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The Great Seismos

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:12-17).

It is evident that the breaking of the first four seals of the seven-sealed scroll provides an overall word picture of the complete seven-year Tribulation, presenting just the main, necessary facts. That seen when the four horsemen ride forth, one after the other as each of the first four seals are broken, provides an overall description of an interrelated succession of events which will mark the last seven years of Man's Day. In this respect, the whole of that seen through the breaking of these first four seals (6:1-8) could be viewed as a *skeletal framework* for that seen in the remainder of the book covering this period of time (6:9-19:21).

Everything beyond this point (that revealed when the remaining three seals are broken [which includes that revealed when the seven trumpets are sounded and the corresponding seven vials are poured out, seen in chs. 6b, 8-10, 11b, 15, 16], along with all of the asides [events seen in chs. 7, 11a, 12-14, 17-19]) provides the details and commentary for *the complete skeletal picture* seen through the breaking of the first four seals. This complete sequence of events provides *the sinews, flesh, and skin* to cover the initial skeletal framework.

In this respect, when an individual begins with the breaking of the first seal in chapter six and continues through chapter nineteen — with the completion of the judgment of the great whore, Christ's subsequent return, and the destruction of Gentile world power — that individual has read a detailed word picture covering the overall scope of the coming seven-year Tribulation and immediately following events, which lead into the Messianic Era. That individual has read the matter *exactly* as God gave it and *exactly* as God wants man to see and understand it in this closing book of Scripture.

God though would expect man to see and understand this part of His Word *exactly* as He would expect man to see and understand any other part of His Word — *not only in the light of all which He has revealed but also in the light of the way in which He has revealed matters, beginning with Moses.*

But, bear something in mind. As in any other part of Scripture, God, in this book, has structured His Word *after a particular fashion.* At the beginning of Scripture, God's structural method, along with providing history, was centrally *typical, in conjunction with numbers and metaphors.* In the closing book of Scripture, in the Book of Revelation, God's structural method is clearly stated at the beginning of the book:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and *signified* it by his angel unto his servant John” (1:1).

And this revealed method (“signified”) is seen throughout the book, often *in conjunction with numbers and metaphors* (ref. Chapter I in this book).

The preceding is what many expositors and Bible students

have overlooked and have not taken into account when trying to understand that revealed in this book, particularly when the sixth seal is broken. They have overlooked and not taken into account the word “signified” in the opening verse of the book, which has to do with using *indirect or illustrative language in order to bring out that which is direct or explanatory*. And attempting to understand and interpret this book after a manner other than how God gave this part of His Word not only leads to all types of problems but it closes the door to the true picture of the matter, to that which God has revealed through the means which He has used.

The whole of that revealed when the sixth seal is broken is set forth in illustrative language (which was used extensively in that revealed through the breaking of the first five seals), and it is quite evident that metaphors are being used throughout. And, viewing the matter both textually and contextually, it is a simple matter to see and understand the exact nature of the subject matter being dealt with through this means.

First, to understand that illustrative language is being used in this part of Scripture, begin with the word “earthquake” (6:12), which is the first thing mentioned when this sixth seal is broken. This word in the Greek text is *seismos*, which means “to shake,” “to agitate,” “to stir up.”

The word “earth” is not associated with the word *seismos*. That would have to be derived from the text or context. And, in this case, the whole of the passage has to do with *things in heaven, heaven itself, and things on earth*. There is a great shaking of *things in heaven* (“the sun,” “the moon,” and “the stars”), *heaven itself*, and *things on earth* (“every mountain and island”).

(Our English words “seismic,” “seismology,” “seismograph” and other forms of the same word are all derived [in whole or in part] from the Greek word, *seismos*. Most words in this family of words in the English language are associated with earthquakes; but the words, in and of themselves, as in the Greek, have no relation to *the earth per se* [note a cognate form of *seismos* in v. 13 (*seio*), translated “shaken”]. *The earth* is something added to *the shaking or agitation*, completely apart from the actual meaning of the different words derived from *seismos* [e.g., “earth” prefixed to “quake,” *earth-seismic*, “earthquake”].)

Then note that which occurs through this great shaking of things in heaven, heaven itself, and things on earth. *The sun* becomes “black as sackcloth of hair,” *the moon* becomes “as blood,” *the stars* fall from heaven “upon the earth,” *the heaven* departs (is removed, in the sense of being rolled up [cf. Isa. 34:4]), “as a scroll when it is rolled together,” and *every mountain and island* are “moved out of their places.”

Attempting to see this as literal, apart from illustrative means and metaphors, would present major problems at every turn. Note possibly the greatest of the problems — “the stars” *falling from heaven upon the earth*. The size of stars, the heat generated by stars, and their distance from the earth would prohibit even the thought of such literally occurring.

Stars are much larger than the earth. Our sun, for example, is a medium-sized star, and the diameter of the sun is over one hundred times that of the earth. If a literal star ever “fell unto the earth,” the earth would be burned to a cinder long before the star ever reached the earth.

Aside from the preceding, the nearest star to the earth (other than the sun) is Alpha Centauri, and this star is over four light years removed from the earth (about twenty-five trillion miles away); but most stars are thousands of light years removed, and there are multiplied billions of them in our galaxy (an estimated two to four hundred billion).

In fact, the distance from the earth to stars in the galaxy, for the most part, is so great that what man sees when he gazes into the heavens at night is light from distant stars which began traveling toward earth before man was even created, possibly even before Satan fell, at a speed slightly over 186,000 miles per second. And that light is just now reaching the earth. In fact, a scattering of these stars have likely not even existed for centuries or millenniums, with their nova yet to be seen (possibly not being seen until sometime during the Millennium, or the ages following).

And similar things, though in a different sense, could be said about that which happens to *the sun, the moon, the heaven itself, and the mountains and islands* when the sixth seal is broken. All is *illustrative and metaphorical*, and the whole of the passage must

be understood after this fashion, in keeping with the way God has not only designed His Word in this book but also in keeping with the way God views these different objects when using them as metaphors.

The Great Shaking

This *great disarray* of that being referenced, described through the use of heavenly bodies, heaven itself, and geographical places on earth, covers *the complete spectrum* of the matter. And that seen through this means when the sixth seal is broken provides further information, commentary, for that seen when the first four seals were broken.

That seen when these four seals were broken presented a man gaining governmental control over the earth (first seal). This was then followed by a progressive deterioration of conditions on earth unparalleled in the history of man (second, third, and fourth seals), which is seen *directly connected with the government of the earth from the first seal*.

And that seen when the sixth seal is broken brings the whole of the matter to *a time near and at its climax* (near and at the end of the Tribulation). Graphically described, that seen when this seal is broken has to do with *a complete disarray and collapse of the government of the earth* — the government in existence after the rider on the white horse had become world ruler and had been instrumental in bringing to pass that seen after the second, third, and fourth seals had been broken.

Then, viewing the matter from the standpoint of that seen when the fifth seal was broken (souls under the altar), that brought to pass when the sixth seal is subsequently broken *addresses the cry of the martyrs seen under the altar*:

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (6:10b; cf. Gen. 9:6).

There is also considerable commentary numerous places in the Old Testament which bears directly upon that brought to

pass when the sixth seal is broken (numerous types, that seen in Daniel, etc.).

(E.g., parts of the O.T. which deal with that seen when the sixth seal is broken would be sections such as the power of Egypt brought to naught during Moses' Day, events leading to Haman and his ten sons being impaled on a gallows during Esther's day, or "the little horn," "the prince of the covenant," brought to his end in Daniel's prophecy.)

In short, as previously seen, that brought to pass through the imagery used when the sixth seal is broken depicts *the complete breakdown of the final form of Gentile world power, immediately prior to its destruction*. The destruction of the final form of Gentile world power is seen later in the book (chs. 14b, 19b), and that which occurs when the sixth seal is broken sets the stage for this subsequent destruction.

1) *The Powers of Nature*

There is a great shaking of natural things connected with the earth, both *in heaven* and *on earth* — the sun, moon, and stars in heaven, heaven itself, and the mountains and islands on earth.

a) *The Sun*

"The sun," the first thing mentioned among this array of things in heaven and on earth, can only be depicting *the supreme governing authority* — "the heavens do rule" (Gen. 37:9; Dan. 4:26; Rev. 12:1). All (the moon, stars [in the sense used here], and the mountains and islands) *are dependent on light* from the sun. And the sun is *darkened*. The sun becomes "black as sackcloth of hair."

Sackcloth was a coarse-textured cloth, often made from goat's hair or black hair from camels. Being clothed in sackcloth was a symbol of *despair or calamity* (Gen. 37:34; Esther 4:1-4; Isa. 50:3; Ezek. 7:18). Revelation 6:12, in the imagery used, pictures the sun, as it were, being clothed with this black, coarse-textured cloth, *blotting out all light*, with the added thought of *despair or calamity*.

And this is not seen as a passing eclipse. Rather, this pictures conditions at a terminal point. This pictures the way that the government of the earth will exist at the end of Man's Day. "The prince

of the covenant," *seated on Satan's throne* and possessing "power... and great authority" (Rev. 13:2), will have carried the government, in a downward spiral, to this point (cf. Joel 2:2, 10, 30, 31).

b) *The Moon*

"The moon," the next thing mentioned, is a *secondary heavenly body in relation to the sun*. The moon derives its light from the sun; and in the sense of depicting governing authority, this secondary authority, dependent on the supreme authority, would be darkened as well, with this darkness described through another means — the moon becoming "as blood."

"Blood," in Scripture, has to do with both *life* and *death*. In Lev. 17:11, *life* is said to be in the blood. But, in Ex. 12:7, viewing the other side of the matter, blood from a slain lamb placed on the doorposts and lintel of an Israeli home showed *death*.

The blood on the doorposts and lintel showed *that death had occurred inside that Israeli home*. The blood showed that *the firstborn had already died, though vicariously*. When the Lord passed through the land of Egypt at midnight and saw the blood, He was satisfied; and, consequently, He passed over that house.

Thus, the thought of "blood" could be used either way — *life*, or *death*.

But the manner in which "blood" is used in Rev. 6:12, where the moon becomes "as blood" in connection with the sun becoming "black as sackcloth of hair," the thought could only have to do with *death*. The moon, dependent on the sun, is seen being blackened as well, though the matter is expressed a different way. Where there had previously been "light," now there was *darkness*; where there had previously been "life," now there was *death*.

c) *The Stars*

"The stars" of heaven, the remaining heavenly bodies mentioned, could only depict *secondary powers connected with the primary and secondary authority, the sun and the moon* (cf. Job 38:7; Isa. 14:13; Rev. 12:4). And the sun being darkened would affect the stars (in the sense that they are used here) exactly as it had affected the moon.

And a different way of stating that which has happened is used again. First, to describe matters at hand, *there was a calamitous blackness, and then death*. Now, continuing the description, “the stars” are seen *falling* from heaven to the earth.

d) *The Mountains and Islands*

Then “mountains and islands” are the last objects used in this depiction of *a complete breakdown of powers and authorities*. “A mountain” in Scripture, when used in the sense seen here, depicts *a kingdom* (Isa. 2:1-5; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:44, 45; Matt. 17:1-5); and, contextually, “an island” would be connected with the government but more in the sense of *a center of trade and commerce* (Isa. 23:2; Ezek. 27:3ff; cf. Rev. 18:11ff).

They (all of the mountains and islands) are seen being “moved out of their places.” Not only is there *a calamitous blackness, death, and a falling*, but there is also *a removal, dislodging, and displacement of everything*.

2) *The End Result of Going Forth “Conquering, and to Conquer”*

The government of the earth at the end of Man’s Day is vividly described when the sixth seal is opened. Then those having some type connection with the government are seen (which, in the text, includes *everyone*).

That seen when the sixth seal is broken depicts *a complete breakdown of the whole of the matter — the government of the earth and that connected with the government*. The fabric holding the system together unravels, apparently quite rapidly. *Disorder, in that day, will reign supreme* (cf. Hag. 2:21, 22).

When everything unravels and disorder reigns supreme, the attitude of those on the earth comes into view. *All — “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man”* (v. 15a) — will be affected by this total collapse of the government and all the things which appertain thereunto, *resulting in utter chaos*.

And these same individuals will seek help through one means.

They will hide themselves “in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains” (v. 15b), saying to “the mountains and rocks,”

“Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (vv. 16, 17).

“Dens” and “rocks of the mountains,” as in that which precedes, are used in metaphorical senses. Hiding themselves in the places described and looking to these places as possibly some type sanctuary or shield from that occurring could only have to do with seeking some type help or aid from a government in complete disarray. And, of course, no help or aid will be found.

But the matter in that day will be as it has always been — *under the complete control of the God of heaven*. He has stayed His hand for a time, allowing man’s *cup of iniquity* to become “full” (cf. Gen. 15:16). He has allowed Satan to continue exercising control, and He will allow the coming Antichrist, under Satan, to bring mankind to the brink of annihilation (Matt. 24:21, 22). Then things will begin to change rapidly. “The great day of his [God’s] wrath” *will be at hand*.

In that day God will no longer stay his hand. God will, again, step into man’s affairs during Man’s Day; and man, when that day arrives, *will be unable to do anything whatsoever about the matter* (cf. Rev. 9:6).

Men on the earth in that day will seek to distance themselves from that which is happening. But they will be unable to do so. *There will be no escape*.

Note the first part of the second Psalm in this respect:

“Why do the heathen [Gentiles] rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us [a cry to do away with all control from the Lord].

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have

them in derision.

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (vv. 1-6).

The second Psalm is a Messianic Psalm, picturing conditions both at the end of Man's Day and during the subsequent Lord's Day.

The Gentiles are seen *raging* and *imagining vain things*. The kings of the earth are seen *forming alliances against the Lord, and against His Christ*. They are seen *seeking to do away with all control from the heavens*.

Man's actions in this respect though are not going to be allowed to continue unchecked indefinitely. *There is a limit to God's patience*. God in His time and way will step in and put a stop to the matter.

In that day God will *laugh (in contempt)* at the vain efforts of the nations. In that day God will respond with *wrath*, resulting in *dismay, panic, terror, etc.*

That is the picture brought into focus from the second Psalm when the sixth seal is broken.

Then, after God has responded with *wrath*, despite all of man's efforts to prevent the inevitable, *He will set His King on the throne in Jerusalem* — both *heavenly* and *earthly* (cf. Ps. 76:2; Heb. 12:22).

The complete breakdown, disarray, and collapse of the earth's government under Satan, his angels, and the nations will be followed by *a complete change in the government of the earth*. And man can't do anything to either hasten that day or move that day far into the future.

God works with *set times* which He Himself has established; and, "It is written..."

Structure of the Seals, Trumpets, and Vials

The breaking of the seventh seal reveals the seven trumpet judgments, and the sounding of the seventh trumpet reveals the seven vial judgments. And these together complete all of the judgments revealed through the breaking of the seven seals on the scroll (*ref.* Chapter XI in this book).

In turn, the judgments revealed when the seventh seal is broken (the trumpet and vial judgments) fit into and form commentary, providing additional information, for that previously seen when the first six seals of the scroll were broken. They would reflect back on particularly that seen when the sixth seal was broken, which answers the cry of the martyrs when the fifth seal was broken, along with forming commentary for events seen near and at the end when the first four seals were broken.

These judgments form part of the sinews, flesh, and skin to cloth the skeletal framework originally set forth through that revealed by the four horsemen riding forth when the first four seals of the scroll were broken. The end of the matter is seen through events occurring when the fourth horseman rides forth, but very little detail is given. Commentary with detail is given when the remaining seals are broken, with this commentary reflecting back mainly on events near and at the end of that revealed when the four horsemen ride forth.

And when the seventh seal is broken, the matter is seen brought to a *full end* with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the corresponding pouring out of the seventh vial.

Note how this is seen in that stated about the angel with the seventh trumpet:

“And the angel [the angel with the seventh trumpet] which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand [*lit.*, ‘right hand’] to heaven,

And sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there should be time no longer.

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Rev. 10:5-7).

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ [*lit.*, ‘The kingdom of this world is become that of our Lord, and of His Christ’], and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

Then note how this is seen in that stated about the angel with the seventh vial:

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done [*lit.*, ‘It has been completed,’ ‘It has come to pass’] (Rev. 16:17).

(*Ref.* Chapter XIX in this book, pp. 235, 236, for comments on “time” in relation to *finality* in Rev. 10:6. Also, see Chapter XI in this book, pp. 133, 134, for comments on “the mystery of God” being *finished* in Rev. 10:7, along with the statement having to do with *completion* in Rev. 16:17.)

Though the seals, trumpets, and vials are presented in a separate sense in the Book of Revelation, forming three triads of sevens — *showing Divine perfection [three] within God’s complete judgment [seven] surrounding the redemption of the inheritance* — as previously seen, an inseparable relationship exists between all of the judgments. And *everything moves toward revealed goals, ultimately allowing God’s Son to take the kingdom and to reign.*

These revealed goals would encompass:

1) Bringing about the redemption of the inheritance, allowing God’s Son to take the kingdom.

2) Bringing to pass the marriage of Christ to His previously revealed bride, allowing the Son to possess a wife — a requirement for reigning in the kingdom of men, for man cannot reign alone; he must reign as a complete being.

3) Bringing Israel to the place of repentance, resulting in the restoration of the nation (spiritually, and to the land), God again taking Israel as His wife, and the restoration of the theocracy to the nation.

4) Bringing Gentile world power to naught, resulting in an end to the Times of the Gentiles.

5) Bringing about that seen in Ps. 2:6 — “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.”