

Three days after he died, Jesus rose from the dead.  
For forty days after his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples before returning to his Father's home.  
Seven days after his ascension the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus.

On that day, the day of Pentecost, a large crowd rushed to the place where the disciples were because they had heard the sound..



... “like the blowing of a violent wind.”

Once there they heard the disciples speaking the praises of God in different languages.

It was Peter who stood up and explained to them what was happening.

### Acts 2:17

In **the last days**, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Peter declared that what they heard, and saw had been foretold long ago through the prophet Joel.

The Spirit of God had come because of Jesus of Nazareth...  
... who had come into the earth and was accredited by God through miracles,  
wonders and signs...  
...the very same Jesus the crowd had betrayed and put to death...  
...the same Jesus whom God had raised from the dead...  
...the very same Jesus who only seven days earlier had ascended into heaven and  
was now at the right hand of God.

Peter boldly announced that the Father had entrusted the gift of the Spirit into  
the hands of Jesus, and this gift had been poured out.... the Spirit had saturated  
their lives as the crowd could see and hear...

### Acts 2:33

...he has received from the Father the  
promised Holy Spirit and has poured  
out what you now see and hear.

The Bible describes the period of time after the ascension of Jesus... but before his  
return... as **the last days**.

The last days... is the time of the Holy Spirit...when he inhabits the people of God  
as they live their lives here on the earth.

The Bible describes the day of Jesus' visible return... as **the last day**.

This day will be one of joy for those who know God and are in relationship with  
him...and it will be a day of terror for those who have lived without God.

Isaiah 2:12, 17-19

The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled) ... <sup>17</sup> The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, <sup>18</sup> and the idols will totally disappear.

<sup>19</sup> People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.

2 Peter 3:10

...the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

In Revelation 6, the events that transpire as seals 1-5 are opened take place... **in the last days.**

But the opening of the sixth seal happens... **on the last day** – look again at v.17.

As John watched and listened he was shown two perspectives.

**He saw how the last day will impact the creation.**

- a great earthquake
- the sun turns black
- the whole moon turns blood red
- the stars of the sky fall to earth
- the sky recedes
- every mountain and island is removed from its place

Let's read again v.12-14.

There are two important things for us to take note of.

1. In verses 12-14, John used the language of hyperbole.

Do you recognize this picture?



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A newspaper in England wrote: On 9 November 1989, the exuberance of Berliners **spread like wildfire** around the globe.





This cataclysmic event happened almost twenty years ago.



John in his attempt to describe the terrifying images he saw, had to use the words “like” and “as.”

“...the sun turned black **like** sackcloth...”  
“...the stars fell **as** late figs drop from a fig tree...”  
“...the sky receded **like** a scroll, rolling up....”

Galatians 4:4 says that when the time had fully come God sent the Son into the world to be born of a woman.

When the time **has** fully come, God will again send the Son to the world. The fullness of time regarding the return of Jesus will include as we saw in the fifth seal – the full number of martyrs being reached.

Jesus in Matthew 24 identified another **“fulness of time factor”** regarding his return.

Matthew 24:9-14: ... you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. <sup>10</sup> At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup> and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup> Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup> but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The end comes... Jesus returns...when the gospel has been preached in the whole world.

The gospel being preached in the whole world... and the full number of martyrs being reached... **go hand in hand.**

Those who lose their lives do so because of their obedience to Jesus' command... go into to the world and make disciples.

**The second** important thing for us to consider is this.

The unseen realm of heaven has always been there.

But because every person is born spiritually dead, we are unable to see it.



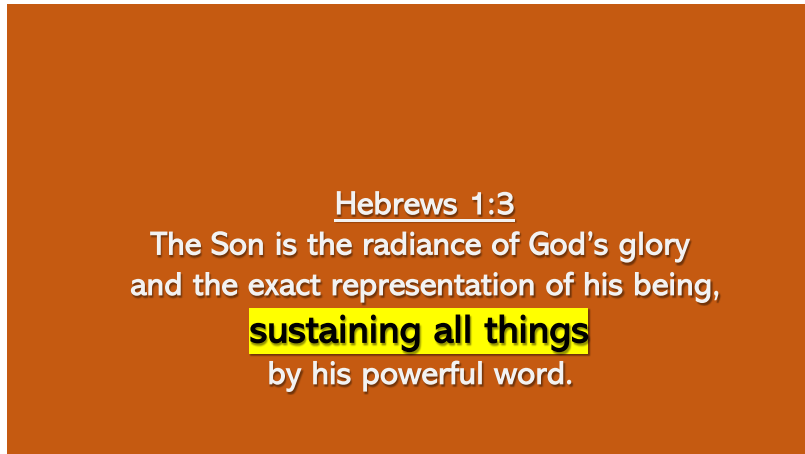
However, on the last day, by the will of God the curtain... will be drawn back.

The veil... that has kept the unseen realm hidden... will be removed.

On that day the One on the throne and the Lamb will be made visible to all who live on the earth.

But why... on this day, will the creation be so profoundly and utterly shaken?

Look at Hebrews 1:3.



What is it that God the Son has done since the creation?  
He has sustained all things.  
Is there anything he doesn't sustain?

**All...means everything.**

How does the Son sustain all things?

By his powerful word.

We need to press into this – you and I need to see this reality clearly.

Hebrews 1:3 is the explanation for what happened in Matthew 8:23-27.



One evening as he and the disciples sailed across the lake in the Galilee region  
Jesus fell asleep.

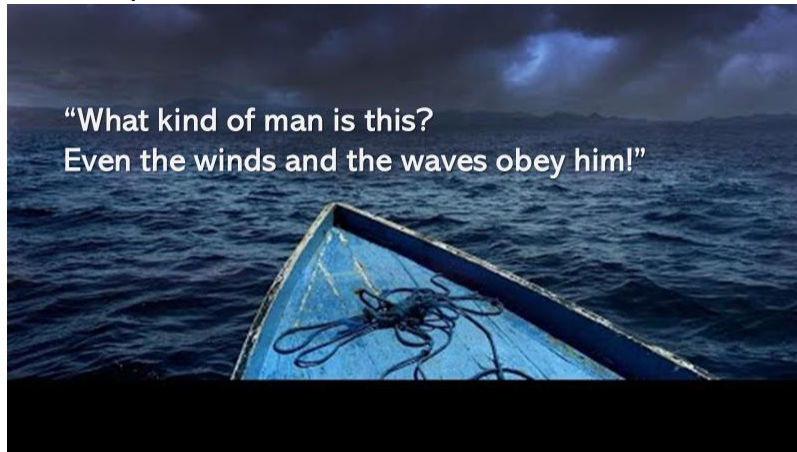
Without warning a sudden and furious storm came up.

The storm was so violent that the boat was in danger of being swamped and sunk.  
Jesus' disciples woke him saying, "We're going to drown!"



You and I need to remember some of the disciples were fishermen – so their response tells us this was a fierce storm.  
As the wind howled, and the waves battered the boat, Jesus stood to his feet,  
... **“and rebuked the wind and the waves, and it was completely calm.”**

His disciples were amazed and said to one another...



**Why did the winds and the waves obey Jesus?**

Because... he sustains all things.

The creation... recognized the authority of its Creator.

It was the same with the miracle of the wine...

...the same with the feeding of the 5000 and 4000...

...the same with his miracles of healing...

...the same when Jesus walked on the water.

Colossians 1:16-17

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...

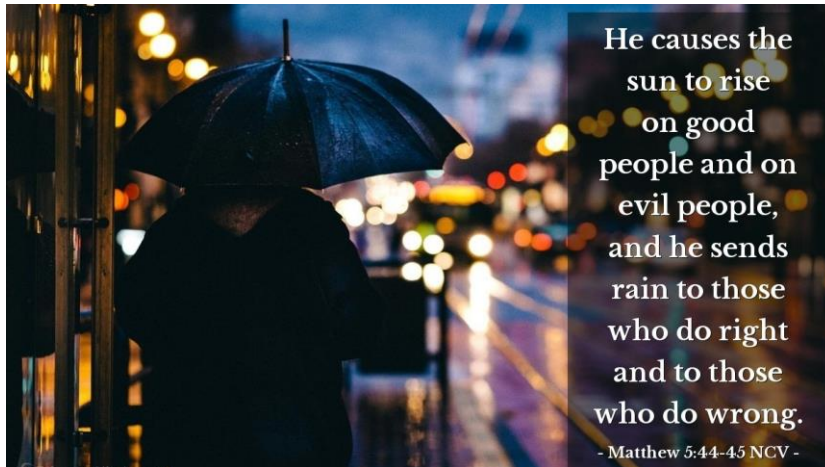
all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and

**in him all things hold together.**

The creation does not and cannot exist apart from the Creator.

The same is true of human beings - “In him we live and move and have our being.” Acts 17:28.

Consider what Jesus said about the Father in Matthew 5:45...



The God who sustains all things – in addition to sending sunshine and rain, keeps the earth spinning; he directs the earth in its orbit around the sun; he holds the thin layer of air in its place, etc., etc., etc.

I say it again... it is the powerful word of Jesus that holds all things together.

Look at Hebrews 12.

This passage first speaks of the blessings of the new covenant which Jesus established by his blood.

#### **Hebrews 12:22-24**

**...you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

By grace alone... through faith alone... in Christ alone, the follower of Jesus is included in and lives on the basis of these unshakeable unseen realities.

Right now....

- We are citizens of heaven.
- Our worship joins with that of the angels who are in joyful assembly.
- We are a part of the church of Jesus Christ, the Firstborn from the dead.

- Our names are written in the book of life.
- God who is the Judge of all mankind... has become our Father and through faith in Jesus he credits us with righteousness and when we pass from this life to the next, he makes us perfect.

This is now...but what about the future? What about the last day?

**Hebrews 12:26-27**

...he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

<sup>27</sup> The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—

**so that what cannot be shaken may remain.**

On the last day the heavens and the earth will be shaken by God. Why will he do this?

- To undo the dysfunction and brokenness of this present time and age.
- To swallow up the curse of death.
- To remove the disgrace suffered by his people.
- To wipe away their tears— see Isaiah 25:6-8.
- To expose and destroy all that has caused corruption.

What will take the place of what is shaken and removed?

**Hebrews 12:28-29**

"Therefore, since we are receiving **a kingdom that cannot be shaken,** let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our "God is a consuming fire."

God will shake the heavens and the earth in order to replace them with a kingdom that cannot be shaken... a kingdom in which there is no curse of death, no stain of sin.

As I have said before – there is no future for evil; life without God is a dead-end street that has only one outcome.

It is because God is holy that he will on the last day... purge and purify.

His righteousness will fill the earth.

He will make all things new!!

Our passage identifies a second impact caused by the day of the Lord.

**And this is...the impact upon humanity who lives without God.**

What do they do on that day?

Before we answer that I want you to see how John highlight the truth of...



Look again at the list of who is mentioned in v.15.

All... means all.

What do those who have lived without God do when he appears?

v.16 - they call out to the mountains and the rocks.

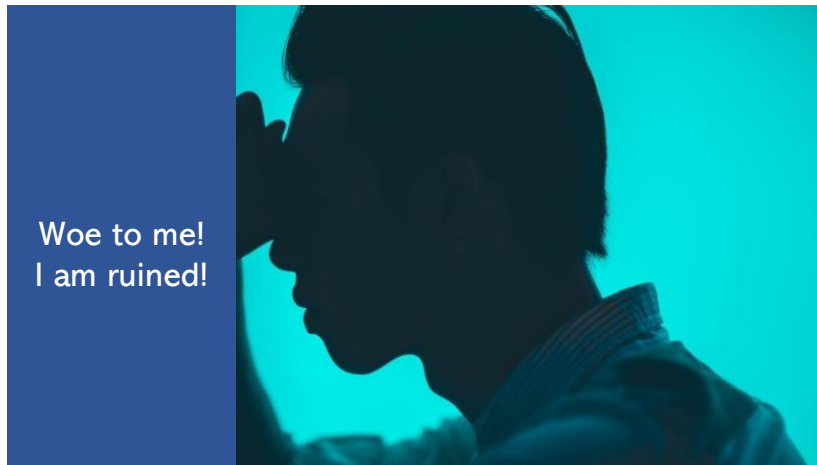
In saying this John draws the reader's attention to the desperation of those who fear the gaze of God and the wrath of the Lamb.

Do you remember Isaiah's vision is Isaiah 6?

He saw the Lord.

He saw the holiness of God

And what was his response?



Isaiah 6:5.

I remind you this was the response of a man who loved God; a man who had centered his life in the person of God; a man who had committed his life to speak for God.

Can you begin to imagine what it will be like for those who don't love God, who have centered their lives in themselves, who have done what is right in their own eyes?

This will be the moment when they realize...

"There is a God.

I am a sinner.

I am accountable to him and I have fallen short of his glory.

I rejected him and his salvation.

I was wrong about everything!

Woe to me! I am ruined."

This is why, as John saw in the vision... these individuals attempt to hide... were it possible.... from God.

They cannot bear to see the face of him who sits on the throne.

His brilliant holiness exposes their corruption and makes plain his determined opposition to sin.

Were you surprised to read in v.16 the phrase – "the wrath of the Lamb?"

Do you remember in 5:5 when John turned to look at the Lion of Judah?

What did he see? He saw a Lamb.

**In Revelation 5 the reader's understanding of the lion was redefined.**



Do you remember in Luke 24, the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus?

**Jesus redefined their hope in the Messiah** as he re-oriented it around the OT prophecies of suffering and vindication – see Isaiah 53.

Tom Wright says that with the opening of the sixth seal, **the notion of God's wrath is also redefined.**

The wrath of the Lamb cannot be separated from... but must be understood through... the lens of his self-giving, self-sacrificial love that took him to Golgotha... that moved him to willingly lay down on a Roman cross and not resist the nails that were driven into his feet and hands... that kept him on the cross until it was finished; until he breathed his last breath.

If one does not understand the love of God, neither will they understand his wrath.

If you misunderstand the wrath of the Lamb, it will be because you have misunderstood his love.

This is why many are spiritually confused.

This is why the OT is often misunderstood.

This is why many dismiss God lightly, or reject him thinking he is cruel.

In the person of God there is no contradiction for him to love the world... and at the same time... hate sin.

God's love would not be love, but would be a perversity were he to be ok with sin; were he to permit sin to continue to corrupt, destroy and kill; if he refused to judge and remove it from his creation.

The One on the throne and the Lamb will pour out their wrath... in order... to make all things new.

This is the hope of those who trust in God; the hope of the martyrs.

And this is what those individuals whom John saw in Revelation 6 are desperate to hide from.

This is why they ask that haunting question:



This question is so important, so significant... that the revealing to John of the breaking of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is delayed until it is answered. And it is here we will stop for today.

As we finish our time of study, let's be certain we see the connection between today's passage and our lives. Two things.

You and I live in a culture, which in its attempts to encourage and affirm, minimizes sin.

Today's passage is meant to shake one's complacency – whether the reader is a follower of Jesus or not.

God hates sin.

Sin is not an oops or a boo-boo.

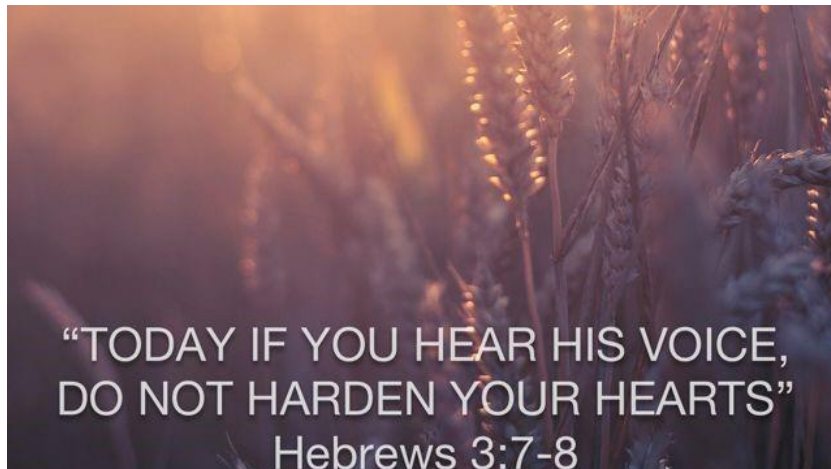


Sin corrupts all that is good.

It kills dreams and hopes.

It kills spiritually and physically...and ultimately... eternally.

Today's passage is intended to instill in the people of God a renewed determination to communicate the gospel and to urge all listeners to respond to God...



This is the truth... in Jesus, and in him alone, there is salvation.

However, if Jesus is rejected there is no other way, no other hope.

This was the realization that broke in on those whom John saw in Revelation 6:15.

But until that great day of wrath comes... today's passage is meant to grip the one not yet in relationship with God through Jesus Christ to act...to act with urgency...to act without delay.

I love the words of God found in Joel 2:11b-13.

**Joel 2:11b-13**

**The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful.**

**Who can endure it?**

**<sup>12</sup> "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."**

**<sup>13</sup> Rend your heart and not your garments.**

**Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love...**

Even now...even today...turn your life towards God.

Return to him.... with all your heart.  
Return to him... with repentance.  
Return to him because...  
...he is gracious and compassionate...  
...slow to anger and abounding in love.

**Why choose wrath...** when he offers you his love and grace?

**Why delay...** when the door to come home to him is open?

**Why choose death...** when Jesus offers you the life of heaven, the life that never ends?

It is the glory of the Lamb to save!!

Will you come to Jesus today?

Will you receive him and believe in him?

The second thing is this.

1 Peter 1:13-17: Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, **set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.** <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." <sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, **live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.**

Follower of Jesus, those of you who've walked with him for some time... those who've trusted in him today...our hope in Jesus functions as an anchor that holds us firmly to him; and keeps us in the center of God's life.

As followers of Jesus we experience the grace of God on a daily basis.

But this grace in which we live right now... is but an appetizer – there is a greater grace coming.

When the cosmos unravels, when the veil is removed and the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb is seen, this will be the moment – when the grace of God completes our salvation – body, soul and spirit.

This will be the moment when we together will shout with all the rescued ones, what Isaiah heard:

Isaiah 25:9:

**“Surely this is our God; we trusted in him,  
and he saved us.**

**This is the Lord, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”**

Our hope in God will not be disappointed.

This hope, as Peter wrote, is our strength as we live out our days on this earth... as foreigners... waiting for the return of Jesus.