

The Revelation 6:

Reading #433 The unrolling of the scroll

In the next few verses we learn about some of the attitudes in the church from the beginning of the Christian era to near its end. (The seventh seal is not opened until chapter eight, verse 1.) As each seal is broken a new aspect of church behaviour is shown to us. John saw nearly all of them as future events; we see them in the past till the middle of the events of the fifth seal, after which we must swing into our future, and then must tread carefully, for it is very easy to misunderstand unfulfilled prophecy.

Of course, when the scroll is fully unrolled again after the second advent we shall all see it as God sees it, and find out whether we were correct in our interpretations of last-day events. At that time every Christian from Abel onwards will understand what really happened in the great controversy.

Let's begin:

***** (Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

¹ And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts [the redeemed] saying, "Come and see".

² And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given to him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

***** (End Quote)

There was a tremendous roar from the crowd as the Lamb opened the first seal and John was called by one section of the redeemed to look at what was revealed. (John saw, rather than read, for the book is a series of visions.) What he saw reminded him of his past experiences in the gospel work, for that's exactly what it was. The whiteness of the horse represented the purity of the message his branch of the church had carried, first to the Jewish church, and then to the Gentile world.

The rider of the horse (which in itself shows the strength and speed in which the call was given), had a bow, but no there is mention of him having any arrows. He was "militant" but not aggressive, for the LORD does not desire the use of force in His call to the nations. The people of that branch of the church were at first "kings", strong and courageous, and willing to risk all for their LORD. In response to Christ's call to "Go into all the world", we read, "These that have turned the world upside down are come here also", and,

“... be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature ...” Colossians 1:23; Acts 17:6.
[For more on this subject, try <http://4dw.net/nonconformer/agape/agape.html>]

But, as we have read in the message from the Son of God to the people of the first branch of the Christian church (Revelation 2:4), a change came as the apostles died off. By repeating from another angle the events that happened in the church from Calvary to the second coming, and with some extra information added, the LORD is endeavouring to underline them for us. (He wants us to know our “family” history.) Each branch (a distinct group with unique behaviour) could have been able to see where they were in the line of time, what they were like in God’s eyes, and also what was to come after them. Let’s hope we do when we get to our present-day position, for then we will know what the Son of God expects from us.

(Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

3 And when He had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast [another group of the redeemed] say, “Come and see”.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given to him a great sword.

(End Quote)

Here we read that in the second branch (from 100AD to 313AD approx.), the majority did their own thing and therefore caused a lot of unnecessary trouble in the world. They had no crown and their “horse” was the colour of blood, for they turned against one another as they began to dispute in doctrinal matters, as much, or more, as they tried to reach the unbelievers. Even while offering themselves for martyrdom at the hands of the Roman power (many chose it as the highest expression of their faith), they accepted the use of force in religion and used it against one another, especially the clergy against the laity.

Lateral thought:

Following the example set by the apostle Paul, who himself thought he was following in the footsteps of the Son of man, many of the Christians of this early age thought that God wanted His people to die for Him. In truth, the ONLY one who HAD TO DIE THAT WAY was the Son of man as He illustrated the experience of the Son of God. It has NEVER been God’s desire that His people should come under Satan’s dominion again. It is

written, “Sin [or its wages] shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace”. Romans 6:14.

But this was Paul’s attitude:

***** (Begin Quote)

Acts 21:

¹² And when we [Luke and his companions] heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, “What mean you to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the LORD Jesus”.

¹⁴ And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the LORD be done”.

[This is the will of God concerning the rejecters of His mercy – how much more can it be that He wants His saints to live? “Say to them, AS I LIVE, said the LORD GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” Ezekiel 33:11.]

²² [Paul continued] “And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: ²³ save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me [they are my lot]. ²⁴ But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the LORD Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

²⁵ [Then the Spirit confirmed his desire for him, and he added], “And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more”.

***** (End Quote)

Fortunately, God understands our confusions and will accept our actions in the spirit in which they were given, for it is motive which counts with Him rather than deeds. Our efforts are accepted when they are prompted by love to God and a sincere desire to do His will. He just works around our mistakes and failures.

***** (Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

⁵ And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, “Come and see”.

And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances [scales] in his hand.

(End Quote)

Balances are scales which can go either way – light or heavy. So this branch (313 – 538AD) could have gone either way at first – either back to the purity of the original gospel, or on to that which tries to add faith to works instead of works to faith. But quickly their horse turned “black” and the die was cast. By 538AD the bishop of Rome had taken over the leadership of the church and it was in a bad way, for now Paganism dressed as Christianity had almost full rule. **See note 2 at the end.** Almost, for there is always a remnant.

(Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, “A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see you hurt not the oil and the wine”.

(End Quote)

As we saw last week, in the middle of the march, and in the centre of the encampment, was the tabernacle. (Numbers 2:17.) Now a voice, which was not one of the four, spoke and informed John and us that a great “famine” of truth had come into being. A penny was the equivalent of a day’s wages (Matthew 20:2) and a “measure” a very small amount. By this simple illustration the Spirit shows us what God’s people had become, very scarce with not much in the way of truth! Yet they are described as “oil and wine”, healing and helping, and were protected in their ignorance from those who would hurt them. **See Psalm 104:15.**

(Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

⁷ And when He had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, “Come and see”.

⁸ And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was “Death”, and “Hell” followed with him. And power was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

(End Quote)

The opening of the fourth seal revealed a very sad state of affairs. The “horse” had become a sickly colour, and was the bearer of “death” and the “grave”. Over a vast portion of the earth, encompassing Britain and Europe,

and into the new world of the Americas, from 538 to about 1844AD, the professed churches of God killed in many ways, not the least of which was their manmade systems of religion, which leave men and women FEELING they are saved, but without righteousness. (Their very actions showed that they were not really branches of God's church, but counterfeits, for He does not punish, hurt or destroy anyone, at any time, for any reason. The real Christians were hidden.) What a sight this must have been for the sinless inhabitants of the universe to behold! Angels wept continuously, but the saga continued for lack of saints to stand up for God. Most of them had moved into the wilderness areas of the world to spread their message (Revelation 12:6), and it was really a case of letting "the dead bury the dead", with just a sprinkling of true-hearted ones holding the flag of the LORD's Sabbath.

Note 3, Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:60.

For more on this subject, try:

<http://4dw.net/nonconformer/Centuries/centuries.html#>.

***** (Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

9 And when He had opened the fifth seal [picturing 1844], I saw under the [brass] altar [of the sanctuary] the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O LORD, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" [This was the time that the truth of the sanctuary in heaven was at last perceived by God's people.]

11 And white robes [of righteousness] were given to every one of them [the martyrs]; and it was said to them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brothers [and sisters], that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

***** (End Quote)

The imagery used for the period from 1517 to 1844, the times of the Reformation (and beyond), is right to the point. Just as the earlier period had been full of death, so now John saw in his vision a picture of those who had died for their faith. Killed by both Catholics and Protestants they are depicted as being "under the brass altar" of sacrifice in the courtyard of the sanctuary, and crying for the judgment to begin. Of course, the dead "know not anything . . . neither have they any more a portion **FOR EVER** in any thing that is done under the [this] sun", so this picture is just for our benefit. Ecclesiastes 9:5-6.

In this vision they were given their permanent “white robes” as their names came up for review in the first judgment which began in 1844, and then “told” (again for our benefit) that they would have to wait for their resurrection till the last group of martyrs had died in the next persecution, the one just before the second advent. (It is at this point in the narrative that we start to look into the future.)

Lateral thought:

Martyrs are not suicides, for a suicide dies for himself, while a martyr is willing to be killed for someone else.

There was no horse mentioned when the fifth seal was opened, for this branch of the church was going nowhere! After rising only slightly in the understanding of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (not “righteousness by faith”, for this phrase is not found in the Bible), most of them fell back into the morass of Catholicism and remained her “daughters”. (Revelation 17:5.)

And that’s where we are today – with many of the saints of God calling them “fellow Christians” while God calls them “rebels”! Don’t misunderstand me, there are genuine Christians among them for God is calling them to “come out of her, MY people”, but we cannot tell who is what. Nor should we try, but simply echo God’s word.

This is what we can look forward to:

***** (Begin Quote)

Revelation 6:

¹² 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; ¹³ and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ¹⁴ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places [in the earthquake].

¹⁵ 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; ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷ for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

***** (End Quote)

We have seen these events before (in history) as they occurred as part of the 2, 000 year aspect of Christ’s prophecy, but now we can plainly see that their

real application lies in the future. It is the generation who will welcome the LORD at the second advent who will see ALL these signs, for the sixth seal will be broken just before His appearing. When the earth shall shake at the voice of God proclaiming the day and the hour, the stars will appear to move; then the sun will go out for a while and the moisture in the atmosphere will freeze, and men will cry out in fear.

Then it will be that the rejecters who survive the seven last plagues will desire to die rather than face Him. They will use the one weapon that defeats our God – they will exercise their right of choice – they will choose self-destruction. Against such a weapon, used in conscious knowledge and defiance, our God is helpless. In righteousness, He must allow it. “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether”. Psalm 19:9.

But what lies between now and the opening of the sixth seal? Let’s read about that next week.

Bye for now,
Ron

Some of the comments in these readings are adapted from books in my library. No recognition is given because they are not intended as authorities, but are used because they express my understanding clearly. All the ideas expressed in these readings, right or wrong, are my own.

Some of these readings are available at http://www.geocities.com/weprotest.geo/BibleReadings/books_index.html

Note 1.

***** (Begin Quote)

Psalm 104:

¹⁵ And wine that makes glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart.

***** (End Quote)

Note 2.

***** (Begin Quote)

Ezekiel 28:

² Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre [Satan’s representative at that time], “Thus said the LORD GOD; Because your heart is lifted up, and you have said, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas [the people]’; yet you are a man, and not God, though you set your heart as the heart of God”.

2 Thessalonians 2:

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the second advent] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5 Remember you not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

***** (End Quote)

This is also expressed today as: “You are god”, or “Find the god within you”.

Note 3.

***** (Begin Quote)

Matthew 8:

21 And another of His disciples said to Him, “LORD, suffer me first to go and bury my father”. 22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead”.

Luke 9:

⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the kingdom of God”.

***** (End Quote)