

Corresponds to Program 24

## THE FIFTH SEAL STUDY GUIDE

### THE CRY OF THE MARTYRS

#### Revelation 6:9-11

Remembering that the seals are a timeline, and that they are a consecutive history, just like the Churches, we can expect events in this seal to be a continuation of the black and pale horses. During that time, the period known as the Dark Ages befell the church. False doctrines, forced worship, torture, death for heretics, and extortion of money to get out of purgatory dominated the Christian religion. This period lasted from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798.

Historians tell us that over fifty million people lost their lives during that terrible time. That explains the description found in the fifth seal:

“I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Revelation 6:9-10

This altar is identified in Hebrews 13:10-13 as the one where Christ was slain and where believers were to go. It was the altar in the courtyard of the sanctuary that pointed to the sacrifice of Christ the Lamb on Calvary (John 1:29).

Those pictured slain under it represent faithful martyrs who held to the sacrifice of Jesus as well as the “word of God” and the “testimony” which they held. These people died in Christ. Slain for the Word of God refers back to the black horse and the famine for God’s word. Slain for the testimony they held refers back to the oil and wine and their dependence on Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Yet if they were slain how did they cry out? Does this verse prove that the soul survives death? There is a key story in Genesis 4 that explains their crying and much more.

“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are

you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.’ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ And He said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground’” Genesis 4:3-10.

There are several parallels from this story that promise to help us with the overall symbolic picture in Revelation 6:

1. Both Cain and Abel are worshipers of God.
2. Both bring offerings to God.
3. Abel’s offering shows that he depends on the Lamb while Cain’s offering shows that he depends on his own works.
4. Abel and Cain talked and God also spoke to Cain about his rebellion.
5. Cain then kills his brother Abel because Abel’s offering was accepted of God and Cain’s was not.
6. God holds Cain accountable for his brother’s death say-



“How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” **REVELATION 6:10**

### KEY SCRIPTURES

**Rev. 6 & Zec. 3** WHITE ROBES FOR OVERCOMERS

**Rev. 6:9-10** JESUS AVENGES BLOOD OF MARTYRS

**John 1:29** JESUS TAKES AWAY SINS OF THE WORLD

ing “the voice of you brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.”

7. God then places a “mark” on rebellious Cain so that no one would “kill” him (Genesis 4:15).

God connected this entire story to Revelation 6 so that we could understand that the martyrs are crying out through their slain blood rather than literally. Notice that God did not say, Abel just told me that you killed him, but rather that Abel’s blood was crying out from the ground. Likewise, the martyrs of all ages cry out through the testimony of their spilled blood while they rest in the graves until the final judgment.

It is also apparent that the story of Cain and Abel speaks to the same issues we see in the history of the church. And it points forward to future events with marked clarity. Worshiping God by trusting in the Lamb or worshiping the beast and receiving his mark. Like Cain, there will be those who will yet receive a “mark” in their rebellion against God so that they will not be killed by men (Revelation 13:15-17; 14:1-7).

“Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed” Revelation 6:11.

There are three points here that should be considered:

1. White robes are given to each one of them.
2. They are to rest a little while longer.
3. A future crisis like theirs awaits their brethren.

This picture of the judgment and receiving white robes is also found in the Old Testament books of Zechariah chapter 3:

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke

you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him.’ And to him He said, ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes” Zechariah 3:1-4.

The picture of judgment applies to everyone who places their trust in the sacrifice of the Lamb as Abel did. No human being is righteous no matter how good they appear (Romans 3:9; Isaiah 64:6). We all need the righteousness of Jesus Christ to cover our selfish natures and vindicate us from the accusations of Satan.

This same picture of the gospel, judgment, accusation, and rest for a while is seen in Revelation chapters 12-14 (The fourth prophetic cycle of Revelation). The accuser of the brethren is overcome by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 12:10-11). The everlasting gospel of the Lamb’s white robe of righteousness is preached and the judgment announced (Revelation 14:6-7). Then those who die in the Lord are told to rest from the labors (Revelation 14:12-13).

Cain and Abel attest that trusting in the sacrifice of the Lamb or in the works of man for salvation is an age-old controversy. It will replicate a mark for those who reject the Lamb. It will produce persecution and death towards those who hold to Jesus. And God will vindicate all who die in Him through the judgment. May we follow the Lamb wherever He leads (Revelation 14:4). ★

