



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Revelation 27 Cry of Martyrs/ Fifth seal! Revelation 6:9-11

**Revelation 6:9-11**, *When He opened 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. <sup>10</sup> 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?" <sup>11</sup> 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.*

The stirrings of judgment began into full action in chapter 6.

Let us examine the thought of vengeance.

The fifth seal is all about is vengeance.

It is a cry on the part of these souls identified here for the Lord to avenge our blood, to bring about judgment.

It is not inconsistent with God to make such a plea.

People have recast God in the form that pleases them and, of course, have eliminated any thought of His being a vengeful God. But the God of Scripture is a God of vengeance.

**Deuteronomy 32:35**, *Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them.'*

**Deuteronomy 32:41**, *If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me.*

**Deuteronomy 32:43**, *"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people."*

Vengeance is mine and retribution.

**Psalm 94:1-3**, *O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs— O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! <sup>2</sup>Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud. <sup>3</sup>Lord, how long will the wicked, How long will the wicked triumph?*

The psalm ends as, "The Lord our God will destroy."

There are several imprecatory psalms calling for God to destroy the wicked.

The Psalmist calling for God to bring about vengeance.

The longest of those imprecations are found in **Psalm 35, Psalm 69, and Psalm 109.**

There are other portions of the Psalms with similar prayers for God to bring vengeance on the wicked.

**Psalm 79:10**, *Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight The avenging of the blood of Your servants which has been shed.*

God is a God of vengeance.

**Micah 5:15**, *And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury On the nations that have not heard."*

**Isaiah 59:17-18**, *For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak. <sup>18</sup> According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, Fury to His adversaries, Recompense to His enemies; The coastlands He will fully repay.*

**Isaiah 63:4**, *For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.*

**Psalm 64:7-10**, *But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; Suddenly they shall be wounded. <sup>8</sup> So He will make them stumble over their own tongue; All who see them shall flee away. <sup>9</sup> All men shall fear, And shall declare the work of God; For they shall wisely consider His doing. <sup>10</sup> The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.*

It's a frightening thought in one sense.

The righteous could see the destruction of the wicked and be glad and be happy of that?

But there is that element.

God is a God of vengeance.

- ✓ Vengeance displays God's glory,
- ✓ Vengeance displays God's justice,
- ✓ Vengeance displays God's holiness, and
- ✓ Vengeance displays God's righteousness.

When all of that is put on display, and God is fully vindicated, the righteous will be glad.

**Proverbs 25:21**, *"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he's thirsty, give him water to drink.*

The other side of it.

We ought to be compassionate.

We ought to demonstrate the love of God toward sinners, just as the love of God was demonstrated toward us while we were yet sinners.

There is a balance that we are to seek mercy and compassion for those who are under the judgment of God, as well as seeking and longing for vengeance which puts God on display and vindicates His holiness and His righteousness.

We see the same balance in the letter to Romans.

**Romans 12:19-20**, *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*

There is a day of vengeance coming. But that doesn't mean we treat sinners with revenge or vengeful spirits or retributive attitudes.

We do long for the day when God's holiness, justice, and righteousness is vindicated. But at the same time, we know it's a fearful day for the ungodly.

In the meantime, we reach out in love and compassion and mercy to them.

As we come to **Revelation 6:9-11**, we are going to come face to face with God's vengeance.

The time of grace is really coming to its end.

We are now in a **seven-year period** that we have called the **time of tribulation**. It is also called the time of **Jacob's trouble** with reference to Israel's role in it.

This seven-year period, identified in the book of **Daniel 7** as **7 years**, and identified again in the book of Revelation as to half of it being **3-1/2 years or 42 months or 1,260 days**, this period of time is the time when God unleashes His vengeance.

When God unleashes His judgment and His wrath on the earth like never before. Now, there have been past times when God's vengeance has been manifested God's anger has been revealed. Some of those times have even been called days of the Lord.

But this final time is greater than any other time to precede it. This is the seven-year period when Jesus Christ not only judges the ungodly, but takes back the earth and the universe for His own possession.

In **Matthew's Gospel**, in the **Olivet Discourse or the Sermon on the Mount of Olives** where Jesus discussed this period of time. Jesus said these seven years will be divided into two halves.

The first half He called the beginning of birth pang. When a child is to be born, prior to the birth, there are a series of birth pangs that get increasingly more intense and closer together as you get nearer to the great event of birth itself.

Our Lord is telling us that a monumental event is approaching—not the birth of a child, but the arrival of the King, the Son of God.

As we draw closer to His coming, particularly within seven years, the earth will begin to experience "birth pangs." These are signs of impending arrival.

At first, these signs will be gradual, but they will intensify over time. The initial phase of these birth pangs will occur during the first three-and-a-half years, while the second half will be marked by much fiercer, more intense suffering, which our Lord refers to as the "great tribulation."

In **Matthew 24:8**, the first phase is called the "**beginning of birth pangs.**"

But in **Matthew 24:21**, the second phase is described as the "**great tribulation,**" a time of unprecedented trouble, distress, and agony.

What is interesting, and important for understanding the chronology of these events, is how Luke records the same period in his Gospel.

In **Luke 21**, he captures Jesus' words about this time, and while **Matthew and Mark** focus on the "great tribulation," Luke adds another layer.

**Luke 21:22**, refers to the second half of this period as the "**days of vengeance**"

This is crucial because, according to the prophecy in **Daniel 7**, and as mentioned by Jesus in **Matthew 24**, the "*abomination of desolation*" marks the midpoint of this seven-year period.

Although **Luke** doesn't specifically mention the abomination, he does describe what happens afterward—the "days of vengeance," a time when God's fury is fully unleashed following the midpoint.

So, when Luke speaks of the "days of vengeance," he is referring to that intense second half of the tribulation that begins after the abomination of desolation, a time when God's judgment and wrath will be poured out on the world.

This is crucial to understand, as it aligns perfectly with what we see in the opening of the fifth seal.

The sequence of events is clear:

The first four seals occur in the first half of the three-and-a-half years, which Jesus described as the "beginning of birth pangs."

However, the fifth seal marks a shift.

It begins during the first half, continues through the midpoint, and intensifies in the second half, culminating in the vengeance of God.

This "vengeance" is an essential aspect of the second half of the tribulation and is consistent with what the Apostle Paul describes.

**2 Thessalonians 1:5-9**, *which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; <sup>6</sup>since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup>and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup>in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,*

Paul describes a day of retribution—God’s vengeance against those who reject Him and refuse His gospel.

This vengeance is not just a momentary act of wrath but the righteous judgment of God upon a sinful world.

Peter also speaks of this same day of vengeance.

**2 Peter 3:10**, *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

This "day of the Lord" is coming, bringing with it a massive and unparalleled destruction, a judgment that will purify the earth and all that's in it.

Peter's description echoes the catastrophic nature of this vengeance—a day when everything that stands in opposition to God's holiness will be consumed by His righteous wrath.

It is the moment when God's glory will be fully revealed, when sin and iniquity will be eradicated. Those who have mocked and abused God will see His holiness and justice in action.

It will bring an end to Satan's reign and usher in everlasting righteousness. For those who have suffered for their faith, it will be a day of relief and vindication, as God's justice finally prevails over evil.

In that day, God's glory will shine in its fullness, and His long-awaited justice will be delivered. For believers, this is a moment to rejoice, for it marks the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom over all that opposes Him.

We do rejoice when they anticipated the coming of this day, even though it would mean the destruction of the ungodly. It's a complex, bittersweet emotion:

Joy in the victory of God's justice,  
yet sorrow over the fate of those who remain in rebellion.

This duality of joy and sadness is reflected in **Revelation 10**.

**Revelation 10:9-10**, *So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."* <sup>10</sup> *Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*

John does as he is told. He takes the little book, eats it, and it tastes sweet as honey in his mouth. But once swallowed, it turns his stomach bitter.

This vision of the bittersweet nature of judgment is a powerful one.

The sweetness of the book represents the victory of God and the destruction of sin.

But the bitterness comes because the judgment falls on the ungodly, those who have rejected God's offer of grace.

The bitter reality of their destruction cannot be ignored.  
As Christians, we don't carry a message of vengeance.  
Jesus on the cross cried.

**Luke 23:34**, *Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.*

Stephen, as he was being stoned by those who hated him.

**Acts 7:60**, *Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Paul expressed his longing for the salvation of his fellow Jews.

**Romans 9:3**, *For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,*

**2 Corinthians 5:11**, *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

Paul urged his hearers to be reconciled to God before the retribution falls.

God has given the church the ministry of reconciliation, and our message is one of urging sinners to repent and be saved, before the judgment comes.

The Scriptures tell us that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

**Ezekiel 33:11**, *Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'*

God is not willing that any should perish.

**2 Peter 3:9**, *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

David who wrote the imprecatory psalms, calling down God's judgment on his enemies, is the same one who, when he had the opportunity, spared the life of King Saul his enemy out of compassion.

David could have killed Saul but chose mercy, demonstrating care for Saul's soul despite his animosity toward him. David's heart reflected a divine tension while he longed for justice, he also longed for mercy.

This is the tension we live in today.

God's grace is extended to all, but His patience will not last forever.

There will come a day when the time of grace ends, and the day of retribution arrives. God's Spirit will not always strive with man (**Genesis 6:3**), and there will come an end to the opportunity for repentance.

While we hope and pray for the salvation of all, we also understand that the day of judgment is coming, and when it does, it will bring both joy for the redeemed and sorrow for those who remain outside of God's mercy. But even in that sorrow, we rejoice that God's justice will be done, and His righteousness will prevail.

The first four seals show how different forces are unleashed upon the earth.

**Seal one introduced peace**, which was quickly overshadowed by the appearance of a false peace.

**Seal two brought war**, setting the stage for global conflict.

**Seal three released famine**, creating widespread hunger and economic instability.

**Seal four brought the pestilence**, further exacerbated by war, famine, and the general breakdown of society.

Each of these forces has a distinct impact.

But in the fifth seal is vengeance.

A vengeance driven by the prayers of the saints in heaven are what give this seal its power.

These are not prayers for personal relief or for any kind of selfish desire, but prayers for God's justice to be enacted.

The prayers from those who are already in heaven, completely purified and free from any sin. These are prayers of absolute holiness and power, prayers that will be answered by God.

They cry out for justice, for God's vengeance to be executed upon those who have opposed Him and oppressed His people.

While vengeance doesn't come with the opening of the fifth seal, the prayers for vengeance are an essential precursor to what is coming.

The actual outpouring of judgment begins in Revelation 6 with the opening of the seven-sealed scroll. The judgments will unfold over the course of chapters 6 through 19, beginning with the opening of the first four seals.

This shift from the initial judgments (peace, war, famine, and pestilence) to the prayers for vengeance in the fifth seal underscores the gravity of what is about to unfold.

The forces of judgment have been set in motion, but they are now being propelled forward by the righteous prayers of the saints, which will be answered in due time.

As we come to the fifth seal, we are still in the first half of the seven-year period. The second half—the days of vengeance—have not yet been unleashed. However, even now, we see the first signs of the prayer for vengeance beginning to rise.

**V 9**, the persons involved.

**V 10**, the petitions.

**V 11**, the promises.

## **1. The Persons Involved.**

**V 9**, *When He opened 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.*

A group of individuals who have been martyred for their faith. They are described as being "under the altar," a symbolic location in the heavenly realm.

These souls are in a place of safety and divine proximity, yet they are crying out for justice. These are individuals who suffered and died for their steadfast commitment to the Word of God and their testimony about Jesus Christ.

Their martyrdom is not a random event, but a direct result of their faithful stand for the truth in a world that rejected it. Their souls, now in heaven, await the fulfillment of God's justice, which is about to be realized in the coming judgments.

### **How did they get under the altar?**

They were killed because of their commitment to the Word of God and their testimony about Jesus.

These individuals are clearly martyrs—those who were put to death for their faith.

This follows the pattern that has already been set with the first four seals: after false peace, war, famine, and widespread death due to pestilence, persecution will arise, culminating in martyrdom.

In **Matthew 24**, the disciples ask the question to Jesus and He responds to them.

In **Matthew 24**, Jesus outlines the sequence of events that will unfold during the tribulation.

In **V 4**, Jesus warns of **false messiahs** and the beginning of deception, which is the false peace preceding conflict.

In **V 6**, He mentions **wars and rumors of wars**, corresponding to the red horse of the second seal, which brings strife.

**V 7**, describes nations in **conflict, famine, and earthquakes**, aligning with the black horse (famine) and pale horse (pestilence) seals.

**V 8**, Jesus calls these the "beginning of birth pangs" signaling the start of God's judgment.

As the tribulation progresses, the fifth seal reveals martyrs under the altar, paralleling Jesus' warning in **Matthew 24:9**, where He predicts persecution and death for His followers.

This intensifies after the chaos of war, famine, and pestilence, with believers being hated for their faith in Christ.

The fifth seal in Revelation reflects the persecution Jesus foretold, highlighting the cost of discipleship during this time, but also pointing to God's ultimate victory.

This idea of persecution continuing through the first half of the tribulation is also echoed in **Mark 13:9-13** and **Luke 21:12-19**, where Jesus warns His followers that they will face tribulation and death before the final judgment.

It's important to recognize that the persecution described in the fifth seal occurs during the first half of the seven-year tribulation. This timing is supported by the fact that the **abomination of desolation**, which marks the midpoint of the tribulation, is not mentioned until **Matthew 24:15**.

**Daniel 9:27** further confirms that this event takes place at the midpoint.

Therefore, when the fifth seal is opened, we are still in the early stages of the tribulation, during what Jesus refers to as "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8).

This period, marked by increasing deception, wars, famine, and pestilence, sets the stage for the later, more intense tribulation that follows the abomination of desolation.

### **Why is this important?**

Because Jesus warns that the beginning of the pain (which includes persecution, death, and suffering) will seem severe, but He also says, “the real pain comes later.”

The first half of the tribulation, while marked by intense suffering, is only the start. Jesus is saying that the worst is yet to come, particularly in the second half of the tribulation, after the midpoint when the days of vengeance begin in full force.

This leads to an important realization:

If the first half of the tribulation, with a quarter of the world’s population dying from famine, war, and pestilence, is only the beginning, then the second half is unimaginable in its severity.

The second half will be a time of unparalleled suffering, as God’s wrath is poured out without restraint.

### **What will the rest of the tribulation be like?**

In the beginning of the birth pangs, the persecution of Christians begins—but it will not be a full-scale massacre at first. It will start small, with tribulation and persecution increasing gradually.

Jesus says it will begin with tribulation and death. The inevitable progression will be that persecution will be official—government-led and religiously-inspired. This is not just random hatred, but an organized effort.

Jesus says, “You will be hated by all nations on account of My name.”

**Global Persecution:** Persecution during the first half of the tribulation will be both political and religious, with governments and religious institutions (churches, synagogues, etc.) aligning to persecute true believers. Revelation 17:6 foreshadows this through the image of a false religious system "drunk with the blood of the saints."

**Antichrist's Role:** Although not yet fully revealed, the Antichrist will operate in the background, presenting himself as a peacekeeper while preparing for global persecution. His true nature will be revealed at the midpoint with the abomination of desolation, where he proclaims himself as God.

**Increasing Hatred and Persecution:** As the Holy Spirit begins to withdraw His restraint, anti-God attitudes will increase, setting the stage for heightened persecution of believers, with many martyred for their faith.

**Matthew 24:10 - Falling Away:** As persecution intensifies, many who had superficially attached themselves to the faith will fall

away, betray one another, and follow false prophets. The division between true believers and false ones will become stark.

**False Prophets and Lawlessness:** The rise of false prophets and the spirit of lawlessness will lead many astray, exposing those with a shallow faith who will abandon Christ under pressure.

**Endurance of True Believers:** Matthew 24:13 promises that those who endure to the end, remaining steadfast in their faith despite persecution, will be saved. True faith is revealed not in starting well, but in finishing well.

**Matthew 24:14 - The Gospel Will Prevail:** Despite persecution, the gospel will continue to spread throughout the world, reaching all nations as a testimony. The gospel cannot be silenced, and its global reach will signal the end of the age.

**Sifting of Faith:** The initial persecution will act as a sifting process, revealing who is truly committed to Christ and who is not. Only those with genuine faith will endure.

**Persecution Throughout the Tribulation:** Persecution will persist throughout the entire tribulation, escalating in intensity as time progresses. Initially, during the first half of the seven years, it will gradually increase, eventually reaching an all-out effort to eradicate all believers.

**Antichrist's Effort to Eliminate the Church:** The Antichrist's system will attempt to completely destroy the Church, and hostility against Christians will become widespread. Despite this, the gospel will not be stopped.

**Matthew 24:14 - Gospel Will Be Preached Worldwide:** Even amid intense persecution, the gospel will continue to be preached across the world. This demonstrates that God's plan will not be thwarted—His message of salvation will reach every nation.

**Preachers of the Gospel: Revelation 7:1-8** reveals that 144,000 Jewish evangelists (12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel) will be sealed by God and sent to spread the gospel. They will be divinely protected for this mission.

**The Two Witnesses:** Revelation 11 introduces two prophetic witnesses who will boldly preach the gospel and perform miraculous signs, even in the face of fierce opposition. They will be powerful witnesses to the truth.

**Global Gospel Proclamation:** Together, the 144,000 evangelists and the two witnesses will ensure that the message of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to all nations before the end of the age.

**God's Plan Cannot Be Thwarted:** Despite escalating persecution, God's gospel will continue to spread, and His plan

for salvation will unfold as intended, with the good news reaching every corner of the world.

This is a great encouragement for us. Even in the darkest times, when the world seems to be spiraling into chaos, God will ensure that His gospel is heard.

Despite opposition, deception, and persecution, the message of Christ's kingdom will reach every nation. God's purposes will be accomplished, and His gospel will triumph.

Even as persecution begins to spread and intensify, the gospel will continue to be proclaimed with power and authority. And in the end, as Jesus promised, the end will come—not because of the enemy's triumph, but because God's plan has reached its appointed conclusion. The kingdom of Christ will be established, and the reign of righteousness will begin.

**Revelation 14:6-7**, *Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—<sup>7</sup> saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”*

This is incredible: an angel will fly across the sky, proclaiming the gospel to every nation and people group on the earth. This message will be so powerful and clear that no one will be able

to miss it. The angel's declaration emphasizes that the hour of God's judgment has arrived—a call to worship the Creator, the One who made all things.

**The Abomination of Desolation:** In Matthew 24:15, Jesus warns of a pivotal moment when the Antichrist reveals his true nature, entering the Jewish temple and declaring himself as God (**2 Thessalonians 2:4**). This act of blasphemy marks the beginning of his reign as the ultimate oppressor, demanding worship from the world.

**The Antichrist's True Nature Revealed:** Until this point, the Antichrist had presented himself as a peacemaker, but from this moment onward, he will openly defy God, performing false miracles to deceive the world (2 Thessalonians 2:9). He will establish a kingdom of totalitarian control, with false worship and persecution of believers.

**Global Persecution: Revelation 13** describes the Antichrist's power growing, with global admiration and worship. He will wage war against believers, gaining authority over all nations for 42 months (Revelation 13:5-7). Persecution will intensify, and only those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life will resist.

**Midpoint of the Tribulation:** When the Antichrist sets himself up as God, the persecution will escalate dramatically. The Great Tribulation will be marked by unprecedented suffering, with the

Antichrist's religious system actively hunting down those who refuse to worship him (Matthew 24:16-22).

**Martyrdom and the Gospel's Spread:** Despite fierce opposition, the gospel will continue to spread, as witnessed by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the two witnesses, and even an angel proclaiming the truth (Revelation 7, 14). Many will come to faith even in the face of death.

**Revelation 7 - The Multitude of Martyrs:** A vast multitude from every nation will stand before the throne, clothed in white robes, having endured the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:9-14). Their suffering and martyrdom will be washed away by the blood of the Lamb, symbolizing their victory over the Antichrist's system.

**Final Reward for Believers:** Those who endure persecution and martyrdom will find ultimate peace in heaven, where their hardships—hunger, thirst, and the burning sun—will be no more. Their eternal rewards will contrast with their earthly suffering (**Revelation 7:16-17**).

The Antichrist's rise to power marks the intensification of persecution, but God's sovereignty ensures that the gospel will be preached to the world. The final victory belongs to Christ, who will return as the true King, judging the wicked and delivering the faithful.

**The fifth seal (in Revelation 6:9-11)** also emphasizes the persecution and martyrdom of Christians.

As the souls of those slain for their faith cry out for vengeance against the earth's inhabitants who have not repented, we see a powerful combination of prayer and justice being expressed. These martyrs are pleading with God to avenge their blood, asking how long it will be before their killers are judged.

Some see the fifth seal as a sign of martyrdom, while others think it's about prayers for vengeance or God's judgment. It's actually a bit of both. The martyrs are asking God for justice, so the seal shows their prayers for vengeance and God's justice. It highlights their suffering and the hope for God to make things right in time. This seal combines the pain of persecution with the longing for God's justice.

Some call this a "prayer for vengeance," where the martyred saints ask God to avenge their deaths, knowing divine justice will come when evil reaches its peak. Evil rulers may seem powerful, but eventually, God will judge them. The suffering of believers is part of God's ultimate victory over sin and evil.

In summary, the fifth seal isn't just about martyrdom but it is about God's justice and the martyrs' prayers for vengeance.

Their cries show a deep longing for God to end the world's wickedness, even though the tribulation is severe, it won't last

forever. Christ and those who endure faithfully will ultimately triumph.

**V 9**, John mentions seeing "*under the altar.*"

Scholars debate which altar this is, but the exact identity isn't the main point. Instead, it's about what happens under it and its symbolic meaning.

John sees the souls of martyrs crying out for vengeance under the altar in his vision. This vision depicts a heavenly scene distinct from earthly realities, so it's not necessarily the altar from the Old Testament tabernacle or temple.

Some think this altar is like the Old Testament altar of burnt offering (Exodus 27:1-8) used for sacrifices, while others believe it's the altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-10) associated with prayer.

I lean towards the altar of incense for two reasons:

- a) **Prayer imagery:** In the Old Testament, the altar of incense symbolized prayers rising like smoke. **Revelation 5:8** describes incense as the saints' prayers. Similarly, in **Revelation 6:9**, the souls under the altar pray for vengeance, fitting the symbolism of the altar of incense.
  
- b) **Location:** The altar of burnt offering was outside the temple, used for sacrifices, while the altar of incense was inside, associated with prayers to God. The souls

under the altar in Revelation cry out to God for justice, matching the altar of incense's symbolism.

However, **Revelation 6** shows a heavenly scene, so the altar may be unique to the heavenly realm, symbolizing the persecuted saints' prayers.

The key point is that the souls under the altar cry out for justice. They are martyrs who died for their faith, asking God to avenge their deaths and judge the earth's inhabitants. Their prayer for vengeance is a plea for divine justice, not personal revenge, asking God to right the wrongs done to them and others suffering for His name.

While the altar's identity might be unclear, its symbolism is clear. The souls under the altar offer prayers for justice, rising to God like incense. They are not forgotten, and their cries will be answered in God's timing.

The altar represents sacrifice and prayer, central to the Christian faith. It reminds us of Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice and the martyrs following His example, asking for God's righteous judgment.

In summary, the altar likely symbolizes prayer and the cry for justice. The focus is on the persecuted saints' prayers and the assurance that God will hear them and bring judgment in due time.

The altar appears again in Revelation, highlighting its importance. We first see it in **Revelation 5:8** with golden bowls of incense, symbolizing the prayers of the saints. These bowls likely contain incense from the same altar mentioned in Revelation 6. The incense represents prayers, a recurring theme in Revelation.

**Revelation 8:3**, *Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

The golden altar before God's throne is closely linked to the saints' prayers. This shows that the incense, symbolizing prayers, rises before God, representing the ongoing prayers of the faithful for justice and deliverance.

The altar in Revelation 6 represents the altar of incense from the Old Testament, located near God's throne. While it draws from Old Testament imagery, it is unique to heaven.

In heaven, the altar symbolizes the prayers of the saints. **Revelation 6** shows the souls of martyrs gathered under the altar, praying for vengeance and justice. These martyrs, killed for their faith during the great tribulation, offer prayers that rise like incense to God.

This passage underscores the ongoing prayers of those who have suffered for their faith, awaiting God's righteous judgment.

### **Who is at the altar?**

The souls at the altar are described as those who had been slain for their testimony of Christ during the Great Tribulation.

These are the martyrs, those who have suffered and died because they did not compromise their faith during the brutal persecution of the Antichrist's reign.

**Revelation 7:9**, *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

A diverse group of people who have all been killed for their unwavering faith.

A key detail here is that these martyrs are not yet in their resurrected bodies. They are souls—which means that their bodily resurrection has not yet occurred. Their bodies will not be resurrected until the second coming of Christ, at which point all the tribulation saints (and Old Testament saints) will receive their glorified bodies.

This is confirmed in **Daniel 12:2**, which speaks of a future resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. For now, these martyrs are in heaven in a disembodied state, awaiting the moment when they will receive their resurrected bodies.

This concept of souls under the altar is significant because it points to the intermediate state—the period between death and resurrection.

While the martyrs have already been vindicated in heaven, their full redemption (which includes receiving their glorified bodies) will be completed at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns. This also underscores the continuity between the present suffering of the saints and their future glory, which will be fully realized at Christ's return.

They are just souls there.

They are under the altar.

They are praying.

They have been slaughtered in the persecution.

The hostility of a satanic Antichrist-led world attack on believers has taken a toll on them in one sense. Another, it's elevated them to glory.

These are the first fruits of the 144,000, and the gospel preaching that will go on clear to the end.

Those Jews would constitute the beginning of the fulfillment of **Romans 11:26-29**, which describes the time when all Israel will be saved.

That really happens, culminating at the very end when they look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as an only son.

Certainly the 144,000 are redeemed, and they are not killed because the Lord seals them so they can't kill them. They must have led some other Jews to Christ who would be included in every nation, all tribes, peoples, and tongues.

According to Zechariah **12:10 and 13:1** culminates at the end of this tribulation time.

### **Why were they killed?**

Because of the Word of God.

They could rightly interpret the judgment of God that is leading to the day of the Lord and the wrath and vengeance of almighty God.

The world says, "We want them silent. We don't want to hear what they say." So, the killing starts.

The world is not going to tolerate the preachers, not going to tolerate the Christian testimony. We are moving fairly fast in that direction.

Right in the middle of all this blood and slaughter that's going on, Christians are going to say, "It's God's judgment." They are going to try to kill the 144,000. They can't be killed. They're going to be sealed, and they can't be harmed.

They are going to try to kill the two witnesses. According to **Revelation 11**, they kill them in the middle of the city of Jerusalem, and they lay dead in the street.

Then on the third day, while everybody's watching, they rise from the dead and start preaching again.

With the restraining of the Holy Spirit gone merciless men will kill those who speak God's truth.

**V 9**, *"because of the Word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained."*

They will kill to silence their intimidating proclamation of the Word of God, and because of their testimony.

**Revelation 1:2**, *who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.*

**Revelation 1:9**, *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

The testimony of Jesus.

- ✓ Jesus is the Christ.
- ✓ Jesus is the Deliverer.
- ✓ Jesus is the Redeemer.
- ✓ Jesus is coming.

They had maintained faithfully the testimony concerning Jesus Christ. They will be preaching then, for proclaiming God's Word and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. They had maintained that as a part of their uncompromising commitment.

**Revelation 12:17**, *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

They are committed to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

**Revelation 20:4-6**, *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the*

*word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

This is their resurrection, when they get their bodies. All those Scriptures tell us that the reason they were killed was because they stuck faithfully to living and preaching the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The cause of their martyrdom, then, is faithfulness, to live and speak God's Word and Christ's gospel.

## **2. The Petitions.**

**V 10,** *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?"*

Prayer is a force.

**What brings about the vengeance?**

Prayer.

Prayer is one of the seals that brings about vengeance.  
Prayer is really the force influencing the holocaust yet to come in the wrath of God in the day of the Lord. Don't underestimate the importance of prayer. Prayer moves God's judgment.

**Luke 18:6-7**, *Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. <sup>7</sup> And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?"*

Their intercession in the fifth seal, activates the tortures to come in the sixth and seventh seals, which include the trumpet and bowl judgments.

They cry out with a loud voice **krazō** means urgency, fervency, a very strong word.

They are crying out, just as the glorified 24 elders and the 4 living creatures and all the rest of the angels in chapters 4 and 5 were loudly praising.

These are loudly petitioning.

**What are they crying?**

How long?

You are holy means You have got to deal with sin.

You are true means You have to be faithful to Your promise.

You who are separate from evil means You who are faithful to Your word.

**How long before You act against evil and keep Your word?**

They know it will come, but **how long do we have to wait?**

**How long are You going to refrain from judging?**

**How long until grace and mercy is exhausted, and justice and punishment come?**

These prayers are not personal vendettas.

They are not thirsts for personal revenge.

Their holy desire is for the end of iniquity.

Their holy desire is for the destruction of Satan.

Their holy desire is for the devastation of Antichrist and the false prophet and all who followed him.

“How long until You avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

Those who dwell on the earth means the ungodly.

How long until You kill the killers?

**Genesis 4:10** said about the blood of Abel.

Their hearts are set on consummation.

Their hearts are set on vindication.

Grace is nearing its end.

It's time for prayers of vengeance.

### **3. The promise.**

Two things:

- A gift from God
- A word from God.

Both indicate promise.

**V11**, *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.*

They got a gift.

First God acted and God spoke.

There was given to each of them a white robe.

**What does a white robe mean?**

**How could they put on a white robe?**

They are spirits.

Angels are spirits, too, but they are seen as being clothed in white.

White is a sign of purity, righteousness, blessedness, and holiness.

The Greek term is a dazzling white robe of dignity and honor. It reaches to the ground.

**Revelation 3:5**, *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

The Lord gave them honor and dignity and righteousness and purity to clothe them. Their souls are pure and righteous.

They are arriving all the time here. More of them are accumulating under the altar as more of them are being killed. When they arrive, they receive this honor, dignity, righteousness, purity, and holiness.

To each one of them is given, upon their arrival, a white robe symbolizing the perfection that they have now entered into.

God not only gave them something, but he said something. They were told they should rest for a little while longer.

They are not being impatient, because they are perfect. They are in heaven.

Rest has the idea of heavenly rest.

You don't be concerned about it. It's not quite here yet you just enjoy the bliss of heaven.

That phrase "a little while longer" is used in **Revelation 10:6**, at the seventh trumpet. It's even used in **Revelation 12:12**, about Satan's time. He's going to work a little while longer. Just a little while.

We are already moving toward that midpoint so, just a little while longer.

### **What are we waiting for?**

**V 11**, *"Until the number of your fellow servants and your brethren who also are to be killed even as you have been should be completed also."*

There is a predetermined, prescribed number that are going to be killed. You have to enjoy the bliss of heaven until that predetermined number who are scheduled for death is reached.

The world is heading toward a time of great judgment, a reality that can be both sobering and unsettling. We long for the salvation of the lost but also desire the vindication of righteousness. We love sinners but hate their sin, and while we wish for all to experience heaven's bliss, we also long for justice against those who have rejected Christ.

In the present, we can still say today is the day of salvation, but the day of vengeance is coming. Discipleship today may be cheap, but it will grow more costly as believers in the tribulation will face persecution and even death for their faith.

Whether the Church is raptured before the tribulation or not, many will suffer for their testimony. We should strive to be faithful to Christ now, so we don't feel embarrassed to stand with those who will endure great trials in the future.

Despite the world's advances, humanity remains wicked, and the restraint of the Holy Spirit is what holds back further atrocities. Without this restraint, the world will experience horrors far worse than anything imagined, as it falls under Satan's influence.

The martyrs under the altar in Revelation pray for God's justice, and He promises righteousness both now and in the future. For now, we are still in the age of grace, called to show mercy and share the gospel with those around us. Let's be faithful to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, as those in the tribulation will be.