



## Part 18: Devotion in Devastation

### Revelation 6

*In the midst of devastation, we respond with a deep cry out to God and with deep devotion.*

Revelation 6 is a picture of great devastation; we live in a world that has experienced great devastation. On September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon led to 2,977 people dying. On December 26, 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami killed 227,898 people. As of April 25, 2021, there have been roughly 570,000 COVID deaths in the US, and 3 million worldwide. And the devastation even impacts our own lives.

How should we respond to devastation?

In the midst of devastation, we respond with A DEEP CRY OUT TO GOD and with DEEP DEVOTION.

### DEVASTATION - SEVEN SEALS

Revelation 4 and 5 set the stage for the opening of the scroll with the seven seals. The scroll represented the unveiling of God's plan in history.

*"The scroll is the scroll of history. The scroll contains the meaning of history – of world history, of your history, of my history, of our children's history. The scroll contains God's plan for bringing the purpose of creation to its intended fulfillment. The scroll contains God's plan for bringing the kingdom of the heavens down to earth." Discipleship on the Edge by Darrell Johnson*

In Revelation 5:4-5, we see the apostle John weeping because no one could open the scroll, until it was revealed that Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the lamb who has been slain, can open it. The apostle John's historical context is that in AD 95, a year before he was exiled, the Roman Emperor Domitian killed 40,000 Christians. Even Timothy, Paul's disciple, was beaten to death. John's world was falling apart, and he is probably wondering what is going on. Where is God in all of this? Have you ever

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been in a space of devastation and wondered, “Where is God in all of this?” Well, the scroll gives the answer.

## **THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE**

This is a picture of conquest, war, famine, and death. Some have interpreted the four horsemen as the future judgement of God. It is more likely that the book of Revelation is speaking throughout all of history and speaks to us even now. It is Progressive Parallelism (recapitulation). Revelation is not relayed in chronological order but rather looking at the same event from different perspectives. In this context, we are looking at the devastation of history from the perspective of conquest, war, famine, and death.

### **FIRST HORSEMAN – CONQUEST**

Revelation 6:2 - Some commentators think that this is speaking of Jesus because Jesus is described on a white horse in Revelation 19. But if you look closer, it fits better that it is the power of evil masquerading as light. Conquest in Revelation is more associated to the conquest of the beast in chapters 11 and 13. Plus, the four horses are described together as all being a part of the devastation of history.

### **SECOND HORSEMAN – WAR**

Revelation 6:3-4 - Many historians believe that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the bloodiest century of all time. The total number of deaths caused or associated with wars has been estimated at 187 million. That is 10% of the world’s population in 1913. This is the sad irony that when people want progress without the presence of God, we get devastation, i.e., the killing fields of Cambodia (1.7 million people killed).

### **THIRD HORSEMAN – FAMINE**

Revelation 6:5-6 – This is a picture of hunger, famine, and injustice. The imagery of “holding scales in his hand” is a picture of inequity that leads to massive inflation where necessary goods cost a “day’s wage”. The interesting line of “do not damage the oil and wine” is a picture of injustice and greed as luxury goods are protected while basic necessities are scarce.

### **FOURTH HORSEMAN – DEATH**

Revelation 6:7-8 - death and Hades always go together. The first three horseman of conquest, war, and famine are all pictures of death. The fourth seal gives greater definition that a fourth of the earth will be killed by the sword, famine, and plague.

### **A DEEP CRY OUT TO GOD - “COME” - ἔρχου**

The four living creatures that are depicted in chapter 4, representing all of animate creation, are continually worshipping God and then give the imperative, the command, “Come,” four times. It would seem like these

creatures are calling forth, commanding this devastation. But that would not make sense. A better explanation is that as they see this devastation, they are crying out “Come” to Jesus, the lamb on the throne. They are crying out to God for help. This is the main prayer of Revelation: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 1:7, 22:7, 12, 20). And Jesus has come, is coming, and will come again. And as He comes, there is resistance and opposition that leads to misery and terror.

## **A DEEP CRY OUT TO GOD - FIFTH SEAL – MARTYRS’ CRY**

Revelation 6:9 - These martyrs are described as souls under the altar as if their deaths are considered to be as a sacrifice on the altar of heaven. And these souls cry out, “How long, sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” They too, in devastation look to God, crying out for God’s coming and for His justice.

## **DEEP DEVOTION**

We see the deep devotion of the martyrs who have been killed because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. Starting with Stephen in the book of Acts, there are thousands and thousands who have been persecuted and martyred for their faith. Church tradition says that 10 of the 11 disciples all died for their faith. There are many now around the world that are persecuted and martyred for their faith.

Andrew Brunson, EPC Pastor and Missionary to Turkey for 25 years, was falsely imprisoned for two years for terrorism.

*“I have been given an assignment – to be imprisoned for the sake of Jesus. This is a very difficult thing, to be separated from my children, separated from my wife. It has been twenty-two months now. But I bear this assignment, for the sake of Jesus. And I declare – Blessed am I, because for the sake of Jesus many people have wronged me, have persecuted me, and I am now suffering. Blessed am I, because I have been forcibly separated from my wife and children. Blessed am I, because every kind of lie has been told about me, because all kinds of slander has been said about me. Blessed am I, because I am in prison. I am kept in prison by force; I do not want to be here. But I choose willingly to suffer for the sake of Jesus, and by suffering for his sake I hope to display for everyone his incomparable worth. And I want Turkey to know – it is for his sake that I am here.”*  
*God’s Hostage*

## **SIXTH SEAL – THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE**

Revelation 6:12-14 - The final crisis is a cosmic meltdown. Some scholars say that it is a picture of the judgment not being imposed from the outside, but from within. It is what happens when God finally takes His hands off and the cosmos collapses in on itself.

So, how should we respond to devastation in our lives? With a Deep Cry out to God and Deep Devotion.

**PRACTICALLY**, how do we do that?

Life Principle: What you fill yourself up with is what spills out of you when devastation shakes. So, if your life is filled with the voice of this world through social media, Netflix, Hulu, sports, whatever...that is what will spill out of you. Are you being filled with the LIFE that is in Jesus? In the morning, do you first go to God or to the news? The Practices - <https://greenwoodcc.com/practices/>

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- Where were you when 9/11 happened, and what was your response? Where were you on December 26, 2004, when the Indian Ocean tsunami hit, and what was your response?
- Have you ever experienced something so devastating that it has made you wonder what God is doing? How well do you cry out to God in devastation and say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"?
- What do you fill yourself up with in the morning? Is there anything you could do to be more filled with God's voice and presence in your life?