

Sixth Seal: Super Quake (vv. 12-17)

Visual Effect on Sun and Moon (v.12)

VERSE 12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake (Καὶ εἶδον ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἕκτην, καὶ σεισμός μέγας ἐγένετο [*conj kai + aor.act.ind.1s. eidon see + adv hote when + aor.act.ind.3s. anoigo open; "broke" + art.w/noun acc.f.s. sphragis seal + art.w/adj.acc.f.s. hektos sixth + conj kai + noun nom.m.s. seimos earthquake + adj.nom.m.s. megas great + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai "there was"*]; **and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair** [καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἐγένετο μέλας ὡς σάκκος τρίχινος [*conj kai + noun nom.m.s. helios sun + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai "became" + adj.nom.m.s. melas black, dark + conj hos as + noun nom.m.s. sakkos sackcloth + adj.nom.m.s. trichinos made of hair, hairy*], **and the whole moon became like blood** [καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὅλη ἐγένετο ὡς αἷμα [*conj kai + noun nom.f.s. selene moon + adj.nom.f.s. holos whole + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai "became" + conj hos as + noun nom.nt.s. haima blood*]];

ANALYSIS: VERSE 12

1. Seals one through four are largely man-made phenomena centered on a nuclear war affecting the entire world in varying degrees.
2. Seal five is also a man-made event, that is, the genocide of tribulational saints.
3. One should learn to distinguish between what God permits and what He directs.
4. In these first five seals we have something God permits in order to accomplish His overruling (and directive) wills in the realm of judgment.
5. Seal six is different in that it is not man-made, but the result of God's sovereign power over nature.
6. It is necessary before examining the earthquake and other natural phenomena associated with it, to dispense with the symbolic interpretation advanced by a good number of commentators.
7. The figurative interpretation of the 6th seal judgment sees the earthquake as political and social convulsions among the peoples of the earth, and the rolling up of the sky and the falling of the stars as punishment of principalities and powers that stand behind the authority of human rulers.
8. The most glaring deficiency of a symbolic interpretation of the features of the sixth seal is that the things allegedly symbolized by the convulsions of the heavens (6:12-14), i.e., the convulsion of the nations, are described in literal terms in (6:15-17) alongside the heavenly phenomena.
9. The same distinction between the shaking of the heavens and a convulsion among the people of earth is seen in the OT counterpart to this description.
10. Hag. 2:21-22.
11. The seal can hardly be seen as containing two descriptions of the same thing.
12. Maybe the most convincing reason to take the events of this seal literally is Jesus' plain words in the companion Olivet discourse about coming earthquakes (Matt. 24:7//Mk.13:8; Lk. 21:11).

13. His language is clearly not figurative.
14. Besides this, nothing short of an apparent dissolution of the natural order would have such a devastating effect on the psyche of mankind as this seal projects in verses 15-17.
15. The literal interpretation of these words is necessary to do justice to OT prophecy, the Olivet discourse, and the psychological trauma envisaged in verses 15-17 of Revelation chapter six.
16. Also, keep in mind the dependence of the creation upon the Creator.
17. He is more than capable of doing something that appears to be the end of the world, and still keep order to advance His prophetic plan onward to the 2nd Advent and millennium.
18. Some cautionary remarks about the literalness of the sixth seal are in order.
19. And that has to do with stark literalness.
20. The language in verses 12-14 is to be taken literally.
21. The falling of the stars and the rolling up of heaven are real.
22. If the moving of the mountains and islands from their places (6:14) were universal and complete, there would be no hiding places for men to seek refuge (6:15-16).
23. At the same time the phenomena are so severe that they are unparalleled in human history.
24. They are sufficiently catastrophic as to leave even the strongest with the full impression that the end of all things has indeed arrived, but when this seal has run its course, the phenomena contained herein is not sufficient to amount to a total destruction of life on the earth.
25. Human activity and history continues after these disruptions.
26. Another preliminary question about the sixth seal has to do with the time of its fulfillment relative to the seven year tribulation.
27. Does it come at the very end in conjunction with Christ's appearing to the nations (cf. Rev. 1:7) or is it merely a harbinger of the last calamities?
28. In the scheme of this book, this cannot be the absolute end because the seventh seal has not yet been opened.
29. The end cannot come until the great persecution has run its course (cf. Rev. 6:11).
30. Revelation 16:18 speaks of another earthquake at the very end (i.e., under the seventh bowl) that is unparalleled in human history.
31. As severe as the 6th seal earthquake is, no such statement accompanies its description.
32. So the sixth-seal events are best understood as preliminary and probably occurring around the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week.
33. The onslaught of this panic-evoking sequence is a *seismos megas* ("a great earthquake").
34. Earthquakes are a familiar birth-pain occurring with greater frequency and intensity as history moves closer to Christ's advent (cf. Matt. 24:7).
35. This earthquake may occur just before the manifestation of the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of the 70th week of years (Matt. 24:15).
36. Luke's account of the Olivet discourse does allude to things which could involve this seal judgment: "And there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven" (Lk. 21:11).
37. Again, the placement of this seal judgment just before the beginning of the last half of the prophetic week of years is most likely.
38. One possibility is the earthquake mentioned in connection with the defeat of Gog and Magog (i.e., Russian alliance) on the hills of Israel (cf. Ezek. 38:19; cp. vv. 18-22).
39. Another possibility is the earthquake mentioned in Rev. 11:13 at the time of the resurrection of the two witnesses.

40. Following the mention of this super quake, come four more phenomena which are atmospheric in nature.
41. In OT apocalyptic literature references to the darkening of the sun are common (Isa. 13:10; Ezek.32:7-8); Joel 2:10, 31; Amos 8:9; cf. Matt. 24:29//Mk. 13:24-25//Lk. 21:35).
42. Some of these references have to do with celestial phenomena related to the 2nd Advent proper.
43. The one in Isa. 13:10 has to do with the blotting out of the sun and moon due to nuclear warfare.
44. That effect will gradually dissipate.
45. Here there is no direct natural connection between this earthquake and the sun appearing black and the moon appearing red colored.
46. This refers to an alteration of the normal function of the sun and moon.
47. The sun turning black while the moon turns blood red is not possible with the false cosmology!
48. A deep red or copper color with respect to “the whole moon” can be observed at times but never has the sun turned black!
49. This will constitute a sign to earth dwellers especially since it is timed to coincide with the super quake of the sixth seal.
50. Other references in prophetic literature to the sun becoming dark include Joel 2:10, 31 (US destruction); 3:15 (2nd Advent phenomena; cp. Matt. 24:29; Lk. 21:25).

Stars Falling to the Earth (v. 13)

VERSE 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth [καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔπεσαν εἰς τὴν γῆν [conj kai + art.w/noun nom.m.p. aster star + art.w/noun gen.m.s. ouranos heaven, sky + aor.act.ind.3p. pipto fall + prep eis into, to + art.w/noun acc.f.s. ge earth], **as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind** [ὡς συκῆ βάλλει τοὺς ὀλύνθους αὐτῆς ὑπὸ ἀνέμου μεγάλου σειομένη [conj hos as + noun nom.f.s. suke fig tree + pres.act.ind.3s. ballo cast + art.w/noun acc.m.p. olunthos unripe fig; hapax + pro.gen.f.s. autos “its” + prep hupo by + noun gen.m.s. anemos wind + adj.gen.m.s. megas great + pres.pass.part.nom.f.s. seio shake, quake; disturb; agitate]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 13

1. Most take this aspect of the 6th seal as falling meteors but this is not the case.
2. The term “stars” is used in the Bible of heavenly bodies, (cf. 2Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28; 22:16; Matt. 2:2,7,9,10), suns (1Cor. 15:41; Gen. 1:16; 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 37:9; Ps. 147:4; Lk. 21:25; Acts 27:20; Rev. 8:12; 12:1); angels (Deut. 4:19; Judg. 5:20; Job 25:5; 38:7; Isa. 14:12, 13; Mk. 13:25; Rev. 9:1; 12:4 saints (Dan. 8:10; Rev. 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1 false teachers (Jude 13); and Christ (Num. 24:17; Rev. 2:28; 22:16).
3. Under this seal we have a literal sun turning black and a literal moon turning red, so it would logically follow that what we have here is literal stars.
4. There are no planets!
5. In this case the physical stars are in view.
6. Under the fake cosmology one star would wipe out the earth!

7. One interpreter (Thomas) says that these stars only appear to be falling to the earth causing men to fear the end of the world.
8. The straightforward language of this verse says “the stars of the heaven/sky fell to the earth.”
9. There is a remarkable similarity between this verse and Isa. 34:4 which reads: “And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers on the vine, and as *fruit* falling from a fig tree” (cf. vv. 1ff.).
10. The fallen angels are barred from their long access to the 2nd and 3rd heavens forever according to Revelation chapter 12.
11. This seems a reasonable and literal interpretation of this verse considering Isa. 34:4 where “host of heaven” is used in a context dealing with the tribulation and not the final dissolution of the universe.
12. Some interpreters take the reference to stars falling to the earth to be the confinement of Satan and his angels to earth.
13. Satan and his angels will be confined to the earth at the midpoint (Rev. 12), but this seal judgment is just before Satan is confined to the earth (his 3rd fall).
14. But again, in keeping with the immediate context this verse refers to the stars above us.
15. Will they simply burn up?
16. Will they be replaced?

Fourth and Fifth Disturbances (v. 14)

VERSE 14 **The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up** (καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπεχωρίσθη ὡς βιβλίον ἐλισσόμενον [*conj kai + art.w/noun nom.m.s. ouranos sky, heaven + aor.pass.ind.3s. apochorizo; of person = separate; pass. = part company; of things be swept aside, be split off, disappear; here translated “rolled up” + conj hos as + noun nom.nt.s. biblion scroll*]), **and every mountain and island were moved out of their places** [καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ νῆσος ἐκ τῶν τόπων αὐτῶν ἐκινήθησαν [*conj kai + adj.nom.nt.s. pas all, every + noun nom.nt.s. oros mountain + conj kai + noun nom.f.s. nesos island + prep ek from + art.w/noun abl.m.p. topos place + pro.gen.nt.p. autos “their” + aor.pass.ind.3p. kineo move; stir up; instigate; remove (thing); pass. = move about*]].

ANALYSIS: VERSE 14

1. The fourth disturbance under the 6th seal judgment will effect the whole expanse of heaven from the vantage point of mankind.
2. Heaven will split and roll back in two opposite directions: “The sky was split like a scroll when it is rolled up...”
3. The edges on either side of the split will peel or curl back in two opposite directions (cf. Isa. 34:4 “and the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll...”).
4. Context precludes that our verse and Isa. 34:4 does not refer to the phenomena associated with the final dissolution of the universe after the conclusion of the 1000 years (cf. Rev.

- 20:11; 21:1; cf. Ps. 102:25-26; Matt. 24:35//Mk. 13:31//Lk. 21:33; Heb. 1:10-12; 2Pet. 3:10).
5. The phenomenon that produces this effect is not explained.
 6. Men will see a dramatic splitting of the sky that will result in great fear and despair.
 7. The account of the sixth seal returns to the earth with the moving of every mountain and island.
 8. The shifting of the earth's mantle rock is like a scroll that is rolled up from opposite ends (a simile) introduced by the comparative conjunction *hos* ("as) in verses 12 [2x], 13, and 14.
 9. Such a geophysical alteration of the earth's surface, effecting mountains and islands, occurs on an even larger scale as a feature of the final and 7th bowl judgment of Rev. 16:20.
 10. Under this judgment all mountains will be abolished (cf. Zech. 14:4).
 11. Again, the complete removal of every mountain would leave no hiding places for men to seek (6:16).
 12. All elevated topography will be affected in varying degrees.
 13. A particular mountain or mountain range does not have to be moved that much to fulfill the letter of this prediction.
 14. The movement will be measurable.

World-Wide Panic (vv. 15-17)

VERSE 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong (καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ οἱ μεγιστᾶνες καὶ οἱ χιλιάρχου καὶ οἱ πλούσιοι καὶ οἱ ἰσχυροὶ [*conj kai + art.w/noun nom.m.p. basileus king + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ge earth + conj kai + art.w/noun nom.m.p. megistan very important persons [only plural in NT]; "great men" + conj kai + art.w/noun nom.m.p. chiliarchos commander [of a thousand]; in Roman times aa tribune of a cohort [c. 600]; generally a high ranking officer + conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.m.p. plousios well-to-do; rich + conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.m.p. ischuros strong; of physical strength = robust]* **and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains** [καὶ πᾶς δοῦλος καὶ ἐλεύθερος ἔκρυψαν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τὰ σπήλαια καὶ εἰς τὰς πέτρας τῶν ὀρέων [*conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. pas all; "every" + noun nom.m.s. doulos slave + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. eleutheros free + aor.act.ind.3p. krupto hide + pro.acc.m.p. heautou oneself + prep eis in + art.w/noun acc.nt.p. spelaion cave + conj kai + prep eis in + art.w/noun acc.f.p. petra rock a opposed to an isolated stone + art.w/noun gen.nt.p. oros mountain]*];

ANALYSIS: VERSE 15

1. For the enemies of truth and righteousness the day of the Lord will be a time of terror.
2. The effect of the six-part trauma of the sixth seal upon negative volition will be nothing short of a morale meltdown.

3. The focus under the sixth seal is psychological misery more than physical pain and death as is the case with the preceding seal judgments.
4. Obviously death will result for some under this seal, but the real emphasis is the terror this seal strikes in the hearts of men.
5. By listing the various categories that seek refuge in the great day of God's wrath, John's intention is not so much to cover the range of human society as it is to demonstrate that those who might be expected to keep their poise will be utterly unhinged (cf. v.16).
6. The sixth seal judgment will freak-out everyone that is not lined up with this phenomena as presented in verse 13 in connection with seal six.
7. The kings of the earth are those individuals who are at the head of nation-states and who by their status represent the top of the authority ladder.
8. The "great men" (*megistanes*; 3x always in the pl.) represent those other than national rulers, who wield enormous power on the national and international stage (cf. Mk. 6:21; Rev. 18:23).
9. The classification "commanders" is the word for a Roman tribune (Moffatt).
10. The term signifies here those individuals throughout the world who possess significant rank within the armies, navies and air forces of the nations.
11. These men are especially conditioned and trained to remain calm and in control under the adversity of combat.
12. They will be faced with a threat that they know to be completely out of their power to understand or counter.
13. "The rich" will not take refuge in their considerable financial assets as we saw under the fourth seal.
14. The power of money will confer no comfort or power of deliverance as it once did for these types.
15. Then there are those who by reason of sheer physical prowess who will lose their manly bravado under the psychological terror of this aspect of the 6th seal.
16. "The strong" refers to those whose physical attributes sets them a part from the ordinary.
17. These first five classes represent the best the human race has to offer, and all five without exception will find no comfort or hope in their advantages.
18. They will see the future as hopeless, individually, and collectively.
19. John's portrayal reflects Isa. 2:10, 19, 21, which prophesies of the day of the Lord.
20. The average man is represented by two categories, considered as one group: "every slave and free man.
21. The adjective *pas* ("every") governs both "slave" and "free man," uniting them in one group.
22. Political and social standing means nothing to the masses at this juncture.
23. We might expect panic among those who have little.
24. As always social and material advantages gain no credence with God (cf. Jer. 9:23-24 "Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast in his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises loyal-love, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.").
25. All classifications of society will respond in the same fashion; they will "take to the hills"!
26. Physically people will attempt to relocate to elevated terrain, or if not to burrow into holes in the earth in an attempt to avoid face-to-face contact with God almighty.

27. They seek shelter from what they consider to be the collapse of the natural world.
28. Strictly speaking they overreact to the significance of the 6th seal.
29. Negative volition interprets the phenomena of the 6th seal as the end of the natural order.
30. This mass hysteria affects all classes throughout the world.
31. During the days of this seal judgment the human race losses all morale.
32. People will flee homes, cities, jobs (including military service), etc. under the terror of this seal.
33. This too is a part of the wrath of God against negative volition.
34. This mass hysteria and its consequence of running into the hills and rocks probably occur just after the phenomena of the 6th seal have run their course.
35. At one level it is not rational to hide in the very terrain that was directly affected by the 6th seal judgment.
36. Obviously the “great earthquake” that begins the sequence of phenomena was not when this mass exodus to the hills began.
37. The mental hysteria triggering this startling behavior is the result of universal observation of the six features of the 6th seal, the last item being the dislocation of all mountains and islands.
38. Humanity interprets the 6th seal as being the 2nd Advent.
39. Only adjusted tribulational saints can relax, stay put, and enjoy the show!

A New God (v. 16)

VERSE 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks (καὶ λέγουσιν τοῖς ὄρεσιν καὶ ταῖς πέτραις [*conj kai + pres.act.ind.3p. lego say + art.w/noun dat.nt.p. oros mountain + conj kai + art.w/noun dat.f.p. petra rock (big)*], **"Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb**

[Πέσετε ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ κρύψατε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου [*aor.act.imper.2p. pipto fall + prep epi on + pro.acc.p. ego "us" + conj kai + aor.act.imper.2p. krupto hide + pro.acc.p. ego I; "us" + prep apo from + noun abl.nt.p. prosopon face + art.w/pres.dep.part.abl.m.s. kathemai sit + prep epi upon + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + conj kai + prep apo from + art.w/noun abl.f.s. orge wrath + art.w/gen.nt.s. arnion lamb*]);

ANALYSIS: VERSE 16

1. The mass impulse is: that it is better to perish under an avalanche than to come face to face with the one sitting on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb.
2. Around the world groups of people huddle and pray “to the mountains and rocks” to fall on them, a fate better than to face God and His wrath.
3. By this juncture these people have already received a gospel hearing, but being negative they have no intention of taking this avenue of deliverance (cf. Rev. 14:6; cp. 9:19-21; 16: 9ff.).
4. This once again demonstrates the perversity and insanity of negative volition.

5. Here they are seen praying to the mountains and rocks to deliver them by killing them from facing God.
6. For the time being they abandon their regular objects of veneration, and turn to this feature of inanimate creation.
7. The mountains and rocks cannot hear or see, whether in their natural state or shaped into some object of worship.
8. All of this is completely irrational, yet there is a certain truth they all grasp, and that is the fact of Lord's coming in judgment.
9. These survivors have been witnessed six seals of judgment and have heard from witnesses of the coming of the Lord and the need to believe in the Lamb.
10. The question is, will they literally refer to God the Father and God the Son in these terms?
11. Apparently so, as this is the manner in which God has been presented to the nations via His agents (e.g., 2 witnesses, 144,000, angelic witness).
12. What sinners dread most is not death, but having to stand before a holy and righteous God.
13. God's wrath is referred to throughout this book (6:16,17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15; either *orge* or *thumos*).
14. Only here we have the arresting expression "the wrath of the Lamb."
15. It is an exceptional expression inasmuch as the wrath of the incarnate Jesus became visible only when He twice cleansed the Temple.
16. The noun *orge* is only used once of His actions (Mk. 3:5).
17. Yet His wrath is joined with the Father's wrath in the coming visitations.
18. He is a lamb, but He also has horns (Rev. 5:6) and He is lion-like (Rev. 5:5).
19. Paradoxically, the contrasting qualities merge in one person.
20. That panic stricken men would recognize the Lamb's role in afflicting their misery is remarkable.
21. What isn't surprising is that having rejected the only way of deliverance, they would momentarily sponsor rock worship!

The Depth of their Apprehension (v. 17)

VERSE 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand (ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν, καὶ τίς δύναται σταθῆναι [*conj hoti (declaratively) + aor.act.ind.3s. erchomai come + art.w/noun nom.f.s. hemera day + art.w/adj.nom.f.s. megas great + art.w/gen.f.s. orge wrath + pro.gen.m.p. autos "their" + conj kai + interrog.pro.nom.m.s. tis who + pres.dep.ind.3s. dunamai be able, can + aor.act.infin. histemi stand*])?"

ANALYSIS: VERSE 17

1. The depth of their doctrinal apprehension is even more remarkable in their grasp of the prophetic accountability that provokes this wrath.
2. Mankind in a state of rebellion and negative volition takes stock of the cosmic and terrestrial disturbances as part of the great end-time day of wrath from the one sitting of the throne and from the Lamb.
3. They acknowledge the source of their terror.
4. They do not attribute these things to purely natural phenomena.

5. The verb “has come” is aorist indicative, referring to a previous arrival of the wrath, not something about to take place.
6. Men associate this arrival at least as early as the cosmic upheavals and terrors associated with the sixth seal (vv. 12:14), but upon reflection they no doubt associate it with the preceding seals.
7. Apparently the full reality of, this is the day of God’s wrath, does not sink in until the phenomena of the sixth seal transpire.
8. The literal Greek expression is “the day, the great day.”
9. “The great day” is an expression borrowed from the OT (Joel 2:11; Zeph. 1:14; Mal. 4:5).
10. Its mention is seen in the NT as well (Matt. 7:22; 1Thess. 5:2; 2Pet. 3:10).
11. The primary OT passages that are reflected in John’s description of the sixth seal in connection with the day of the Lord are: Joel 2:11, 30-31; cf. Isa. 2:10-11, 19-21; 34:4,8; Ezek. 32:7,8; Hos. 10:8.
12. Unbelievers around the world at that time will universally agree that “the great day of their wrath has come.”
13. But their theological perspective does them no good as they refuse to believe in the Lamb for salvation.
14. They have *gnosis*, which they express rather well, but no *epignosis*.
15. *Epignosis* is knowledge acted upon by faith.
16. The final part of their words, “and who is able to stand?”, raises the question of who will have the capacity to survive what the future holds.
17. It has to do with remaining on the earth and sustaining an existence in the face of the impending hardships which will worsen as the intensity of God’s wrath grows to the end.
18. The question is rhetorical and has the effect of an unequivocal assertion that no one will survive.
19. The prophet Nahum asks the same question about that future day: “Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken up by Him.” (Nah. 1:6)
20. The despair of mankind is complete.
21. Terror and despair is the fate of those who will not call upon the name of the Lord in that day.
22. Again, this seal takes place close the midpoint of the Tribulation, and negative mankind will interpret it as the 2nd Advent.

End: Revelation Chapter Six
January, 2025
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