

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 31 MAY 2009: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 119:62

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: Psalm 48:1, 5

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy catholic* Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 9:12

Law

Psalm: 9:12

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Scripture versification 18-6:1,3,4,5 (Revelation 21 : 1-7)

Scripture reading: Revelation 6

Scripture text: Revelation 6:12 – 17

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the

stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:12 –17)

Who is the Lord that commands us to remember Him and have community with Him by partaking in Holy Communion? What does He promise and whereto is He leading us?

As the Lamb opened the Book of God's eternal Counsel, all the seals, prior to this sixth seal, described the victory of Christ by wars, starvation and diseases following it. It also depicted the resistance experienced by the gospel.

- With the opening of the sixth seal the Judgement Day starts.
- With that the history of the world comes to an end.

This seal reveals two matters in particular:

- 1. The collapse of creation.**
- 2. The end of the unbelievers.**

1. The collapse of creation.

This seal shows how the whole world falls to pieces.

- Suddenly all of mankind is facing the judgement of God.
- The earth shakes, the sun becomes black losing the ability to give light.
- This results in the moon turning blood red (contamination?).
- In compounding everything the stars of heaven fall to the earth.
 - A massive rain of falling stars is described here as the Lord revealed that the stars will fall like a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.
 - The Palestinian late figs are figs appearing shortly before winter on the tree, never ripening.
 - When the winter winds blow, shaking the fig tree, the winter figs drop off. This is compared to the falling of the stars.

This image describes the full and total demise of the heavenly bodies.

- Because they disappear, they no longer can give light.
- This possibly explains why it is written in verse 14 that the mountains disappeared and the islands were moved out of their places.
- The sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, creating a passageway and road for the arrival of the Lord.

The whole of creation and universe thus disintegrates.

- It has to make way for a brand new heaven and earth.
- The newness is total: new base elements, new and glorious in the victory of Christ over all evil forces. (See Revelation 21:1onwards: 2Peter 3:10onwards)

- It appears like the demise of creation is causing a condition similar to Genesis 1: a condition of dark chaos. (For this see Matthew 24:29; Mark 13: 24; Luke 21:25; Joel 2: 10,31; Isaiah 13:10; 50:3; Ezekiel 32:7.)

You must keep in mind that the Lord already predicted all these things during the times of the prophets of the Old Testament. Listen to what is written in Joel 2: 10, 30,31:

The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness. (Joel 2:10)

"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

(Joel 2:30-31)

2. The end of the unbelievers.

Following verse 15 there is a description of the events taking place in the world of mankind during these moments.

- All people feel it, see it and know it.
- All admit it being the end and that the judgement of God has arrived – nobody doubts it at all.
- Everybody is overcome by fear – they want to flee.
 - They even try to flee!
 - But they realise that flight is totally impossible.

Due to their anxiety and fear they call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them:

... and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! (Revelation 6:16)

- It deals with the fact that they want to hide from the sight of the Lord Jesus.

The image relates to the beginning of this throne vision: the countenance of Him sitting on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb.

But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."
(Revelation 5:5)

and

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."(Revelation 6:1)

The image of the Lion and the Lamb combines, therefore the Lamb can be wrathful.

All of a sudden the greatness and importance of the people have disappeared. All worldly power and wealth have also come to an end.

- It is clear that, for these people, it formed a base of power upon which all their strength rested.
- This base of power stood in opposition to the authority and judgement of God – they thus rejected God.

These are the people who made fun of God and did not worry about God and His Second Coming.

- Now they are taken over by indescribable fright.
- Therefore something of a confession is embodied in their cry: For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"
- Take note: This is not a cry of repentance.
 - Neither a cry of worship.
 - It is a despairing admission that what they always denied, is now taking place.

Consider the order of the power bearers after the cry: "who is able to stand?"

- Firstly the most powerful are mentioned:
 - Kings of the earth (in contrast to nations), the great men (political figures), the rich men (having the monetary power)
 - the commanders (military figures),
 - the mighty men (influential people)
 - every slave and every free man.
- This is a sevenfold summary of the people according to their status, positions, possessions and social standing.

In contrast to all these people fleeing in fear, are the believers – the souls under the altar (v.9)

Take note that amongst these powerful people there is no attempt to warrant themselves.

- There is also no sign of any resistance against the Lord.
- In the fear and cries of the unbelievers, there is by implication a very clear confirmation that the judgement by the Lord over them is just and not unreasonable in any way.
- They are judged according the reality of what they believed and lived.

The opposite of this conduct is love.

- This judgement of the unjust is in fact the execution of God's love.
- Therefore here the Lord is referred to as the "Lamb".

In fact the Lamb gave Himself to the purification from sin and to the redemption of the true believers.

- **Wrath** executes the judgement over those who hated God.
- **Wrath** and **Lamb** indeed combines judgement and mercy.

The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross thus causes the fear and terror to the creation and the unbelievers.

At the same time by the same deed the Lord Jesus brings mercy to the believers. The word **Lamb** explains the Christ-preaching of this passage.

- The word **Lamb** refers to the death on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The people, who in fear cried that the great day of His wrath has come, themselves see the final judgement and punishment following it as the logical result of the Lord Jesus' death on the cross.

The judgement of the unbelievers is the redemption of the believers.

- That is not written in Revelation 6, but it is written in the Bible.
- Let us look at Matthew 24:29 – 31:
 - Firstly, what is written in Revelation 6, is precisely described here, namely the falling of the stars and the trembling of the heavens and earth.

- Then it is written that all on earth will then see the Son of mankind arriving from heaven in the clouds of heaven. He arrives with great power and glory.
"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Then these words follow:

"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

(Matthew 24:29-31)

In Luke 21:28 everything is described in the same way but the following words were added:

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

This matter thus has a specific meaning.

- We are expecting the end. We already experience many of these things and see them taking place.
- The question now is: How must I react to it? Do I have to be scared?

When these things happen, it has to fortify your faith.

- Because it brings the realisation to the unbelievers that the Lord Jesus is real and that He appears in the heavens to judge some and save others.
- We thus have to do what the Lord says in Luke 21: We must lift up our heads and be glad that life everlasting is starting because it means that our salvation is imminent.

Keep in mind that the sixth seal teaches that the most dreadful things will happen when the end arrives.

- There will be terror, pain and fear like nobody had ever seen or known before.
- But above all, we see the One who executes the Judgement and who, by His judgement, redeems us!

He is the Lamb coming. He is coming to, for us, make His mercy true in perfection.

- He came to redeem us.
- He is coming again so that we may, in perfect glory, enter the life on the new earth

Prepare yourselves to remember at the table of Holy Communion the redemption brought about by Him, and together with that, His Second Coming when we, in perfection, will be taken into His Kingdom.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture versification 5-3:2 (Revelation 5: 9-14)

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
31 May 2009
Scripture Modern King James Version