

SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER

Read: Revelation 6

*'they cried out with a loud voice, 'Sovereign Lord, holy and true,
how long will it be'* **Revelation 6:10**

Are things getting better or getting worse? I imagine that with climate change in our world, destructive war in Europe, economic and political mess in our country, and ever-increasing persecution of Christians, many are finding quite a lot to feel gloomy about.

This is where the book of Revelation is so helpful. Behind this book stands an agonised question—If God is in control, why are things as bad as they are? When we come to chapter 6 the question takes a slightly different turn—not so much 'why?' as 'how long?', how long before God does something about it (v.10)? The answers given in chapter 6 are hard and challenging, but hugely helpful too.

First, evil will continue to get worse, so don't be surprised. That is the message of the first six of the seven seals. We meet the famous four horsemen of the apocalypse, depicting war, persecution, famine and death. Then we meet our brothers and sisters who have been murdered for their faith. Finally, with the sixth seal, we have the final judgement, encompassing every stratum of society from kings to slaves. So while we may (should) be saddened, even appalled by evil, we should not be caught out. God knows. Second, evil is in the hand of God, so be understanding. Notice, first, that the seals are all opened by the Lamb. In other words, it is the crucified, risen, glorified, and reigning Lord Jesus Christ, who brings these things about. Then, notice the repeated word 'given'. Its rider was 'given a crown' (v.2); they were 'given authority' (v.8). Given by whom? By God. This is indeed a hard truth. But which do you find the most comforting? That evil happenings are random and meaningless? Or that, time and again, Satan has the upper hand? Or that all things, good and evil, are under the sovereign rule of God? Third, a day of vindication will come, so have hope. The martyrs ask, 'how long?' (v.10). They are told to wait a little longer. But then the day of the wrath of the Lamb will come. God will not wait for ever.

And so chapter 6 ends with a new question: On that day, 'who is able to stand' (v.17)? Who indeed? And how? The wondrous, glorious, answer comes in chapter 7. Read on!

Let us pray: *Lord Jesus Christ, when evil increases around us and when our own circumstances seem to threaten us, help us to remain steadfast in faith and in thanksgiving, so that on the day of Your coming we may be found standing and may rejoice to see You face to face. Amen.*

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