

The Cry From Under the Altar

Revelation 6:9–17 · Pastor Raul Granillo · July 26, 2026

Today's Text

“When he broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘**Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long...?**’ They were each given a white robe... When he broke the sixth seal... the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘**Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb... who is able to stand?**’”

— Revelation 6:9–11, 15–17

Big Idea

The seals keep exposing. First the horsemen exposed the pattern of the world. Now the fifth and sixth seals expose **what that pattern costs** — the blood of the faithful under the altar — and **who has to answer for it**. When the Day of the Lord finally comes, the powerful and the powerless are hiding in the same caves.

Key Truth

The martyrs are not asking a bad question. **“How long?” is worship.** It is the same cry as Psalm 13, Isaiah 6, and Zechariah 1. God’s response is not a rebuke — He clothes them in a white robe, the very garment of the heavenly court. Salvation is not just being saved **from** something; it is being saved **into** the people of God.

The Fifth & Sixth Seals — What John Wants Us to See

SCENE	WHAT JOHN SEES	WHAT IT MEANS FOR US
UNDER THE ALTAR	The souls of those slaughtered for the word of God, positioned under the altar of sacrifice and petition.	Faithful witness threatens the powers of this world. When you live and share the Gospel, you pull back the curtain on parasitic charlatans who have no real power except what we give them.
THE CRY	“Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long?” A loud, unfiltered petition for justice.	Crying out is not a failure of faith — the altar is exactly where grief belongs. Worship holds the raw questions. Silence in the face of injustice is the failure, not the cry.
THE WHITE ROBE	Each martyr is given a white robe and told to rest a little longer.	They asked for justice; God gave them membership. The white robe is the garment of the twenty-four elders — court dress. Salvation is being brought inside the Lamb’s fellowship.
SIXTH SEAL	Blackened sun, blood moon, falling stars, sky rolled up. Kings, generals, rich, and slaves all hiding in the same caves.	Classic OT “Day of the Lord” language — stock imagery for empires collapsing. The great leveling: every rock the powerful hid behind is finally useless.
THE WRATH OF THE LAMB	The powerful beg the rocks to hide them from the face of the One on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb.	A slaughtered Lamb who is also wrathful — because sin kills. God does not name things sin randomly; He warns us against what brings death.

Define This

The Day of the Lord — A term saturating the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 2, Amos 5, Joel, Zephaniah). Israel expected it to vindicate them; the prophets kept saying, **no — it is coming for you too**. It is the day God allows the full weight of humanity's choices to be felt. In Revelation 6, John lifts this exact language and drops it on Rome — and by extension, on every empire, every system, every one of us that governs by pride and self-protection instead of by the Lamb.

Quote To Remember

“To us today they may sound impatient, but impatience in the face of injustice is a consistent theme in Jewish literature. The altar is the proper place to bring grief, injustice, and impatience — worship is exactly where this petition belongs.” — reflecting on Carol Rotz

Take It Home — Reflection

- The martyrs cry “How long?” from the altar — not from unbelief but from worship. What honest cry have I been keeping out of my prayers because I thought God couldn't handle it?
- The Gospel exposes parasitic powers that have no real authority except what we give them. Where in my life or community have I been quietly feeding one of those powers?
- John ends chapter 6 with a direct question: “Who is able to stand?” Am I clothed in the white robe of the Lamb's court, or am I scrambling for a rock that cannot hold me?

My Notes