

"White robes were given unto every one of them". The "white robes" may be understood in two ways:

- (1) **Characters vindicated before men.** As a result of the Reformation, the opinion of millions concerning the martyrs has been radically changed. We now look back upon them with profound admiration. Whereas they were put to death as criminals and vermin, we think of them as heroes, and covet their faith and fortitude.
- (2) **Characters vindicated before God.** The white robe is the Biblical symbol of the righteousness of Christ. In spite of scorn, rejection, torture and death at the hands of men, God sees the martyrs as clothed in the stainless perfection of His Son, and their eternal acceptance with Him is assured (Rev. 3: 4, 5).

#### THE SIXTH SEAL — REV. 6: 12, 13

(See Chart No. 17—*Earthquake, Sun Darkened, Stars Fall*)

The opening of the sixth seal introduces three great convulsions of nature which followed the cessation of Papal persecution in Europe. To the watchful child of God, these are unmistakable preliminary signs of the soon return of Jesus.

- (1) **The Great Earthquake.** In view of the time of the opening of this seal—about 1750, when widespread religious persecution had ceased—"the great earthquake" is evidently that of Lisbon, Portugal, November 1, 1755. This was the most devastating and extensive earthquake ever recorded, up to that time. Ninety thousand lives were lost, and half the world felt the convulsion. Four million square miles of the earth's surface were affected. In six minutes, 60,000 people perished in the Lisbon area alone. The appalling magnitude of this earthquake led many to regard it as a sign that the end of all things was at hand.
- (2) **The Darkening of the Sun and Moon.** Following the great earthquake, John's attention was drawn to an extraordinary darkening of the sun. The fulfillment of this prediction occurred on May 19, 1780—twenty-five years after the Lisbon Earthquake—when the sun was unaccountably extinguished during the daylight hours. Webster's dictionary refers to this phenomenon as "THE DARK DAY". He does not state that several such "Dark Days" have occurred in history, but refers to **one only**. The darkness extended over a large portion of North America—commencing at about mid-morning and continuing until midnight. When the moon rose that night, it had the appearance of blood. Though many reliable records were made at the time no one has ever been able to account for this uncanny darkness. It was not due to an eclipse, for the heavenly bodies were not in the correct position. Webster's dictionary says, "The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known."
- (3) **The Falling of the Stars.** This third great natural phenomenon occurred about fifty years after the Dark Day, on the night of November 13, 1833, when meteoric showers of unparalleled brilliance were witnessed over a wide area of North America. This unforgettable display of "falling stars" was by far the most spectacular event of its kind ever recorded. Eye-witnesses estimated that the stars fell like a continuous fiery hailstorm at the rate of 200,000 an hour for five or six hours, and declared that they fell in the very manner described by the prophet: "Even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind" (Rev. 6: 13).

When listing the signs of His Second Coming, Jesus said that a darkening of the sun and moon and a falling of stars would herald His return (Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27). The striking similarity of Jesus' words to those of John shows that the great natural disturbances of the sixth seal are mammoth signs of the approaching end of the age.

This conclusion is further reinforced by the fact that the closing verses of Revelation 6 lead us right up to the actual appearing of the King of kings (vv 14-17).