

# Post-Historic Cave-Dwellers

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*Forerunner*, "Prophecy Watch," September-October 2012

Our Savior Jesus Christ declares in Matthew 12:34, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (see also Luke 6:45). The words of those whom Christ quotes in Revelation 6:16-17 prove to be a veritable window to their minds. An examination of what these people say—and do not say—provides us with a panoramic view of their thoughts: "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?"

Before parsing these words, we should put them in context: Who said them, to whom, and under what circumstances? The text of the sixth seal reads:

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)

Today is the day of 9/11—Revelation 9:11, that is—the days when the ruler of this world is called Apollyon ("destroyer") or Abaddon ("destruction"). We see about us the fruits of Satan's widespread work as he deceives mankind into destroying the planet. Revelation 6 describes some of God's *initial* judgments on "those who destroy" this good earth (Revelation 11:18).

But more than judgment is involved; God's actions are beneficial too: They demonstrate Him *already* hard at work terraforming the planet, making it once again habitable for life as He created it. In Revelation 6, we see God already setting out to fix the degraded environment.

So great are the literally "earthshaking" events involving sun and moon and sky that none could help but be filled day and night with harrowing terror. Notable men have become cavemen, post-historic cave-dwellers, we may say, driven underground at the end of Satan's rule. Intelligent people open their mouths irrationally, crying out to "mountains and rocks," inanimate objects that will neither answer them nor provide them lasting succor. And, at the end, they can only wonder, "Who can stand?"

## The Cavemen Speak

God quotes two statements of these sixth-seal cavemen. The first is a command to mountains and rocks. The second is a question. What do their words tell us? What does their silence tell us?

The first sentence is a somewhat illogical command for the "mountains and rocks" to fall on them.

» In making this statement, the cavemen demonstrate at least some correct understanding of the Source of their difficulties. They recognize two Beings as the cause: "Him who sits on the throne" and "the Lamb." This is remarkable in itself, since, to this point, they have seen neither Being.

» The cavemen call one of these two Beings "the Lamb." Admittedly, they do not equate the Lamb with Christ, but the inference is clear that they understand the Lamb to be Christ, the Word of God. Incidentally, John makes 26 references to Christ as the Lamb in the book of Revelation.

» Further, the cavemen understand that these two powerful Beings are angry. In assigning a cause to their difficulties, they utterly shun the voice of the secularist or the atheist. They do not, for example, blame *nature* on their troubles. They do not assert, "It's just a cycle. Nature will clean up the air and water, and everything will be okay soon." Rather, they squarely identify the cause of their present problems to be the wrath of the Father and Christ.

» Even more interesting is their silence concerning the Holy Spirit. In their dire straits, where their lifestyles have so dramatically changed and their lives are in clear-and-present danger, they make no reference to the Holy Spirit as a separate Person of the Godhead. This suggests that they have abandoned Trinitarian doctrine—remarkable considering the cornerstone status nominal Christianity has historically accorded to it. We are left to speculate why they make no reference to the Trinity at this time.

Their second sentence is a question rather than a statement or command. In stating that "the great day of His wrath has come," they recognize that their situation is *special*; theirs are extraordinary times. They rightly realize that they can no more defer the effects of God's ire than they can blame those effects on nature. Their reference to "the great day of His wrath" indicates an at least superficial realization that they are facing the Day of the Lord. In asking, "Who can stand?" they recognize that they are powerless to defend themselves against the wrath of these two God-Beings.

In short, the window of these people's minds opens up to a substantially different landscape than what currently exists in our world. Consider how many individuals whom we would today classify as "the kings of the earth, the great men" would refer to Christ as "the Lamb"? How many "rich men, the commanders, the mighty men" know about the prophesied Day of the Lord?

Comparatively few. Perhaps some in America's Bible Belt might use this terminology, but most individuals in the wider society, the secularized, cosmopolitan mess we call the Western World, would find these concepts alien to their thinking. Moreover, most of those who are familiar with the concepts of Christ as the Lamb or the Day of the Lord also *fervently* believe in the Trinity—something our latter-day cavemen do not allude to at all.

### **A Shift in Understanding**

What is happening here? God has actually begun to transform the *religious* landscape of these cave-dwellers as surely as He has commenced to terraform the planet's physical landscape. These people have *listened* to the Two Witnesses' preaching, beginning at the time of the fifth seal. God's Word

does not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11); these erstwhile movers and shakers have heeded, to an extent. As a result, they have a more complete—though far from perfect—understanding of God and His purposes. And they run for the hills!

We need to dig deeper into the minds of these end-time spelunkers. What thinking underlies their words?

A shaking fist is absent; these individuals do not express anger or outright rebellion against God. Conversely, they make no confession of personal guilt; they express no repentance. While they recognize the existence of the Father and Son, they do not understand that God is a Family into which they can be born. They do not know—or believe—the gospel. They do not realize that they can develop a personal relationship with God and grow to become like Him. In other words, the cavemen's words are not those of converted individuals at all.

*The underlying thinking behind their comments is desperate self-preservation.*

They want personal safety. Understanding more than many do about God, convinced that the Father and the Lamb are stirred to anger, their knowledge is still so limited that they can only irrationally command "mountains and rocks" to fall on them. Pathetically, in the end, they can only ask a question that exhibits the depths of their despair. Who is able to survive during the Day of the Lord? They have no answer.

Isaiah 2 provides us a bit more insight. In verse 9, the prophet, speaking of idolaters, addresses the issue of their repentance. These people, he says, "will be brought low and everyone humbled—do not forgive them" (Isaiah 2:9, *New International Version*). God has humbled them through mind-numbing terror; they hide in caves from God and His Son and talk to rocks. Yet, in all this, they have not yet expressed godly sorrow, not yet repented. So God has not yet forgiven them. The prophet Isaiah continues:

Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—and it shall be brought low. . . . (Isaiah 2:10-12)

Notice that the cave-dwellers are those who have been humbled. In verse 11, Isaiah states the timeframe: They are humbled in a time when "the Lord alone shall be exalted. . . ." So, this passage in Isaiah 2 is dealing with the general period that we call the Day of the Lord.

Interestingly, in verses 20-21, we see that they have eschewed idolatry:

In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, each for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily.

If the people who hurl their idols "to the moles and bats" as they enter the "clefts of the rocks" are the same ones who ask "mountains and rocks" to fall on them in Revelation 6:16, these folk may well have started out on a road to repentance. They are not there yet, for they lack the proper

understanding and motivations. Though God has not yet granted them repentance (II Timothy 2:25), He is working among them, perhaps through the work of the Two Witnesses. He has increased their knowledge about Him, brought them to an understanding that idolatry is wrong, and led them to subterranean "places of safety." Is He setting them apart as a cadre of physical beings He can use in the Millennium?

### **Slaves and Free Men**

To answer that question, we need to consider the role played by another classification of cave-dweller that John lists in Revelation 6:15. Juxtaposed against "the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men" is another group: "every slave and every free man" (Revelation 6:15). Who are they? What role do they play in the caves?

To understand, we first need to deal with those repeated words, *every*: "every slave and every free man." Does John mean that every slave and every free person in the world is addressing "mountains and rocks," asking that they fall on him? Does every free individual and every slave know about the Day of the Lord and about the Lamb at this point? That would be a lot of people.

Revelation 9 clearly indicates that the cave-dwellers represent only a segment—perhaps a small segment—of humanity. Many other people have refused to foreswear idolatry, not yet understanding what the cavemen know about God and His imminent anger:

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9: 20-21)

So, the occurrences of "every" in Revelation 6:15 do not refer to every slave and every free person in the world. Rather, the phrase "every slave and every free man" is a merism, a rhetorical device wherein a single entity or action is described by opposites, as in "looked high and low" or "on-and-off enthusiasm." "Every slave and every free man" refers to a small subset of people, to *a single class of person*, one who is both free *and* bond.

The merism may refer to God's people—who are free and slave concurrently. Christ promises that, if we remain in His Word, we are free: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Similarly, the apostle Paul writes:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2; compare Galatians 5:1)

Yet, the same apostle calls us slaves, bought by God:

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

Paul also tells the Roman church: "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). Peter provides yet further witness to our being God's slaves: "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God" (I Peter 2:15-16).

In some ways, God's people are free, and in others, slaves.

### **Another Perspective**

We could look at this merism a bit differently. "Every slave and every free man" could refer to true Christians, those who know the truth and are therefore free (John 8:32) in God's sight, but who have become enslaved by man through end-time religious persecution. Slaves are expropriated and disenfranchised individuals, having lost personal and property rights. The Jews, taken in the Nazi pogroms, were slaves, told by their masters, "*Arbeit macht frei*" ("Work makes free").

Currently, chattel slavery is not a legal institution in Western civilization. However, under increased Islamic influence, it could become legalized and widespread as the result of religious persecution. So it might happen that God *protects* His people in caves, arranging to have them taken there as slaves in service to others.

What else might God's people do in these caves? Hopefully, they would be a light to those around them (Matthew 5:14). Armed with far more knowledge about God and His plan than their masters, God's people will be able to put the horrifying events into perspective for the already-humbled cave-dwellers. The caves will be not so much a "place of final training" as a venue to serve others. For example, God's people might

1. Assure others that Christ will soon end the maddening chaos by establishing His rule on earth.
2. Tell them the living can expect to see His return—"every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7).
3. Notify them that, at His return, they can expect to see God's people rising in the air to meet Him (I Thessalonians 4:17).
4. Instruct them that, once Christ consolidates His rule, the terror will subside, as the healing waters from His throne take their effect (Ezekiel 47:1-12; Revelation 22:1-2).
5. Enjoin them to make their way to Jerusalem when conditions begin to settle down, where they will be taught by Christ, the Lamb.

Since every eye will see Christ return (Revelation 1:7), we can deduce that the rigors of the Day of the Lord will open the caves, exposing them to the atmosphere, or perhaps events will force their inhabitants out into the open. The cavemen will see Christ return in power and great glory (Matthew 24:30). As the living among God's people rise to meet Christ, will they say to their fellow cave-dwellers, "See you in Jerusalem"?

Though they entered the caves with a degree of resignation, supposing they would eventually perish there, the presence with them of "every slave and every free man" will bring about a change in their thinking, arming them with more complete knowledge about God's plan and will. Once Christ returns, they will be motivated to make their way to Jerusalem as soon as it is feasible.

Isaiah 2 speaks of a great migration to Jerusalem once Christ establishes His rule there. Survivors near and far, among them these cave-dwellers, will set out, and once there, they will hear the preaching of God's Word and His law, taught by Christ Himself in some cases, or by us, His priests. God prophesies in Isaiah 2:2-3:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The days of living in caves will end, as God begins to terraform in earnest, remaking the physical, religious, and ethical landscape so that it will indeed support physical life as He intends it to be lived.