

“SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR”

Revelation 6:9-11

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INTRODUCTION

Where will you be the moment you die?

- If in Heaven, you get to stay there.
- If in Hell, you must stay there.

Here we see that Christians are a martyr people throughout the generations: See Mt. 10:38; 16:24, 25.

- “He who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of Me.”
- “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.”

YOU MUST LAY YOUR ALL ON THE ALTAR!

I. SOULS IN HEAVEN

A. Their Presence

Reality of life after death: Lk. 23:43; Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:8

How can John see “souls” [note they had been slain; no bodies here; this is a vision.]

Will you be in Heaven immediately upon your death?

B. Their Place

Under the altar—1) The place of Sacrifice—blood spilled, the life of their flesh, as OT sacrifices.

2) The place of Safety—in OT one could go to the altar for safety and security.

Heaven is God’s Temple (Hab. 2:20) and it is also His Throne Room (Is. 6:1, 6)

In this vision, John sees truth in symbolic form.

Is this altar that of burnt offering or that of incense (esp. 8:3, 5)?

C. Their Purpose (martyred)

1. The Word of God—they believed it, held to it, lived by it, and **testified for it**.

2. The Testimony of Christ—which they held, maintained

- Unyielding loyalty to Christ
- They therefore suffer His fate.
- They were **slain on earth**.
- But, in reality, **their sacrifice was made in Heaven!**

We might ask the question, “Why should good and godly people be mistreated on earth?”

- 1) God is glorified in them.
- 2) Souls are saved as the result—the Word spreads.
- 3) They are strengthened by persecution.
- 4) Their rewards are greater.

II. SUPPLICATION OF THE SOULS IN HEAVEN

“Judge, vindicate, and Avenge us!”

- *Is this a non-Christian prayer?*
 - **No, it is a concern for the reputation of God!**
 - Vengeance and vindication is left up to God here—See Rom. 12:19: “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of *God*, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’” (cf. Dt. 32:35; Heb. 10:30).
 - See Rev. 19:2—God avenges the blood of “His bondservants” on Babylon!
 - See Gen. 4:10—Abel’s blood cries out for vindication (cf. Heb. 12:24—Jesus’ blood pleads forgiveness!).
 - I Pet. 2:23—Entrust yourself to the One who judges righteously.
 - Luke 18:7—God will bring about justice for His elect.
 - In Hebrew jurisprudence **the plaintiff pleads his own case**—so here.
 - Condemned by a human “court”; they must plead to a higher court.
- A. How Can God Permit This?
1. His nature cries against injustice: “Holy and true”
 2. The wicked are purely earthly—“earth-dwellers”
 3. It is God’s people who are mistreated and killed!
- B. Why is it taking so long? (Cf. Ps. 94:3—“How long shall the wicked exult?” Hab. 1:2—“How long, Lord will I call for help, and Thou wilt not hear? I cry out to Thee, ‘Violence!’ Yet Thou dost not save.” And even Psalm 40:13, 17—“Make haste,” “do not delay!” [last week’s message])

III. SATISFACTION OF THE SOULS (11)

- A. White Robe: purity, righteousness, victory [See Rev. 19:8—“Righteous acts of the saints”; Rev. 7:13-14—“Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.” *These are not temporary bodies!*]
- B. A Brief Rest—cf. 14:3—“Rest from their labors, and their deeds follow them.”
- Includes burdens, troubles, persecution, toilsome work with opposition and due to the fall, and struggles against sin and the sin nature.
 - They now find *full enjoyment of God’s presence*.
- C. A completed Remnant
1. Fellow Servants (servants of God!)
 2. Brethren—by faith, with a common Father and Savior
More must suffer and die—“were to be killed.”
There is a limit, and the Lord know the number that must be filled
Election is seen here also—to salvation, and the resulting suffering.

CONCLUSION

Christian people are a martyr people: Mt. 10:38—take up your cross daily; 16:24—deny self, take up cross and follow me. There must be a willingness to suffer for Jesus if required.

Cf. Paul: II Tim. 4:6; Phil. 2:17

- 1) Is your life on the altar?
- 2) Where will you be the moment after you die? Will you be in Heaven like these martyrs?