

BEREANS Bible Institute Module III.

“Ghost Stories” in the Bible – Part 8

The Ghosts under the Altar?

*Rev. 6:9-11 NKJV – 9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the **souls** of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

*Rev. 20:4-5 NKJV – 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the **souls** of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

- I. The first 4 “Seals” are allegories, why not the 5th Seal? (Rule #3 – historical setting, context)
- II. How should we define the term “souls?” (Rule #4 – interpret progressively)
 - A. Using pagan concepts: “soul” = “ghost”?
 - B. Using Biblical concepts: a physical person, or the essence of physical life?
 1. Blood – Gen. 9:3-4; Lev. 17:10-12; Deut. 12:23-25
 - C. Both passages are related, the latter describing what happened to the future martyrs mentioned in Rev. 6:11.
 1. If “souls” in Rev. 6:9 means “ghosts,” then “souls” in Rev. 20:4 also means “ghosts.” Yet, it is clear from vs. 5 that they were already resurrected.
- III. Should we interpret these “martyrs” based on all that Scripture says about “martyrs?” (Rule #4)
 - A. Abel was the first martyr
 1. Abel’s blood calling out to be avenged (Gen. 4:9-12)
 - a. The martyrs under the altar are calling out to be avenged
 2. Abel is the father of all martyrs (Luke 11:46-51)
 - a. “this generation” = those who persecute the righteous
 3. The sons of God vs. the sons of the devil (1 John 3:10-12).
- IV. Why are the souls (individual martyrs’ blood) “under the altar?”
 - A. The blood of all sacrificed animals was to be poured out **under the altar** of sacrifice (Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; Lev. 5:9; Lev. 8:15; Lev. 9:9).
 1. Martyrs are typified by slain animals
 - B. The martyrs were NOT in heaven, because the “altar” of sacrifice was outside of the Temple.
 1. The Tabernacle that Moses built was an allegory of the “heavenly things.” (Heb. 8:1-6)
 2. The true “Temple” which God constructed includes both heaven and earth.
 - a. The “Holy of Holies” (God’s abode) was situated in heaven (Heb. 9:24-28; Rev. 11:19).
 - b. The other prototypes are on earth
 1. Menorah (Rev. 1:20)
 2. Olive trees supplying oil to the Menorah (Rev. 11:4; Zech. 4).
 3. Prayers of the saints on the Altar of Incense (Rev. 5:8; Rev. 8:3-4)
 3. In Revelation, the perspectives of “heaven” and “earth” are not different locations, but rather the visible (earth) and the invisible (heaven).
- V. Conclusion: The message of this allegory is that God has not forgotten the martyrs of the past, and that they will be avenged and rewarded along with the martyrs of the tribulation.