

Revelation Chapter 8

8:1 The Saviour opens the seventh seal

“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”

The interlude or parenthetical section of chapter 7 is over now and the opening of the seals continues. Though there is glory in the midst of the gloom of the tribulation, yet we must return to the gloom of the devastation and judgement that God pours out on this Christ rejecting world. But first we notice that there is silence in heaven. This seems to be very unusual since heaven has heretofore been filled with loud sounds, voices and praises, chapters 4:1, 5:11,12, 6:1, 7:2,10. What do you suppose is the reason for this silence that last about half an hour? The following observations may help:

A. This seems to be a silence of expectation. Comparable to everyone awaiting a very important announcement or event. All heaven awaits in awe for what lies beneath the seventh seal.

B. This could have been a time of silent prayer. In Luke 1:9-10 we see that while the earthly priest executed his office and went into the temple to bum incense, the multitude without stood praying outside. No, it doesn't say that their prayer was silent, but the indication is that it was, for they stood in awe, listening, because if he made a mistake inside that temple he could lose his life for it. And, notice in our text, verses 3-4, that an angel does something similar to a priest's duty. He comes and stands at the altar having a golden censer and receives much incense to offer with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar before the throne. But whatever may be involved in this half hour of silence, we cannot help but understand that it involves an expectation of what lies beneath the seventh seal.

8:2-6 The Seventh seal is opened

“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”

The indication is clearly that the trumpet judgements, of which there are seven, are all contained in the seventh seal. It is only when the seventh seal is opened that the seven trumpets begin to sound. The following things are interesting:

A. In the opening of the first six seals, chapter 6:1-7, it seems that John is given an overview of the great destructiveness and horror of the tribulation time.

B. John sees the seven angels that are given seven trumpets. Then in addition he sees another, an eighth angel that comes to the altar in heaven and performs a priestly function. He has a golden censer, a pan containing incense, and he offers it along with prayers of saints upon the altar and after the smoke of incense and prayers of saints were offered he filled the censer with fire from the altar and flings it down upon the earth. This is a clear picture of God's wrath coming upon a Christ rejecting world. The fire of God's wrath brings thunderings and lightnings, and an earthquake upon the world. John heard voices as this happened. This shows us that there is diving intelligence behind the tribulational storm. In chapter 5:8 we noted that prayers of saints were in vials. It seems that our prayers are indeed bottled up in heaven! One day the cries of Christians for injustices done them by a Christ rejecting world for centuries will be answered by God's judgement upon the world.

C. It is possible, particularly since Christ has just finished opening the seven seals, that this angel is the angel of the Lord, an appearance of Christ himself, presenting a picture of his priestly work for all believers, Hebrews 4:14-16. Angels do not normally function in the office of a priest. However this does not preclude the possibility that this is just another angel given this duty on this occasion as preparatory for the trumpet judgements.

8:7-13 The Sounding of the trumpets begin

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

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And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

A. When the first angel sounds his trumpet, hail and fire mingled with blood is cast upon the earth and this causes great forest fires that destroy one third of earth's trees, and the grass is also burned. This is a supernatural storm. And the fact that the hail and fire is mingled with blood seems to reference Christ's promised judgement in Matthew 23:35. He said to the Jewish people in a context of judgement to come "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and altar". Could it be that when blood is mingled with hail and fire in this tribulational trumpet judgement that it is particularly to emphasize the world's treatment of God's people through the ages, and God's vengeance upon them for it. When the blood of unsaved people on earth during the tribulation pours from their veins because of the hail that hits upon earth and because of the damaging fires ensuing, it will remind them that its judgement for shedding the innocent blood of God's people. Compare Exodus 9:22-26 for God's historical judgement upon one nation. What he did to Egypt he'll do to the whole world, and worse! Consider the great oxygen depletion on earth because of this trumpet judgement.

B. When the second angel sounds his trumpet, a burning object as large as a great mountain will fall upon the earth. This is probably a great meteor. This will cause one third of the sea to become blood. This great devastation is understood better when one remembers that most of the earth is covered with water. The seas are great. And under this trumpet judgement one third of all life in the seas will die. Also, one-third of earth's great naval fleets will be destroyed. And earth will be helpless to stop the devastation.

C. When the third angel sounds his trumpet, a great star will fall from the heavens, it too will be ablaze, and it is directed toward the rivers and fountains of waters. This is of course the fresh waters, the drinking waters, and when this happens one third of earth's drinkable water will be contaminated. Wormwood is a perennial herb which is bitter and will cause convulsions and kill brain cells. Wormwood in the bible speaks of judgement, Jeremiah 9:15, Lamentations 3:15. Think about this. A shooting star comes from the heavens, all the way through the atmosphere having harmful elements such as radioactivity, and contaminate one-third of earth's drinkable water and multitudes die from the poison water. If you think our cities sometimes now have problems with contaminated water, wait till the tribulation.

D. When the fourth angel sounds his trumpet, one third of the sun is darkened, one third of the moon, and one third of the stars. The result will be that the day light hours will be shortened by a third and what light there is reflecting from the moon and stars during the night will be darkened a third more. Obviously this will result in a terror stricken world of people. Compare God's historical judgement on just one nation, Egypt, Exodus 10:21.

8:13 A Sermon from the sky

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!"

This is another brief interlude. But unlike the first of chapter 7 where their glory seen amidst the gloom, this brief pause records only a warning of intensifying anguish for mankind. Things helpful when noticed:

A. The first woe is the same as the fifth trumpet, chapter 9:1-12, see verse 12 particularly.

B. Then, the second woe will be the same as the sixth trumpet, chapter 9:13-21.

C. And, the third woe will be the events of the seventh trumpet judgement, chapter 11:14-18.