

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Calm Before the Storm

Rev. 8:1-12

INTRODUCTION:

Between the sixth and seventh seals we see an interlude as 144,000 are sealed on earth and a vast number in heaven – from every nation, tribe, people and language – stand before the throne. This interlude is there to tell us that even though all of these judgments are occurring on earth by a very powerful enemy, we can overcome.

It answers the question, "Who can stand?"

Those who have the seal of God can stand. God's people on earth need assurance that they can overcome because they know they may very well be martyrs also. Those who are experiencing a great suffering need to see victory in heaven. Jesus says "Stand firm". Because, ultimately that is what is going to allow you to **stand** before the throne.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 8:1-6 (NASB)

8 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

³ Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

⁶ And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

Prayer

BODY:

I. SILENCE IN HEAVEN.

Revelation 8:1 (NASB)

8 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

(Pause for a few seconds, and lean forward as if listening to something.)

“Listen!” **(Pause for another few seconds.)**

“Do you hear it?” **(Pause again.)**

“Do you hear **(pause)** the silence?”

Did you sense the anticipation? You expected me to do something didn't you? You had an expectation that something was about to happen?

THAT'S what Revelation is doing here. It's creating an atmosphere that says “Pay attention! Something important is about to happen. Something that is so significant that God wants to call your attention to it.”

Walter, who works for me in my shop, says "**This is where God tells all the women to keep quiet!**". However, I have not been able to "con-firrm" that in the scriptures.

Silence in heaven is significant because we have read that there is a lot of noise in heaven.

- In chapter 5 John heard 24 elders singing a song "**Worthy art thou to take the book, and to break its seals;...**"
- Then John heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "**Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.**"
- Then every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "**To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.**"
- In the first four seals the living creatures speak as with a voice of thunder, "**Come!**"
- In the fifth seal, we hear "**How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**"

When the seventh seal is opened there is **silence**. It's a dramatic effect, **the calm before the storm**.

II. AVENGING THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS.

So, why is God trying to get our attention? Well, let's read about it:

Revelation 8:3-4 (NASB)

³ Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Chapter 8 picks up where the sixth seal left off in Chapter 6 with the final judgment. We know we are in the final judgment because God is now responding to the prayers of the martyrs from the fifth seal.

Revelation 6:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; ¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

God told the martyrs that He would not avenge their blood by judging the evil until the very last martyr had been killed. Thus the seventh seal cannot happen until Christ comes again and history comes to an end.

Notice also that the seventh seal refers to "**the prayers of all the saints**". This confirms that the picture of martyrs under the altar in the fifth seal is not a narrow reference to a group of literal martyrs but a figurative representation of all saints who have died to themselves in order to serve Christ.

NOTICE – an angel is in charge of the prayers of the saints. Our prayers are precious to God. And this angel brings your prayers before the very throne of God.

Now... notice what happens next:

Revelation 8:5 (NIV)

⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came...

(Shout)

**PEALS OF THUNDER,
RUMBLINGS,
FLASHES OF LIGHTNING,
AND AN EARTHQUAKE"**

(Pause)

Scared you didn't I???

I did that on purpose.

These phrases point to the final judgment. We will see it four times in Revelation.

- 4:5 "Lightnings, sounds, and thunders".
- 8:5 "Thunders, sounds, lightnings, and quaking".
- 11:19 "Lightnings, sounds, thunders, quaking, and great hail".
- 16:18-21 "Lightnings, sounds, thunders, great earthquake, and huge hail".

These events point to an increasing severity of each series of judgments. When God hears our prayers He unleashes a power that we can't even begin to imagine.

We saw that chapters 4 and 5 were setting up this scene because in Revelation, prayer and worship is an act of war.

Who you worship determines which side of the battle that you are on. And that battle is raging whether you like it or not.

Prayer in this context in the seventh seal is an act of war. It is a weapon of war that the saints are using to utilize the desire for God's name to be honored and the blood of the martyrs to be avenged. So what we will find is that we have weapons of war that are being used that are not conventional weapons of war and that they are very powerful.

That's why God uses an imagery of power and might and even the terror that those prayers could bring. When we pray...the whole might of heaven is unleashed.

God is saying "I am the One Who is making these judgments. I am in control. It is not chaos. It is My sovereign will being executed.

Then what happens? Angels appear with trumpets – ready to announce still more of what is to come.

III. THE SOUNDING OF THE TRUMPETS.

Revelation 8:6 (NASB)

⁶ And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

The trumpets have been passed out in verse 2 and now they are going to be put to use.

Trumpets were weapons of war. And weapons of worship. The book of Revelation tells us that the way we fight the war is through our worship. Our worship is a weapon of war. The way we pray is a weapon of war. The way we die is a weapon of war. So we have these elements of trumpets which is a worship element but it is also one that is a war element.

Revelation 8:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

This sounds a lot like the Exodus plagues in Egypt doesn't it?

The main purpose of the plagues was for Pharaoh to REPENT. The key word is REPENT. By seeing the power of God, Pharaoh was asked to repent and liberate the people of God. The plagues were to show the sovereignty, the power of God, and the glory of God, and cause the disobedient person to repent.

⁸ The second angel sounded, and *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, ⁹ and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The likeness of a mountain could be metaphorical for a kingdom. Fire is an image of judgment. Therefore John is referring to judgment of an evil kingdom.

What is John saying by a constant referral to one third?

There will come a time when there is a complete destruction, but this is not the last time that we are going to be talking about the judgment of God.

Because, bottom line is, if you kill one third of all of the living creatures in the sea, we have a major problem with our oceans. Yes? So if you want to get literal and scientific, even a third of everything is going to destroy everything. Yet, that is not his point. His point is, I am talking about a judgment where there will be another one to follow.

Once again, we are going to see the use of recapitulation. The seventh seal had us at the final judgment, but once again we are back on earth with general judgments. You will notice that the first trumpet mentions that all of the green grass is burned up. But you will also see when the fifth trumpet sounds, there will be locusts that are told to not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Revelation 8:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. ¹¹ The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

¹² The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

If a third of the sun is struck, we are all in trouble. If a third of the moon is gone, we may spin out of orbit.

The judgments that we see in Revelation are not meant to refer to specific events. These judgments are limited disasters that take place throughout history to serve as continual alarms being sounded. So that each and every time there is another calamity, we step back and say, "we need to be ready"! These are signs. They are judgments that are pointing to a much greater judgment.

Notice how general these are. Let's look at a third. How, could you have exactly a third of the trees on earth affected? How would you know? How many trees are cut down or die from disease or drought or wind or fires or excess moisture each day? How many trees sprout up on that same day? It is not meant to be specific. These cycles are broad and at this point are not universal.

The other thing is that they are always taking place somewhere. They are always providing evidence of judgment. And this evidence is always pointing forward to a greater judgment which will be completed when the seventh trumpet sounds.

Everything will be complete when the seventh seal is broken and the seventh bowl is poured out.

CONCLUSION:

How we then engage with our neighbor as these things are happening becomes very important. You need to consider what type of alarm you are going to be. A silent alarm? Are you going to be a harsh and ungracious alarm? Or are you going to be an alarm that,

in the midst of it all, is pointing to hope, grace, and love? The sure foundation. The solid rock that we have in Christ?

All of us who have partaken of God's grace and read through all of these judgments should be able to walk out of here not criticizing God for the judgments, but thanking God that you do not have to face final judgment. Because those who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb are those who have had all of their sins paid for. You do not have final judgment to face. Even though we have been redeemed, there is no promise that we will not be killed by an earthquake or end up drowning in the sea, or even die from hunger. There is no guarantee of that. The reality is, that in the midst of all of these calamities, we do not have to worry about the final judgment because our sins were paid for. We are sealed by God and are protected spiritually. The debt that we owed to God for our sins was completely paid for. So for those who are redeemed, you are completely forgiven. You have this confidence and assurance that there is no judgment that awaits you in your future. There is only a warm reception into your Father's kingdom. We will be loved and blessed and refreshed forever. So even as we talk about these things it is important that we always appreciate and acknowledge the grace that God has shown to us to ensure us that we will never have to face this great final judgment.

These are the thoughts that I want you to walk out with. That you are an alarm for others. So pray, study God's word, worship, live in readiness, and rejoice in the grace of God which has saved you from a terrible judgment.

This is the Day!