

## Silence in Heaven

Revelation 8:1-7

9/16/07

### Intro

At the time John was given the vision which we are now studying, the church was going through a very difficult time. The Roman Emperor was determined to create much trouble for Christians. Some were fed to lions others crucified, some burned as human candles, and many were killed.

That background is important to remember because we have a tendency to see the Revelation only in light of current events and can sometimes forget that it has been a source of encouragement to Christians for many years.

This book would have been such an encouragement to the believers of that day because the hand of Rome seemed more like the iron fist of invincible and immovable power.

Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple destroyed, Jews and Christians alike were taken by the thousands to Rome to be killed in the coliseum for the entertainment of a sick generation.

So this word was the word of hope and strengthened their faith. They were reminded that God was sovereign and reigned over all nations.

Here in chapter 8, the Lord opens the last of the seven seals that sealed the scroll of the edicts and precepts of God. When he opens the seventh seal there is silence in heaven for half an hour. This is where we will study and gain insight into the significance of what is happening in heaven and on earth.

### **I. Be Still and Know That He is God**

- The scene in heaven had been filled with wonderful and powerful worship. Myriads upon myriads have praised God; the four living creatures have continued to give glory to God.

- But when the seventh seal is open there is silence. Complete and awesome silence.

### A. Silence can be powerful worship

- There is so much noise in this world and it often feeds into the frenetic lifestyle that comes standard in our modern age.
- Many know little of the power of silence.

**Illus – Matt Redman was recording a worship song and as it reached its peak of holy expression, the worshipers began to become quieter until a holy silence fell upon them all. The presence of God was then powerfully expressed in silence.**

- There are some great scriptures that help us understand the importance of silence before God.

**Psalm 62:1-2, My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.**

**Psalm 37:7-8, Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil. NIV**

- Read **Revelation 6:14** and then read Psalm 46.

**Psalm 46:1-11 Be still and know...**

## B. Our prayers are God's priority

- The silence in heaven is followed by the offering of the prayers of believers with incense before God.
- What are some prayers that have been prayed for many generations?
  - *“How long, O Lord?”* This is the prayer that the early church must have prayed. The Tribulation saints prayed this in chapter 6. Many right now have this prayer in their hearts.
  - *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* That prayer is about to be answered in dramatic way. God's Kingdom will come to the earth and He will reign from Jerusalem. O for day that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.
- The scripture says that God attends to our prayer.

**I Peter 3:12, For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer,**

**James 5:16-18, The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. NIV**

## C. Incense is added to our prayers

- In verse 3 John saw an angel stand at the altar holding a golden censor and much incense was given to him to *add to* the prayers of the saints.
- There are several places in scripture that tell us that the prayers of the saints are like sweet smelling incense to the heart of the Lord.

**Psalm 141:2-3, May my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering. Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.**

- It is interesting that we see here that the incense was added to the prayers of the saints. That explains a lot to us...
- The OT priests would come before the altar in the temple and offer incense to the Lord. **They were adding incense to the prayers of the people.** This became a picture of Christ because His intercession for us is perfect and is perfectly sweet before the Lord.

**Hebrews 7:24-25, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

**II Corinthians 2:14-15, But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God**

among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

- In Romans 8 we see the Holy Spirit also interceding for us.

**Romans 8:26-27, In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.**

**Illus – In the 60's incense was popular because the sweet smell would cover up other smells that weren't so good.**

**It's a good thing that Christ intercedes for me because I would prayer *my will be done* because of weakness on my part.**

**My prayers would not smell so good to the Lord because my requests would often have disastrous results, but He intercedes according to the will of God.**

- Another interesting aspect of incense is that once it's lit it keeps burning. There is a sustaining fire. What a good analogy of the fire that is to be in every believer; never ending fire burning before the Lord.

## II. Prayers are About to be Answered

- The angel before the altar takes the golden censor filled with burning incense and hurls it to the earth.
- This is a picture of the prayers being answered. *How long, O Lord?* The answer will be fulfilled. *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...* soon and very soon.

### A. The trumpets declare victory

- God has used the sound of a ram's horn and trumpets made of silver throughout Israel's history.

**Numbers 10:1-10 The significance of trumpets.**

**Illus – The sound of a trumpet also signaled the year of Jubilee; the year in which all debts were cancelled and all slaves set free. (Lev 25:9)**

**The sound of a trumpet calls the church to meet the Lord in the air...**

**I Thessalonians 4:16-17, For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.**

- This prophecy would have been music to the ears to the first century believers. It signaled to them that a future power greater than Rome would be taken down.

B. God answers prayer in greater measure

- The seals that were opened were for the most part the consequences of man's decisions, but God allowing these events to come about.
- But with the trumpets sounding, God is pouring out His power on the earth and answering the prayers of saints for many generations.
- He answers prayer by promising a great victory.

**Illus – Someone might wonder if God hears and answers prayer today; to which the scripture answers, yes – rest in faith on that rock of promise.**

**I Corinthians 2:9, but just as it is written, *“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”***

**Illus – In the days of King Herod, an old priest by the name of Zacharias entered the temple to offer incense before the altar and an angel appeared on the right side of the altar. Zacharias had great fear, but the angel said to him, “Zacharias, do not fear for your prayer is heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you give him the name John.”**

- Being without a child would be considered a curse, a consequence of sin. But Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous and faithful to pray. God's answer was greater than they could have imagined – the forerunner of the Messiah would be their son.

**Ephesians 3:20-21, Now unto Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

- When we pray, God attends to our prayer, and though it may seem that God tarries long in answering, God will answer in the right time, “walls will fall, trumpets will sound, debts will be cancelled and victory will be ours.”
- Lord, help us to be a people who truly trust in you and become a people who pray.