

Revelation #24**January 22, 2023****Series Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon****Today's Message: The Seventh Seal; Revelation 8:1-6**

Chapter 7 provided a powerful comfort in knowing that God will save His people; not one will be lost! Even though the tribulation described thus far was intense and very disturbing, just knowing that God has a remnant that would be saved—an innumerable remnant of believers who come through the tribulation safe in the sheltering presence of God!

The tone changes in Revelation 8. But keep in mind, keep in mind that this final outpouring of the Great Tribulation could not happen until the “servants of God”, the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, had been sealed. We find that promise in Revelation 7:3-4.

I. An Overview of Revelation 8

- A. (8:1) The Lamb opened The Seventh Seal of the Scroll
 - 1. The Scroll of Revelation 5:1
 - a) The Title and Deed to the earth.
 - 2. The Seventh Seal contains the final judgments of the Tribulation period.
 - a) Trumpet judgments
 - b) Bowl judgments
- B. (8:2,6) The Seven Angels and the Seven Trumpets
 - 1. The Trumpets are given to them
 - 2. The Angels are prepared to sound them.
- C. (8:7-13) The First Four Trumpets are sounded
 - 1. These four trumpets devastate the life sustaining systems on earth
 - a) Life on earth becomes heavily burdensome
 - 2. 8:13 indicates that the last three trumpets will be even more severe than the first four trumpets.

II. (8:1-2) The Opening of the Seventh Seal and the Seven Angels

- A. (8:1) The Lamb opened the Seals
 - 1. It is the Lamb who initiates the judgments upon the earth and the inhabitants of the earth.
 - a) The Seventh Seal contains multiple judgments
 - (1) 6 Trumpet judgments. The Seventh Trumpet....
 - (2) ...contains 7 bowl judgments
 - b) The Total number of Lamb initiated judgments during the Tribulation: 19
 - (1) Six Seal judgments

- (2) Six Trumpet judgments
- (3) Seven Bowl judgments
- 2. The peculiar response to the opening of the Seventh Seal
 - a) Silence. Silence for 30 minutes.
 - b) Up until this Seventh Seal, Heaven has been full of loud sounds¹
 - (1) (4:5) sounds and peals of thunder
 - (2) (4:8) The Four Living Creatures day and night shouting, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!"
 - (3) (4:11) The Elders day and night praising God
 - (4) (5:9-14) Saints and Elders, the Creatures and innumerable angels saying, singing, shouting worship before Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb of God!
 - (5) (6:9-10) The loud voices of the martyrs under the altar crying out for divine vengeance.
 - (6) (7:2-3) The angel crying out to the four angels holding back the four winds, "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."
 - c) Silence: As the Seal is opened the Awe of Almighty God silences saints, and elders, and Creatures and Angels. All sound is halted for two reasons:
 - (1) A holy fear of the power and justice of God about to fall upon earth and the inhabitants of the earth.
 - (2) In the OT, in Zephaniah 1:7-9 there is a call for silence.
 - (a) In the Jewish temple, at the time of the offering of incense, silence came upon the temple and everyone in it. All the musical instruments and all the singing and voices would cease and become silent, while the offering of incense is given.
 - (3) Here in Revelation 8:2 a solemn silence fills heaven. And as we see in the following verses, the silence falls as the angel prepares to offer the incense of offering upon the altar before the throne, along with the prayers of the saints.
 - (a) The Final righteous judgments of the Holy God are about to fall heavily upon the earth and the ungodly.

¹ MacArthur. The listed items were noted by John MacArthur

- (b) And the righteous inhabitants of Heaven will be witnesses to the indescribable wrath of God. Silence!

B. (8:2,6) The Seven Angels

1. These are angels of the highest and special rank among all other angels.
 - a) In the Bible there are distinctions between angels.²
 - (1) "Dominions, principalities, and powers" (Col.1:16)
 - (2) Daniel 10:13 recognizes "*chief princes*", including "Michael".
 - (3) Paul and Jude mention Archangels in 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude:9.
 - (4) Then, in Luke 1:19 the angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist. He says, "I am Gabriel, who stands *in the presence of God*."
 - (a) Gabriel is probably one of the seven "*presence*" angels.
2. Trumpets.
 - a) Interesting to note that in the Bible trumpets are always associated with an announcement. The trumpet, or Shofar (ram's horn) would announce the Feasts of the Lord. But they were also used of warning.
 - (1) Zephaniah 1:14-18 describes the trumpet alarm, warning on *The Day of the Lord* and the judgments associated with that Day.
 - (2) At the overthrow of Jericho in Joshua 6, seven trumpets (ram's horns) were sounded.
3. The Seven Trumpets of Revelation
 - a) The first four trumpets in Revelation 8:7-12
 - (1) Target land, sea, rivers and springs, and the sun
 - (a) Interesting: the first four bowl affect the same.
 - b) The fifth and sixth trumpets (9:1-11; 9:13-19)
 - (1) The unleashing of demonic incursion and desolation of humanity.
 - c) The seventh Trumpet
 - (1) Contain the seven bowl judgments of God's wrath.
4. (8:2,6) The Seven Angels **stand** and **wait** prepared to sound the trumpets

III. (8:3-6) The Prayers of the Saints and The Fiery Censer

- A. "Another angel". Not one of the seven.
 1. A golden censer filled with fiery hot coals from the brazen altar
 - a) In the OT the priest would twice daily take fiery hot coals from the brazen altar in the outer court and take them into the Altar of Incense located in the Holy Place, the place nearest to the Holy of Holies, the dwelling of the Presence of God.

² Both MacArthur and Garland cite J.A. Seiss' work in *The Apocalypse: Lectures on Revelation*

2. The angel *stood* before the golden altar of incense with the coals and the prayers of the saints (see Revelation 5:8; 6:9-11)

- a) The incense symbolizes the prayers of the saints rising up before the throne of God!

- (1) (8:4) "The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand."

- (a) Leviticus 16:12-13 tells us that the smoke of the incense on the Altar of Incense was a heavy smoke providing separation from God's presence (the mercy seat) protecting the priest "so that he doesn't die."

B. The Prayers of the Saints. What kind of prayers?

1. In the OT this offering of incense by Aaron the priest was described as an act of intercession to make atonement for the people turning away God's wrath from the plague that struck the people (Numbers 16:46-48).
2. Here in Revelation 8, then, the prayers of the saints must be *intercessory prayers* not for their atonement.
 - a) They are praying petitions for God to work justice for His suffering people, such as we see in prayers of the martyrs under the altar in Rev. 6:10.
3. These prayers must be for Satan to be destroyed, sin to be defeated and their deaths to be avenged, and Christ to come soon!³ (Rev. 6:9-11)

C. Application:

1. In the earthly tabernacle there were two altars. The Altar of Burnt Offering outside of the Holy Place and one smaller Altar of Incense in the Holy Place close to the *mercy seat*, or Presence of God. In Heaven it is upon the Altar of Incense that the prayers of the saints are offered, near to the throne of God!
 - a) Dear praying Christian, as you pray be certain of this, because your sins have been atoned for and you now have peace with God through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, your faith-filled prayers rise up before the throne of God.
 - (1) Your prayers are heard!
 - (2) Your prayers are a sweet fragrance, pleasing to God (Ps. 141:2).
 - (3) God is pleased when your prayers are offered from a pure and clean heart!
 - (a) Known and Unconfessed sin hinders our prayers

³ MacArthur supplies this list.

- (i) Ps. 66:18a, "If I would have cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;"
- (ii) 1 Peter 3:7, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

D. (8:5) God's wrath unleashed in response to the faith-filled prayers of the saints

1. The angel fills the golden censer with fire from the Altar of Incense and hurls it to the earth.
 - a) Fire speaks of God's judgment
2. This judgment is a precursor to the coming Trumpet judgments.
3. This means that the coming Trumpet judgments are connected to, and in response to the prayers of the saints!. But the Bowl judgments are completely connected to God's wrath.
 - a) James 5:16 states clearly for our encouragement, "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much!"
 - b) Therefore we must learn here, that the innumerable prayers of innumerable righteous men are very powerful and availeth much!
 - c) Garland notes Johnson's commentary here quoting, "All this occurs in answer to the prayers of the saints. There are those who think meanly of prayer, and are always asking: 'What profit should we have if we pray unto the Almighty?' (Job 21:15). The true answer is, 'much in every way.'"
4. Be encouraged to pray as these Revelation saints are encouraged. The peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and earthquake show us that there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the prayers of the saints and the impending judgment.⁴

E. (8:6) The Seven Presence Angels were prepared to sound their trumpets

1. The sounding of the trumpets are a response to the prayers of the saints, which are like incense offered before the throne of God!
2. These angels have been waiting, waiting, waiting for this hour!
3. The following trumpet judgments will be part of the ministry of angels who are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation!" (Hebrews 1:14).

IV. Pray!

⁴ Garland

- A. We have learned that prayer matters. “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”
1. To pray effectively you must not be harboring unconfessed sin. James says to confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you might be healed.
 2. Pray like a Tribulation saint! For the God’s glory and the Name of Jesus Christ to be vindicated; that Satan would be destroyed and sin to be defeated in your life!