

c. Incense

The fact that the incense is "given" to Christ is no problem relating to His deity. It means that it is His by right and title. It is His by due! Four ingredients comprised incense (Ex. 30:34-36). It speaks of all the moral beauty and excellence of Christ. This is seen in the Gospels. It is wonderful to learn here that the saints, both Jew and Gentile, share in the provision of the Lord in prayers. Some evidence of this was noted earlier under the fifth seal (5:9-11). Saints in the tribulation will pray and be helped by our Lord!

d. Prayers

The offering of the incense is to help forward the prayers. It was given along with the prayers. It is interesting to note that the prayers and the incense move out of the "hand" of the Lord (v. 4). Such intimacy! The details of this incident manifest God's deep concern at the height of terrible and intolerable judgment! There is no doubt about the prayers getting to God. It is stated that the smoke of the incense, and therefore the prayers, ascended up "before God!"

e. Fire

As noted above, the brazen altar, which is rejected, now becomes the source of judgment. So here comes wrath, torture, and destruction of the wicked (2 Thess. 1). Here is divine movement against the guilty. It is the angel who takes (perfect tense) the censer and fills it with fire! It then becomes (so "were") voices, thunderrings, and lightnings, and earthquake. All of these physical phenomena are plural except the last one, the earthquake. But it has now been demonstrated that the same fire which kindles the flame of devotion in the heart of the believer is the same one which kindles a burning hell for the unbelieving and neglectful. Perdition is perverted grace.

Conclusion Learn this lesson: God is quiet before judgment. He waits patiently for men to repent and believe His Word. Will YOU believe and be saved today?

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"The Seventh Seal"

Revelation 8:1-5

Introduction

1. There are four hebdomads in the Book of Revelation: seven churches, seals, trumpets, and vials. It is around these that the entire book is written.
2. Following the seven churches, there is an interval of God's arrangements in heaven (chaps. 4, 5). So with the seal series. After the sixth one, there is an interval of God's grace (chap. 7). This same interval situation is seen following the sixth trumpet (10-14:11) and the sixth vial (16:15, 16). These intervals apparently indicate a pause in God's program in order to manifest His mercy and grace.
3. The Book of Revelation demonstrates that God has HIS-tory set out for the future. It is indeed His-Story! It all belongs to Him and He pursues His purpose relentlessly. As believers, we are privileged to read it and know in advance His intent. See the truth of the seventh seal and the details related to it right here:

1. SILENCE IN HEAVEN v. 1.

a. Seal

This is the seventh seal. The entire book can now be read. It is fully unrolled. At each unrolled seal break, a mighty demonstration of divine power was made. But here there is no motion. In the interval (chap. 7), there was rejoicing, now it is all mute! Therefore, the seals include action and passiveness.

b. Silence

Like the "selah" in the Psalms, here is a solemn pause. It indicates the awesome momentousness of the subject in hand. Here is the quiet consideration of heaven laid bare. Interestingly, this silence has made a lot of noise on earth. So many have tried to make out what it really is. The fact of the matter is, it is nothing more or less than a simple silence in heaven. It is like the silence of Paul's day (Acts 21:40). It is the silence of expectancy. The six seals have been broken. There is one more to go. All heaven is mute and breathless. God

pauses before He proceeds. This noiseless utterance from heaven is more powerful than words.

c. Season

The silence is not long. It is only $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. However, time is short according to what is transpiring and what the circumstances really are. There are times when moments are so agonizing that they actually stretch themselves into hours and days. Two minutes might seem like an eternity if your jugular vein were severed! A pause in a sermon may seem like an interminable length of time for a neophyte preacher. One thing is certain: the time mentioned is not a cessation of God's activity but a temporary suspension. He Who rules the world can afford to wait!

2. ANGELS IN HEAVEN v. 2.

a. Sum

The number of angels mentioned is seven. This is the number of completion and fullness. Hence, the full power of God in judgment is in view. The use of the definite article singles out the angels and distinguishes them from all others. This is a special group of them. They are one of the hebdomads in the Bible. Others include the seven days of creation, the seven trumpets, et al.

b. Station

The verb "stood" is in the perfect tense, hence these angels have a confirmed place in heaven. The specific item is that they are "before God." This distinguishes them as "presence angels." They hold this rank before the Lord and amongst other angels who have not fallen. There are only two groups of angels in one sense: fallen and unfallen. Among these two major categories there are a variety of subdivisions or ranks. Gabriel (Luke 1:19) and Michael (Dan. 12:1) are given specific ranks. Two characteristics seem to apply to all unfallen angels: obedience and activity (Psa. 103:20; Heb. 1:7, 14).

c. Service

In this passage, these angels are assigned a task of judgment. They are "given" trumpets and these are related to judgment upon earth-dwellers. No wind instrument

is more generally used among Israel than the trumpet. It was well known at the overthrow of Jericho (Joshua 6). Moses records how it was used in times of war and convocation (Num. 10). In connection with kings, the trumpet was also used (1 Kings 34:39). So, here in the Tribulation, the trumpet is employed to call attention to the coming judgments upon the earth-dwellers.

3. PRAYERS IN HEAVEN

The "silence" and the "angels" are associated with one further item before the trumpets are actually blown in judgment. This is "prayer." Look at the matters related to this subject:

a. Angel

It is the attendant word "another" which makes this important. The seven angels already mentioned are to be distinguished from the one indicated here. This same expression is found two other times in the Book (10:1; 18:1). It is a title of reverence and distance. It refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. He has been known as the "Lamb" in His intimacy with the saints. Now, however, He is known in this manner. No created angel is ever recorded in the Bible to be occupied with what this angel does: mediation. Hence, by analogy of Scripture it is concluded that the Lord Jesus is in view here (1 Tim. 2:5). This is the same "angel" which appeared to Abraham, Joshua, and of whom Zechariah speaks (chap. 3).

b. Altar

Two altars are involved here: the brazen altar, speaking of the place of His death and the golden altar, the place where prayers were offered. The latter speaks of the grace of Christ as the Living One Who is before God for the saints. He sustains them in an intercessory way in all of His own sweet odour and acceptability. The former altar is where the sweet savour of Christ came out sacrificially when He was found in the place of death and sin! It is from this altar that He fills His censer and casts it on the earth. If lawlessness will not yield to the testimony of divine grace in Christ, it must go out in judgment. Its judgment in the coming day is as distinctly the answer to the cross as all the wealth of blessing is today. Grace rejected becomes grace in judgment!