

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“Silence in Heaven”

Revelation 8:1-5

Introduction

1. There are at least 19 heptads in the Book of Revelation. Principal among them are the seven churches, seven stars (Pastors), seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials.

2. Following the study of the seven churches (chaps. 2, 3), there is an interval to describe the Throne of God (4) and the Lamb of God (5). The vision of our Lord (1:9-18) explains our Lord's relation to the seven selected churches of Asia Minor (2, 3).

3. Before the first series of judgments are opened, God provides a window of grace to set aside 144,000 Jewish people as “Jehovah Witnesses” (7:1-8 cf. Isa. 66:19; Mt. 24:14). Then the day of wrath commences (6:1-17). None can stand before God (6:17).

4. God's grace, however, is seen in the midst of judgment. An innumerable white robed, palm-hand, multitude is viewed. They are redeemed out of the day of wrath (7:14). Great praise is given God the Father and God the Son (7:10, 12).

5. As in the previous intervals (chap. 4, 5, 7), now before the seventh seal is opened, and in view of greater devastation, there is another major interval of grace. Take notice of this incredible expression of God's grace. Three blessed demonstrations are provided.

1. SILENCE IN HEAVEN v. 1

a. Seal Opened

The indefinite particle () is only found with the 7th seal, not with any other seal judgments. Now the entire “little book” (5:1) can be read. As each previous seal was unrolled there was a mighty expression of divine power. Here there is none, but rather an interval.

b. Silence Followed

Like the “selah” in the Psalms, here is a solemn pause. The awesome momentousness of the subject in hand is indicated. Literally the text reads “There happened () silence in heaven” (cf. Jn 1:14). This silence is simply the silence of expectancy (cf. Acts 21:30). Six seals have been broken -- now what? All heaven is mute and breathless. God pauses before He proceeds. The noiselessness in heaven is more powerful than words.

c. Season Timed

The word for half an hour is a hapax legomenon (only one time in N.T.). This brief time is short according to what is transpiring. It is agonizingly long in the light of eternity. One thing is certain, the time mentioned is not a cessation of God's activity, but a temporary suspension. The God Who rules the universe can afford to wait ½ hour! His grace is long suffering.

2. ANGELS IN HEAVEN v. 2

a. Their Sum

Seven is the number of completion in the Bible (Gen. 2:2). The full power of the judgement of God is in view. The definite article singles out these Angels and distinguishes them from all others. They are a special group.

b. Their Station

The verb “stood” () is perfect tense, hence these angels have a confirmed place in heaven. They stand “before God,” hence are “presence Angels.” Obviously, these are unfallen angels (cf. Gabriel, Luke 1:19; Michael, Dan. 12:1). Two characteristics seem to

apply to all unfallen angels: obedience and activity (Ps. 103:20; Heb. 1:7, 14).

c. Their Service

The duty of these angels is judgment. They are “given” () seven trumpets, apparently one each. The trumpet had O.T. significance (Joshua 6; Num. 10; 1 Kings 1:34, 39).

3. PRAYERS IN HEAVEN vv. 3-5

The third demonstration of grace, in addition to “silence” and the “angels” is “prayer.” This subject includes:

a. Angel v. 3

This angel is “another” () as distinguished from the previous seven (v. 2, cf. 10:1; 18:1). It seems this is a title of reverence and distinct from others. The reference is to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because no created angel is ever recorded in the Bible to be occupied with what this angel does -- mediation (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). This is the angel who appeared to Abraham (Gen. 18), Joshua (5), and of whom Zechariah writes (chap. 3).

b. Altar v. 3

1) The Brazen Altar (cf. Ex. 27:1-8). This has reference to His sacrifice for sin. It is from this altar that Christ fills His censer and casts it to the earth. If lawlessness will not yield to the testimony of divine grace, it must go out in judgment. Grace rejected becomes grace in judgment.

2) The Golden Altar (Ex. 30:1-10). This has reference to the place where prayers are offered. It speaks of the grace of Christ as the Living One Who is before God the Father for the saints. He sustains them in an intercessory way in all of His own sweet odour and acceptability.

c. Incense v. 3

That this is “given” () to Christ is no problem about His deity. It means it is His by right and title. It is His by due! The incense of the O.T. comprised four ingredients (Ex. 30:34-36) and suggests all His moral beauty and excellence as seen in the four Gospels.

d. Prayers v. 4

The incense helps forward the prayers of “all” () the saints (cf. 5:9-11). These prayers ascended before God the Father out of the hand of the Lord right with the smoke of the incense. Such intimacy! These details manifest God's deep concern at the height of terrible and intolerable judgment. There is no doubt about the prayers getting to God!

e. Fire v. 5

The brazen altar, once rejected, becomes the source of judgment. The verb “take” is perfect tense () and Christ fills the censer with fire from the altar. So here comes wrath, torture, and destruction of the wicked (cf. 2 Thess. 1). The fire is thrown into the earth and it becomes () voices, thunderings, lightings (all plurals), earthquake (singular)..

Conclusion

From the silence in heaven before the trumpet judgments, God demonstrates and shows His unlimited compassion and mediation. But do not fool yourself, the same fire that kindles the flame of devotion in the heart of the believer is the same fire which kindles a burning hell for the unbelieving and neglectful. Perdition (utter loss of one's soul) is perverted grace. Will you believe what Christ did for you at Calvary? Will you accept His death for your sins? Now? Stand up publicly and say so!