

Revelation 8:1-13

"The Silence Ends, The Storm Begins"

Entering Ch 8 we would do well to have our memories refreshed all the way back from Ch 4. It was there that we entered the incredible scene of heavenly happenings. Our attention being drawn to the centerpiece of heaven, a throne, an occupied throne upon which God Himself is seated; & John described what he saw. *The outshining, the effulgence, the brilliant radiance of God, pure light like crystal & a deep ruby red radiating from the throne & a deep emerald green, (a rainbow) around the throne.*

We took note of the fact that heaven is a happening place, at every turn & at each opportunity there seems to be an explosion of worship, a falling down *before* the throne ascribing glory & honor, blessing & power to Him who sits *on* the throne.

But then in Ch 5 our attention is taken & turned toward a scroll. A scroll in the right hand of Him who sits on the throne, sealed w/7 seals w/the challenge being made to all of creation, "Who is worthy to open the scroll & to loose it's seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

So John began to weep but one of the elders (who sit on 1 of the 24 lesser thrones we noted around the throne) encouraged John, gave proper perspective to John & said, "Do not weep, Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has prevailed to open the scroll & to loose it's seals." & *John looked & there He was, J.C. Himself, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. & He came took the scroll out Him who sat upon the throne & as you might imagine another eruption of worship & praise broke loose & kept building & building until all of creation was giving Him glory (& appropriately so).*

It's in Ch 6 that were watching & waiting w/great anticipation as 1 by 1 the Lord loosed each seal & w/each seal being loosed there was a corresponding event that took place upon the earth. A false peace followed by warfare, famine, pestilence & death. We watched as the 1st seal was loosed, then the 2nd seal, the 3rd seal... *By the time the 6th seal was loosed it seemed as though Jesus Himself was poised & prepared to return to the earth as the sky receded as a scroll when it's rolled up & the people (both small & great) were seeking to hide themselves in rocks & caves of the earth saying, "...hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne & from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come & who is able to stand?"*

Flash forward to Ch 7 & we're ready for seal # 7... but we don't get it. There's a reprieve of sorts in the text, a pause, a parenthesis that shares w/us & shows to us some additional detail.

It's there that we learn of the sealing of the 144,000 that takes place prior to the unsealing of the scroll. God seals them & He shields them from the wiles of the wicked one that they might take the gospel into every nation...who are they, they are 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. **Directly following their being sealed we see a great harvest in heaven, those who've come out of the great tribulation having washed their robes & made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

It's such an encouraging & emotional scene that we're sort of left going... "Where were we? Oh yeah, the loosing of the seals..." Ch 8 is the opening of the 7th seal...notice.

Vs1

Now if there's one thing we've noted about heaven it's that it's not a particularly quiet place...Typically there are tremendous volumes of worship being lifted up, praise & adoration being offered up to the Lamb & to Him who sits upon the throne forever & ever. However here all of that stops...

Thus far we've seen 6 of the 7 seals opened, but before the scroll can be unrolled the 7th seal must be loosed. It's at this point that Jesus opens the 7th seal & as He does all of heaven comes to a hush. There is a sobering silence throughout the halls of heaven... here it is, the time has come & the culmination of all things is about to unfold.

People wonder what the point of the silence is... Some suggest perhaps its that God might give full attention to the prayers of the saints that are about to be offered up.

More than likely it's a very sobering silence now that the scroll is opened and God's plan is unfolding. Have you ever been w/a group of people and you've heard news, or seen something on television that seemed so terrible, so overwhelming that the only response was a sobering silence? You're watching the weather channel in May of 2011, a storm has just hit our town but you live on the outskirts so you're trying to figure out what's happened & is happening. You know it's bad, the skies were blacker than you've ever seen them but as the news cameras pan around all you can do is sit there in stunned silence due to the destruction, the devastation that has taken place.

I suggest to you that we have the same sort of context right here in Rev Ch 8. The plan is unfolding, the judgment that's coming is so overwhelming, so devastating & destructive that respectful, awestruck, sobering silence is the only appropriate response.

As I've mentioned people question the *chronology* of these events. What they don't question is the *reality* of these events.

½ hr may not seem to long, but if I were to quit speaking right now it wouldn't take 30 seconds before some of you would begin to squirm in your seat a little. 10 minutes would feel like forever, even so 30 minutes in this scene is a long time. We might consider it the calm before the storm. As we read in the book of Zephaniah, **"Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; For the day of the Lord is at hand,¹"**

Vs 2

It's certainly a dramatic scene that unfolds before us & it's magnified all the more when you realize that Vs 2-6 are taking place in total silence. As heaven comes to a hush John sees 7 angels given 7 trumpets. Now we note the definite article "the" in front of the words "7 angels". That speaks to the fact that these are 7 specific angels who stand in the presence of God, "The 7 angels" unknown to us, highly known in heaven.

It would seem as perhaps at least 1 of them is Gabriel due to the fact that he himself said as he was speaking Zacharias about the birth of J.B., **"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God,"²** Be that as it may whoever they are they seem to be 7 high ranking angels whom heaven knows, & they are there in the presence of God.

It's at this moment as the 7th seal is opened & heaven is silent that these 7 angels are given 7 trumpets. Trumpets of course being (really) neither here nor there to us would speak volumes to Israel. In the nation of Israel trumpets were used for a # of different reasons, they might be used to direct the nation's movement throughout the wilderness, they were used to warn of impending attack, or to assemble the men for war etc. It would seem to me that such is the case here whereby God is (in essence) declaring war upon those who've rejected the offer of peace through J.C.

Israel was to blow trumpets before they attacked their enemies to warn them that it was coming; it's as though God is saying, "Consider yourself warned", having rejected the Prince of Peace there's nothing left but war.

It's kind of an interesting parallel between what's happening here & the story of Jericho. Most of you are no doubt familiar; you recall Israel was to march around the city walls of Jericho for 7 days & 7 priests were to bear 7 trumpets & each day as they marched around the city the trumpets were to blow but the people were to remain silent. **There was a "silence" before the storm & the trumpets were to sound. On the 7th day they circled the city 7 times & after the 7th time they let out a shout & the wall of resistance fell.**

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Zep 1:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Lk 1:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Even so the wall of this world's opposition to God will crumble & fall during the great tribulation.

Vs 3-6

Because of what we see this angel doing here (in dealing w/the prayers of the saints) there are those who think perhaps it's actually Jesus. However I disagree for more than 1 reason. It's true that Jesus is referred in throughout the O.T. as the "Angel of the Lord". However after His incarnation we don't see that anymore. #2 Nowhere else in the book of Revelation is an angel declared to be anything but an angel, #3 John described Jesus earlier & knows well what He looks like; I think if it were Jesus John would make that clear. #4 We don't see Jesus (at this point) acting as a great High Priest interceding for His church. His church is w/Him in heaven & at this point He's on the throne, loosing the seals & sending forth judgment & #5 perhaps the most compelling evidence is the verbiage John uses here.

There are 2 Greek words that translate "another" one meaning "of another order" something different, it's another thing altogether. The other meaning "another of the same kind", the word John uses here speaks of another of the same kind. Another high-ranking angel is coming into view here. He came and stood over the altar and was given much incense that he should offer it w/the prayers of the saints upon the altar of incense that was there before the throne.

As we've mentioned before prayer & incense are often associated in the Bible. The idea being that just as incense is pleasant, it's precious, it ascends into heaven, even so our prayers are just like that before God's throne. So before anything happens after the opening of the 7th seal, silence ensues & the prayers of God's people (the saints) rise in a sweet fragrant kind of way before the throne of God.

Btw "saints" aren't a special class of Christians. We can't improve upon the righteousness of Christ & it's simple faith in Him that causes you to be classified by the scriptures as a saint. So you're either in Christ or you're not, you're either a saint or you ain't (as they say).

So what are we seeing here? We're seeing the prayers of God's people set in motion the coming consummation of world history. This is the power of prayer on display! The prayers of God's people (perhaps contrary to popular opinion) are involved in the judgments He sends.

It's as though every prayer that every child of God has ever prayed along the lines of, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" or some kind of prayer that God would put an end to the evil in this world & vindicate His righteousness has been *stored up* & now it's *risen up* before the throne, then the answer is *gathered up* & hurled to the earth in dramatic fashion to say the least!

The ramifications of which brought about a very eerie & ominous happening of noises, thunderings, lightnings & an earthquake.

Now (just briefly) here we begin to glean a bit of insight regarding the cycle set in motion through prayer. How it begins in the heart of God, it's placed in the heart of man who then lifts the need up to God who then responds in moving upon the earth. **For whatever reason (don't ask me why) God has ordained a relationship, a partnership (if you will) in the accomplishing of His purposes upon the earth, He doesn't need us but He's elected to allow us a part in the fulfilling of His purposes through prayer.**

Somehow & in some way when we pray it opens doors through which God moves. God wants to move, but sometimes He can't find the person who will seek Him in the way He wants to move. We find that in Ezekiel where the Lord said, **"So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one."**³ In that case God wanted to show mercy but no one would stand in the gap, no one would pray & intercede for the people. That's where we come in, we wanna be those people who will stand in that gap & cry out to God for our city, our community, our nation, this ministry. We want to be found as a people of prayer.

In this case God is bringing judgment, so the prayers of God's people have gone up & the censer filled w/fire was hurled to the earth resulting in noises & thunderings, lightnings & an earthquake, the earth is beginning to convulse under God's judgment; so the 7 angels *prepared* themselves to sound.

So as the 7th seal is opened, silence ensues, the prayers of the saints are heard, the censer w/fire from the altar is hurled to the earth & it sets in motion these 7 angels who prepare themselves to sound from these 7 trumpets.

Vs 7

If these judgments sound vaguely familiar it's because in certain respects they are similar to the plagues of Egypt.

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 [Eze 22:30] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Even as we believe those plagues were literal happenings even so we believe that these judgments happen just as the bible says they do. The trumpets aren't introducing symbols & secrets but literal plagues upon the earth.

We don't need laws of nature to verify or ratify their validity in anyway because they come forth from the hand of God Who's not bound by the laws of science, or nature, or physics or any of those things. But if we concede that hail & fire came down on Egypt then we can't employ a different method of hermeneutics (or text interpretation) here so as to make this something different. There are times when we're able to take some liberty (John gives us that license) but until he does we just wanna believe what he says. We don't want to escape into some sort of creative symbolism but just understand this in a straightforward manner.

One commentator by the name of Joseph Seiss says here, "The truth is, if earth, trees, and grass do not mean earth, trees, and grass, no man can tell what they mean. Letting go the literal signification of the record, we launch out upon an endless sea of sheer conjecture."

Now was the hail mingled w/blood as it fell or is it the result of it's bludgeoning of the earth & the people on it? I don't know, I don't want to be here so that I get to know either...It's best to simply get right w/J.C. then you won't need to worry about getting an eye witness account but rather you'll be caught up to be together w/the Lord at the rapture of the church, hallelujah!?

Of course something else people like to entertain in these particular passages is how exactly will all this happen? Will it happen via nuclear war, is John describing fallout & the effects of a nuclear winter & all of that... Listen, I'm not going to say that it couldn't happen. What I am going to say is that we do well not to obscure the essential truth & that is this: God is the One who brings this judgment, He is not a passive bystander allowing nature to take it's course or man to simply destroy himself. This is the judgment of God.

The 1st angel sounds & the result from this hail & fire falling to the earth is that 1/3 of the trees are burned up, the green grass is burned to a crisp (undoubtedly destroying pastures & fields where cattle & such graze) setting into motion a whole series of catastrophic events disrupting the balance of nature & the supply & demand of daily sustenance.

Vs 8-9

Again waters to blood remind of the Exodus account. Do they become blood upon the impact of this Mt like substance that careens into the ocean, or do they become blood because of all of the aquatic life that's destroyed as the result of this impact? Again I don't know.

But check it out, here John gives us a little bit of liberty. He says that was thrown into the ocean was "like" a great mountain burning w/fire. Was it a mountain burning w/fire? No, but it was a massive substance like unto a Mt w/fire. Possibly a meteorite or something to that effect.

But check it out, the result of this judgment is 3 fold. #1 A 1/3 of the sea becomes blood. #2, 1/3 of all marine life dies & # 3, 1/3 of all the ships of the sea are destroyed (probably due to rogue waves resulting from the impact of this enormous asteroid or whatever it is).

I did a quick search on the internet & as of Oct 31st of 2010 the world fleet of ships (consisting of general cargo ships, bulk carriers, container ships, tankers & passenger ships) was 50,054 total ships on the sea. 1/3 of that # is 16, 685 ships instantly erased from the planet. Magnify that w/the loss of marine life & the disruption of supply & demand regarding cattle, fruit trees, general dairy products etc, we've got ecological (we haven't considered residual pollution) & economical disaster happening here of unprecedented, incalculable proportions.

Vs 10-11

So now not only is the salt water polluted but the fresh water is polluted as well. It seems another molten star evidently disintegrating as it enters earth's atmosphere & scatters all over the planet polluting the fresh water supply to the extent that if a man drinks it chances are it will kill him. Now again, that's a rationale explanation, but God can do this however He wants to.

The name of the star is Wormwood, which biblically is synonymous w/sorrow bitterness, poison & death (Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:3-4; Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7).

Once more we're not considering the fresh water fish or wildlife that this will affect as well, you can see the mounting concerns as planet earth is seemingly reeling out of control (though God is in complete control).

Vs 12-13

Total darkness for 8 straight hours. 1/3 of the day & 1/3 of the night.

It's not 1/3 less light, but that 1/3 of the day & of the night are plunged into total darkness. Just as Jesus declared when He said, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."*⁴

The prophet Joel prophesied, *"For the day of the Lord is coming, For it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,"*⁵ Undoubtedly crime rates will skyrocket as the sun & the moon give no light.

Then we have this wild supernatural phenomena that takes place as the angel (perhaps some of your bibles say "eagle", they're very close in spelling in the Greek [it's plausible that it's 1 of the 4 living creatures who has the face of an eagle]) flies through the sky (it's a reference to the place of the sun at high noon, the point being everyone will see this) saying w/a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining 3 trumpet blasts which are about to sound." Here's the point: as bad as it's been you haven't seen anything yet...

People will know exactly what's happening & why, God's not trying to hide this, it's not nature careening out of control it's God's calculated judgment. Notice the precision in the measurements. 1/3, no more, no less... Commenting on these judgments Pastor David Guzik writes, "[God] attacks all the ordinary means of subsistence, such as food and water; and He attacks all the ordinary means of comfort, and knowledge, such as light and the regular rhythm of days. Man has come to see these aspects of the created order as impersonal, perpetual forces. During the great tribulation, God proclaims His Lordship through their agonizing disruption." Now here's where we see the mercy of God in that He leaves twice as much as He destroys.

My suggestion is that you make sure you're not here when this hits, don't tread the blood of Christ underfoot by refusing the forgiveness He offers to you through faith in Him. God has loved you w/an everlasting love, don't reject Jesus, receive Jesus.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for the blessed hope we have in Jesus. Again we ask that you would stir our hearts in such a way as to set us on fire that we might share the gospel, the hope you've given us that people might come to know You, receiving salvation in You.

Here's the deal, you need Jesus in your heart & in your life, the bible is clear that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, to turn from your sin & trust in J.C. .

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 24:29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. 1982 (Joe 2:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.