

The Voice of Truth # 496

The Opening of the Seventh Seal

Now open your Bibles if you please, at the 8th chapter of Revelation, and let's all get quiet around our radios. Will you do that? As we have watched the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lion-Lamb, break and open the seals of the seven sealed book in the hands of him who sat on the throne, we come now to behold him as he completely opens the book, breaking the seventh seal. With your Bibles in hand let's read Revelation 8:1-6, which is the introduction to the opening of that seventh seal. As we read, may the Spirit of the living God lead us to unfold to you the most stupendous fact that will ever face a Christless world. Listen now:

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. And there were voices and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake, and the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

When the Lord Jesus opened the first seal of that book, as recorded in chapter six, we heard one of the living creatures say, **Come!** When he broke the second seal, again we hear the word, **Come!** And so it was with the third and fourth seal. Then when he opened the fifth seal, we heard the cry of martyred souls from under the altar in heaven praying for vengeance upon God's enemies. Then when he opened the sixth seal, the whole earth was shaken. The sun was turned to blackness and the moon to blood, and the stars of heaven fell onto the earth. This produced the world's greatest prayer meeting, which received no answer.

The inhabitants of the earth at the close of the sixth seal thought the great day of the wrath of the Lamb had come, because they could not understand how the wrath of God could be more fierce and more destructive. But when we come to the seventh seal, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, broke that seal and laid it bare, the Scripture says, **there was silence in heaven about the space of a half hour**. There was silence in heaven! Heaven is a place of activity, a place of worship, of praise, of shouting, a place of jubilee, because there's no sin there. In heaven, Christ is the center, and it's one ceaseless strain of praise and worship and thanksgiving. But when he broke this seventh seal, there came a voiceless silence. All angels dropped their wings, closed their mouths, and there was no cry, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty. The redeemed of heaven stood silent. Even the Lord God of heaven was silent. The Lord Jesus Christ stood as a stern judge with his mouth closed, awaiting the moment to issue the verdict; **Guilty unto death!**

In that seventh chapter, we saw that everything in heaven was ringing with triumphant exultation over the redeemed multitudes which no man could number. But now heaven is silent - no songs, no praise, everything is motionless. It is very plain that this silence is connected with the breaking of the seventh seal. Let's not try to explain that fact away; the language is simple and plain and means exactly what is written there. That is, there was silence in heaven. It was a great silence.

We find in the book of Acts, when the apostle Paul stood on the stairs there in Jerusalem and began to speak to the Jews in their own language, the scripture says **There was a great silence**. It was a silence of surprise and wonder, because they wanted to hear what the **babblers** had to say. Then we find in the Psalms, **Praise waiteth**, (that is, silent), **for thee, O God, in Zion**. The same Hebrew word for waiteth is the one for silence. So, when the Lord Jesus broke this seventh seal, there was such an awful expectancy until all heaven became breathless as they looked upon the pages of that book. All saints and angels hushed their songs to look and wait for the result, and even the triune God pauses before action begins.

My heart has all but failed me as I sat there before this scripture this past week and anticipated what is coming upon this Christless world, what judgment, what an outpouring of the wrath of Almighty God without mercy. It's the time of the culmination of all the wrath and justice and judgment of the holy God, who hates sin, upon a Christless world. This Christless world has laughed at, made fun of, spit

upon, cried down, mocked, ridiculed, defamed, cursed, blasphemed, and rejected the Son of God; the second person of the triune God. It's the day of burning; it's the day of the kindling of the fire of the wrath of God. It's the day when all mercy is gone; and it's judgment without mercy.

No wonder there was silence in heaven for half an hour. A half an hour here was long enough. It was the stillness before the storm broke upon the world. Yes, this half an hour of silence in heaven is a thing so tremendous that we may be sure there never was the like before, never will be again thereafter. Sitting here beholding that scene by faith, it just dawns upon me that I'll be there in that crowd. As a redeemed child of God washed in his blood, I'll be standing around the throne when the Lord Jesus opens that seal. But he's letting us look into that book now, before that day arrives. My friend, what he says here is so; and it's going to take place exactly as God says it will take place. No wonder Christ said in the very beginning of this book, **Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the word of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein, for the time is at hand.**

After this profound silence of 30 minutes, then the throne of God resumes its activity. Then we read in that second verse, **And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.** As soon as this silence is over, a company of seven angels comes into view, which stood before God. I wish you listeners understood more of the ministry of angels. Angels have their ranks in heaven; everyone in his place, and no matter what position he occupies, he's a servant of the Triune God. These seven angels here are of a particular rank and distinction, as all angels do not have the same dignity and hold the same office. Paul speaks of angels as dominions and principalities, powers. Daniel speaks of chief princes. Paul and Jude refer to archangels. Job speaks of the sons of God in general who come before him on their appointed times.

The Lord Jesus, while on earth, spoke of angels who always beheld the face of the Father which is in heaven. The angel Gabriel said to Zacharias, **I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God.** Then Michael is another angel who stands in the rank with Gabriel. So, we see here there are seven angels, who stand in the presence of God. Among those seven angels are Gabriel and Michael, and these seven angels were the highest of all the angelic beings that God created. We see them standing in the presence of God in all their majesty, but yet his servants

ready to do his bidding; ready to carry out his administration. They were the ones delegated, or commissioned to carry out the judgments of that seventh seal.

As we see those seven angels standing there in all their angelic glory and power and majesty as the servants of the Most High, they were each one given a trumpet. Let me say here that the voice or the sound of the trumpet is the most significant voice known in the entire Bible. As we read the scriptures, we find that God himself gave the Jews, his ancient people, their specific directions in regard to the use of the trumpet. The voice of a trumpet is usually thought of as a cry; a mighty cry, in its relationship to important occasions. Trumpets were used in connection with war. If you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppreseth you, then you shall blow an alarm with the trumpets. The weeping prophet Jeremiah seems to hear, he said, the cries of the trumpet, **O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.** I seem to hear the sound of the trumpet this morning, the alarm of war, the coming of the great day of vengeance of Almighty God.

Then the trumpets were used in the movement of the camp of Israel. This is described very definitely in the 8th chapter of Romans. Trumpets were also used and associated with the manifestations of the majesty and power of God. For example; when the Almighty appeared on Mount Sinai, the scripture tells us, there was **the voice of the trumpet, exceeding loud so that all the people in the camp trembled.** And then again, when the Lord Jesus shall come again, he'll come with a sounding of the trumpets. You get that, friend? From these scriptures, we have some idea what these seven trumpets in the hands of these seven angels are to bring forth.

The number seven is the complete number, and means a complete overthrow of all wickedness. Get it now, listen. Hold your seat. The breaking of the power of sin and the overthrow of a godless, Christless world, led by the Antichrist and Satan himself. The sounding of these trumpets are related to war and its relationship is to the battle of that great day of God Almighty and the wrath of the Lamb and the overthrowing of the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon. Now, let's notice in that third verse the changing scene that is taking place before the throne in heaven in preparation for the final judgment of God upon a Christless world. Listen, listen to God's word. **And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he**

should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.

If you ever listen to me, you listen to me now, will you? Before these seven angels begin to sound their trumpets, calling for judgment upon the earth, we see another angel come and stand at the altar, having a golden censer. This is the priestly angel, and I see no difficulty in the recognition of who this angel is. Under the Jewish worship, which was patterned after the original in heaven, only the high priests use a golden censer when he stood before the golden altar of incense. The other priest use silver censers, therefore this other angel is no one but the Lord Jesus Christ himself, our great high priest. He came and stood before the altar of incense with a golden censer. Isn't that some scene? Our Lord himself, our mediator, our high priest, now stands before the prayer altar of incense with a golden censer in his hand, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Let's first notice, what does it mean here about the prayers of all saints? He cannot be speaking of only saints of the tribulation period, but it's the prayers of the saints of all ages from the earliest existence of the human race up until that hour. What has been the prayer of all of God's saints through all ages? That prayer can be summed up in these words, as the scripture says, **thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven**. That prayer has been earnestly set forth to the throne of God's grace by the hearts and lives of every saint, every blood-bought sinner, every individual who's come to lie in the dust of repentance at the feet of our blessed Lord, and come to know Christ as our living Lord and Savior.

Multitudes have suffered in dungeons, died under the guillotine, been burned at the stake as objects of ridicule and laughter, been torn to pieces by the lions, sawn asunder, and killed in every manner that man knows how to put a human being to death. But our prayers have not been wasted. Our prayers have not gone unheard. They've all been bottled up there before the throne of God's grace for all these centuries. And now, now, the time has arrived when the God of the universe, sitting on the throne with the Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest, standing before the altar with a golden censer, lets us look in and see that his hand is filled with the incense. That incense is nothing less than his meritorious sufferings, his vicarious death on the cross, the perfumes of Calvary, the powers of the empty tomb. Our Lord stands there with all the incense of Calvary and the

empty tomb to give those prayers power and brings them, the prayers of all the saints of all ages, of all the blood-bought saints, with himself, and presents them on the altar before the throne of Almighty God and says, Father, the time now has come when these prayers are to be answered. Who else could that be but the crucified, buried, risen, exalted Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ? Here Christ offers the prayers of all the saints as the great high priest. Don't you see him as he bears them in the golden censer and perfumes them with the precious fragrance of his own meritorious righteousness and sanctifies them with the sacred fire and then presents them upon the golden altar before the throne of the infinite Godhead? My friends, there is not one of them forgotten, not one lost. He bears them all in this heavenly vessel of gold and presents them on the highest altar in the universe. They have all been endorsed and approved by him before he offers them.

The time of fulfillment has come, and the angel stands there in readiness to execute and to make the kingdoms of the world the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that his kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven. Can you see, my friends, that marvelous picture of those seven mighty angels standing in the presence of Jehovah God, with their trumpets in their hands, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, offering the prayers of all the saints now perfumed with the fragrance of Calvary and the empty tomb upon the altar? And can't you see the holy fire as it descends upon the altar? And can't you see the smoke rising from that fire, ascending into the face of the Lord God of Heaven?

Just remember that our prayers are not in vain. Sinner remember, you're out of hell now because of the prayers of the saints. But remember another thing, that when our prayers are answered, all the power of sin shall be broken. All ungodliness shall be put down. The man of sin shall be cast into the lake of fire. Satan shall be bound and cast into the bottomless pit. And all the ungodly, wicked, infidels, atheists, modernists, evolutionists shall go down in answer to those prayers.

Why do these seven mighty angels stand here with trumpets in hand? They are the answer to all the prayers of the saints through all the ages. They stand here ready to bring to pass and to answer those prayers, and to bring the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Praise the Lord.

Let's not get away from this one fact, and the reason these prayers are brought in remembrance here is because the time has come for them to be answered. It's

God's time to avenge His own elect that has cried unto Him day and night. When vengeance comes, it will come speedily. Cry on saint, victory is assured. Our Lord is the conqueror. God pity the individual who laughs and scoffs at blood redemption in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Now, as we have seen the Lord Jesus offering up these prayers of all the saints with the incense and the golden censer, there's another side to this picture that I want to call your attention to. Listen to it. In that fifth verse, and the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire off of the altar and cast it into the earth. As the great high priest held the golden censer with the burning incense, it says in that fourth verse, and the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. That's the picture of the high priest holding the censer up before God the Father. But in the fifth verse, we have a picture of the reversing of the censer. The holding of the censer before God with the prayers and incense ascending up before him is grace upon grace. But when the censer is perverted and the fire of the incense is poured upon the earth by the great high priest, it is grace perverted, and grace perverted is hell. You get that? Grace perverted is hell. Let's notice those words a little closer. **And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar and cast it into the earth.** John the Baptist said, he that cometh after me is mightier than I. I baptize thee with water, but he shall baptize thee with the Holy Ghost and with fire. On the day of Pentecost, the church was baptized with the Holy Ghost. But here the earth is to be baptized with fire. It is the baptism of fire, it is hell turned loose and who shall be able to stand? Christ said, I came not to bring peace, but to kindle a fire. I know that is partially fulfilled during the life of the church when men turned the gospel down and turned their backs upon the truth and wage war against Christ and his gospel. But my friends, the final fulfillment of that scripture will take place right here when Christ the great high priest will turn those prayers and incense upon the destruction of this world in all of its ungodliness and wickedness and corruption and immorality and iniquity and ungodliness. My friend, God hates sin. God will punish sin. And why will you die in your sins?

The day of judgment is coming. You can cry peace, peace all you want to, but sudden destruction is coming. How much longer will God be patient? How much longer will his long-suffering endure when this world has treated the Lord Jesus Christ as it has? I wish we could get this picture right here as we see Christ, the great high priest, standing before the altar of incense, with the golden censer in his hands, with the prayers of all the saints of all ages, that this prayer moves the

Son of God. Prayer moves eternal majesty upon his everlasting throne, prayer sets in motion the highest angels as we see them standing ready to sound their trumpets of judgment and war and destruction, prayer brings on the awful scene of the day of judgment. Prayer changes the administration of this earth and brings in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth as it is in heaven.

So, we see these angels standing here ready to blast their trumpets in answer to prayer. **Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.** But remember, all true prayer is inspired by the Lord God of heaven.

Let me call your attention again to that scripture, **and the angel took the censor and filled it with fire of the altar and cast it into the earth.** Our God is a consuming fire. Fire is the great consumer. Fire speaks of wrath and torture and destruction to the wicked. Fire speaks of burning. Fire speaks of eternal vengeance of God upon the ungodly that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Brother, I wish you'd listen. I wish you'd listen.

At this moment, as we have spoken about the opening of the seventh seal and the coming judgment, I wish you would listen now. Oh, that your heart would be moved as never before to turn to Christ. Now, this scene's coming, friend. I wish I had another 30 minutes.

As we bring this message to a close, I could not leave it just a judgment without holding out mercy to you. Oh, the mercy of the shed blood of the Son of God.