



# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

*“Where There’s Smoke, There’s Prayer”*  
8:1-4

**Revelation 8:1** When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

**Revelation 8:2** And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

**Revelation 8:3** Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

**Revelation 8:4** And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

**Silence** can be powerful in building anticipation. Like in movies where all of a sudden the adventurers stop and ask, “Do you hear that?” and they realize that everything has gone silent. They know something has silenced the normal sounds and is about to strike.

The most terrible, awful judgments of the Great Tribulation follow the opening of the seventh seal. It's the deep breath before the plunge. Thus you read in verse one,

**Revelation 8:1** When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

We're in the section of the Revelation of Jesus Christ that looks ahead to the future Great Tribulation. The opening of the seventh seal of the seven sealed scroll brings us to about the middle of the seven years of the Great Tribulation. The seventh seal will reveal a series of seven trumpets being blown, each releasing devastating judgments. The seventh trumpet will reveal a series of seven bowls being poured out onto the earth with even more devastating judgments. The seventh seal is significant in that it includes all the remaining judgments.

It would be accurate to say that the seventh seal is the seven trumpets; and the seventh trumpet is the seven bowls.

The **He** is Jesus who has been opening the seals one-by-one ever since He took the scroll from His Father in chapter five.

**Half an hour of silence** may not seem like much but it is relative to the surroundings. If your car radio has even a 10-second silence you think you've lost the signal. If I were to pause for a full minute or two you'd wonder if I was having a stroke.

Previously in Heaven a worship celebration had been going on. So thirty minutes is a long, long time.

As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, **there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak** (3:7). As the seventh seal is opened it is a time to keep silence.

God has spoken to mankind. The writer to the Hebrew Christians put it like this:

**Hebrews 1:1** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

**Hebrews 1:2** has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

God continues this way of speaking in the Church Age in which we live as the Gospel of grace is proclaimed. But a silence is coming, at

the mid-point of the Great Tribulation, after which the words of Psalm 2:5 describe His speech: **Then He shall speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.**

The silence also coincides with an offering of the **prayers of the saints** (v3-4). It's as if God hushes everyone and everything so He can hear those prayers.

Obviously God does not need quiet in order to hear something! He does it for us to emphasize that He is listening. When you talk, **God hears!**

People are confused and conflicted in our modern fast-paced society. They often turn to professional therapists for help. If your problems are not organic, i.e., they are not physical or chemical, then prayer is your best therapy. Realize that God hushes everything else to hear you – just you.

**Revelation 8:2** And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

We get introduced to seven new persons – **angels** – who are around God's throne. They will blow the **seven trumpets** that are the result of opening the seventh seal.

We know only a few names of angels. One of them, Gabriel, may be among these seven because, when he appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist, Gabriel described himself by saying, **I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God** (Luke 1:19).

The **trumpets** were **given** to them. God held them until just this time. The angels were standing-by and ready when called upon.

Readiness can be a challenge. Those in emergency services must stay ready when on shift. They have a heightened sense of action. Usually you relax when your shift ends.

What if you were on-call all the time? There would be a lot you couldn't or wouldn't get involved with because it might interfere with your ability to respond.

We are to think of ourselves as spiritually on-call 24/7 until the Lord comes for us.

**Revelation 8:3** Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

These verses mention items and implements that are somewhat foreign to us. They are foreign to us because we are Gentiles, unfamiliar with Jewish worship. The Jews *were* familiar with these things. Their Tabernacle in the wilderness and their Temple in Jerusalem had all of these items and implements.

The first altar you came upon in the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple was the altar of sacrifice upon which a fire was constantly kept kindled, night and day. There the body of the sacrificed animal was burnt. After the sacrifice was consumed, fire from the altar of sacrifice would be put in a censer and brought into the main room of the Temple to the second altar, called the altar of incense. Just beyond this room was the holy of holies where the presence of God dwelt behind a thick veil.

The Jews understood by these furnishings that the way into the presence of God was by the sacrifice of an innocent substitute. Once the sacrifice atoned for your sin, you could then approach God and offer your prayers before Him. Without that sacrifice, you could *not* approach God and could only face His judgment upon your sin.

The Jewish Tabernacle and Temple were copies on the earth of what actually exists in heaven. There **is** a Temple in heaven, with these two altars - an altar of sacrifice, and an altar of incense.

No animals are actually sacrificed on the altar in heaven. Jesus Christ, on the cross at Calvary, was the sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the book of Hebrews you read regarding Jesus,

**Hebrews 10:4** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

**Hebrews 10:5** Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.

**Hebrews 10:6** In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

**Hebrews 10:7** Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me; To do Your will, O God.'

**Hebrews 10:10** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

If Jesus is your Savior, then He is your sacrifice in heaven. If Jesus is your sacrifice in heaven, the angel can take fire from the altar, mix it with incense and your prayers, and approach the throne of God. The fire burning continually at the altar of sacrifice symbolizes God's holiness and His need to judge sin. If you know Jesus, then God's holiness has been satisfied once and for all; your sins - past, present, and future - have been judged once and for all.

The **angel** is given **much incense** to mingle with the prayers. Throughout Scripture, incense speaks of intercession. Hebrews 7:25 says that Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, ever lives to make intercession for the saints. In other words, the incense of Jesus' intercession on our behalf sweetens our prayers.

**Revelation 8:4** And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

The prayers being offered certainly are those of the Tribulation martyrs we encountered as chapter seven ended. They prayed for the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth.

But they may include the saints of all time whose prayers for the coming of the rule of God on earth are about to be answered.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, **Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**. More than a prayer, it is a passion that should permeate all of your prayers. It is a prayer and a passion for the return of Jesus Christ to rule and reign on the earth.

The return of Jesus is the full, final answer to all prayer. The kingdom rule of Jesus is when you'll see God's will done **on earth as it is in heaven**.

Second Peter 3:10-12 indicates that there is a sense in which we can *hasten* the Lord's coming by our holy conduct and godly lives. But



here we see that we can also hasten the Lord's coming through prayer.

We can and should also pray *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:20).

