

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Chapter 8:1-13

Topic

A moment of silence is observed in Heaven before the judgments of the seventh seal begin

Title

"A Hush To Judgement"

When FedEx employee Chuck Noland's plane crashed he ended up stranded four years on a deserted tropical island. Wilson the volleyball was his only companion.

Forty-five minutes of *Castaway's* one-hundred forty-three minute run time has no dialog.

Silence was almost golden for Tom Hanks who was nominated for an Oscar.

Silence can heighten anticipation. "Do you hear that?" one character will ask another. "I don't hear anything." The sudden silence precedes a creature that is about to emerge and attack.

The mother of all silences is going to happen in the future Great Tribulation.

Rev 8:1(ISV) When the lamb opened the seventh seal, **there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.**

If ever a pause could be called “pregnant,” this is it. When the “about” thirty minutes is up, for three-and-one-half years the worst of God’s wrath will be felt by the inhabitants of the earth.

I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Observe The Silence,** and **#2 You Observe The Scourging.**

#1 - You Observe The Silence (v1-5)

It has become popular to categorize the Revelation of Jesus Christ as “Apocalyptic literature.”

Apocalyptic is a genre of literature that is filled with allegories. It isn’t meant to be taken literally.

The Revelation is *not* in the genre of Apocalyptic literature.

In 22:18 we read the Revelation is referred to as “the words of the **prophecy** in this book.” Prophecy is an entirely different genre from Apocalyptic literature. Prophecy *is* to be taken literally. If the prophecy is told in symbols, the Bible will define those symbols for us.

The major portion of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is yet-to-be fulfilled prophecy.

Rev 8:1 When He [the Lamb] opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

R.E. Trotter writes:

“Whereas Jesus was referred to as a Lamb once in the Old Testament (Isaiah 53:7), twice in the Gospels (John 1:29, 36), and once in the Epistles (First Peter 1:19), He is referred to as the Lamb twenty-eight times in the Book of the

Revelation. We have to conclude that it is a book of salvation available to the very end.”

The most awful judgments are about to be described. They are sent and meant to be evangelistic. God offers “salvation... to the very end.”

The Revelation is a masterpiece of storytelling. It started with a solid outline. John was told, “Write down what you have seen, what is, and what is going to happen after this” (1:19).

- What John saw was a vision of the risen Christ in chapter one.
- “What is” refers to the letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three.
- “What is going to happen” is in the future, from chapter four until the end of the book.

We saw Jesus, looking like the Lamb, take a seven-sealed scroll from God the Father. The scroll is the operational plan for the seven years. The Lord opened six of the seals in chapter six.

Before opening the seventh seal, chapter seven gave us a *flashback* and a *flash-forward*.

That is how it is going to be from this point on. The seventh seal will be opened and we will have lots of flashing back and forward through the Great Tribulation.

Heaven observes a moment of silence. A hushed expectancy. “Do you hear that?” “I don’t hear anything.” It’s the deep breath before the plunge.

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

“Seven angels” take their assigned places. When the seventh seal is opened the seven angels will blow their trumpets in succession. The seventh trumpet

releases seven angels to pour out seven bowls in succession upon those who dwell on the earth.

The seals, trumpets, and bowls give you the linear progression. They set the timeline.

We think of “trumpets” as musical instruments primarily. Trumpets played a major part in the national life of Israel, used in ceremonial processions, in assembling people for war, for journeys, during feasts, and in announcing the new year.

Rev 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.

The silence continues as another angel performs his role in the drama. He has, in some form, “the prayers of all the saints.” Not the prayers of all saints from all time. We take this to mean the saints of the Great Tribulation. We met an innumerable company of them in chapter seven.

Maybe they are audio recordings. Why not? Imagine the storage capacity in Heaven’s “cloud.”

“Incense” enhances their prayers. It gives them a pleasing fragrance.

Notice that God adds the incense. If you want to burn incense to give your home a pleasing aroma, go for it. If you want to burn incense to enhance your prayers... Don’t. God isn’t looking for you to add the incense. He’ll do it.

We need always to resist our natural tendency to think that being mystical is being spiritual. Quite the opposite. The more we add ritual to our walk with Jesus, the more distance we create between He and us.

Being in Christ is not meant to be a long-distance relationship.

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

We previously were introduced to a group of saints holding a prayer meeting in Heaven. The saints alive on earth are their "fellow servants and their brethren." Together their prayers rise with the added incense to the throne.

Rev 8:5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

The martyrs in chapter six asked "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (v10). Their prayers stoked the fire on the altar. It's all very visual.

"Noises" abruptly break the silence in Heaven. "Thunders, lightnings, and an earthquake" alert those who dwell on the earth that the "great" second-half of the Great Tribulation has come.

It is not uncommon to refer to the final three-and-one-half years of the seven as the Great Tribulation. Those 1,260 days will for sure be way worse than the first days. They will be the time of trouble that the world has never experienced.

The seventh seal is like a director shouting, "Action!" It will be a live, one-take performance. It is carefully blocked and scripted. As Bugs Bunny says, "On with the show, This is it."

The Church Age is every bit as dramatic. We are to live in the any-moment return of Jesus to resurrect the dead in Christ and rapture living believers. Expectancy ought to build with each passing moment.

We, too, will be gathered by a trumpet call, the "last" trumpet of the Church Age.

While waiting we are compared to a bride, a soldier, a farmer, a builder, an athlete, a flock, a body with Jesus as its head, servants, and a steward. We are all these at once.

- Each role has its own set of adventures and challenges.
- Each role helps us to understand different aspects of what it means to be loved, protected, and preserved by Jesus.

#2 - You Observe The Scourging (v6-13)

The opening of the first five seals followed a slow pace over the first three-and-one-half-years of the Great Tribulation.

The opening of the sixth seal was like a movie preview. We saw "a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place" (6:12-14).

Those are events that will occur in the last half of the Great Tribulation:

- The first five seals relate primarily to the first half of the Great Tribulation.
- The sixth seal was a preview of the seventh.
- The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets and the seven bowls that further the action in the last half of the Great Tribulation.

Rev 8:6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

If angels need to prep for service, how much more do we?

- On one hand, we can already do all things through Jesus Who strengthens us. Everything we are commanded to do in the Bible we are enabled to do by the Holy Spirit.

- On the other hand, we are to read the Word, pray, be in fellowship with other believers, and tell others Jesus died and rose from the dead to save them. We thereby discover the good works God has before ordained for us to accomplish by His empowering.

Rev 8:7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

The first four trumpet blasts are similar in that they each use the natural world against those who inhabit the earth. The final three trumpets will release demonic onslaughts.

In keeping with my constantly reminding us that the Revelation is *not* Apocalyptic literature, commentator J. A. Seiss wrote, "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."

A mighty hailstorm, a real one, accompanied by some sort of fire rains down from Heaven.

"Mingled with blood" is just frightening. It could be the carnage from the deaths of men on the earth as they are caught in the storm. It may be blood accompanying the storm.

There will also be massive fires on the earth as a result of this judgment. In chapter eleven you'll learn that there has been a three-and-one-half-year drought on the earth - providing ample fuel for the fire from Heaven.

"And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up." I endured many devastating fires when we lived in Southern California. We evacuated more than once. The Panorama Fire in 1980 took over 400 homes.

Recall the most devastating fires of the last decade, and think of them happening all over the earth, all at once.

Rev 8:8 Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

It isn't a mountain that is thrown down. It is something **like** a great mountain. It is a giant, solid mass that will hit the earth, surrounded by combustible gases which ignite as it enters the earth's atmosphere. It impacts one of the oceans and a third of the sea becomes blood.

We don't have to discover the exact mechanisms that cause these effects. It isn't on us to prove such things are 'scientifically' possible. They are supernatural. If you want to get into some of that, get *The Revelation Record*, by Dr. Henry Morris.

There are more than a few similarities between the seven trumpet judgments and the ten plagues in Egypt in the Old Testament. Water turning to blood, for instance. One scholar wrote,

"The trumpet and bowl judgments intentionally parallel the ten plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7-12). The ten plagues are prototypes of the trumpets and bowls, providing a framework to understand them."

We take the ten plagues to be literal, do we not?

Why would the Revelation be non-literal if what it draws from is literal?

The ten plagues occurred just before Israel's Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. It serves as a foreshadowing of the Exodus of God's people through the Great Tribulation and into their kingdom on earth.

Rev 8:9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Notice the precision measurements. It's one-third - no more, no less. It shows that these are carefully calculated judgments sent by God - not simply nature gone bad, or human beings ruining the environment. This is not global warming or any such thing folks suggest today.

In apocalyptic films, there is always that one guy, usually a disgraced scientist, who discovers the 'pattern' to what is occurring. The scientists of the future will conclude this one-third ratio cannot be a coincidence.

Or will they? Nonbelieving scientists can be gullible. Many evolutionary scientists now subscribe to what I call the X-Men theory. Since there are no transitional creatures, they posit that every now and again over billions of years creatures simply leap forward on their own. Like Dr. Xavier and Magneto.

Rev 8:10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

Rev 8:11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Another object strikes the earth. It's called a "star, but is described as "burning like a torch." That is helpful because the Greek Squad says that it is a phrase often used in Greek writing to describe a meteor.

Or maybe it is God's version of a Death Star, made just for the occasion.

As it strikes the atmosphere it scatters all over the planet. It affects the earth's freshwater rivers and the springs from which they flow.

"Wormwood" is a plant with a bitter taste appearing in several varieties in Israel. Jeremiah frequently referred to wormwood as a symbol of divine discipline (Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15; Lamentations 3:15, 19).

There is undoubtedly a devotional study by comparing wormwood to the bitter waters of Marah in the Old Testament. In that story, the bitter water was made

better when the bitter water was made better with wood. The “wood” is the Cross of Jesus. I’ll let you take it from there.

Rev 8:12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

This is more than an eclipse. The light from these heavenly bodies is *reduced* by a factor of one-third. It will result in severe drops in the world’s temperatures, vast meteorological upsets, and climate changes.

Any doubt you may have they are supernatural events and not mankind ruining the earth is removed in verse thirteen.

Rev 8:13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

The remaining trumpet blasts, three of them, have the word “Woe” attached to them. It is a special word in the Bible, used as an exclamation of judgment upon God’s enemies or, in the ministry of Jesus Christ, of sadness over those who fail to recognize the true misery of their condition.

When God says, “Woe on you,” those who dwell on the earth ought to respond with “Woe is me,” and repent.

Weird but true fact: The word translated “angel” is odd and is more likely an *eagle*. Many modern translations get it right.

Here is a suggestion by Dr. Henry Morris: “He is both angel and eagle. [There are] four mighty cherubim, the living creatures of Revelation four... The fourth of these is said to have an appearance “like a flying eagle” (4:7).

I prefer to think of it as an eagle

- He could be a descendant of Gwaihir the Windlord.
- Sam the Eagle from the Muppets? Not fierce enough. (Is he still one of the approved Muppets?).

Animals have talked in Scripture:

- The serpent spoke in the Genesis account of original sin in the Garden of Eden (3:1-5).
- His donkey spoke to Balaam. They had a very lengthy conversation. We're told that "the Lord opened his mouth" (Numbers 22:28-30).

We know that "all dogs go to Heaven." (That's not in the Bible. But be nice to your pets, just in case it's true).

"The inhabitants of the earth" are warned because God is not willing any of them perish. Everyone, everywhere, will hear this warning from Heaven. Everyone everywhere, will have an opportunity to repent.

We understand the phrase "the inhabitants of the earth" to be a technical phrase describing nonbelievers on the earth who have deliberately rejected salvation and who prefer this world over Heaven for their home. They will be without excuse.

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. God strikes one-third. It's been said that He spares more than He strikes. Judgment is inevitable. The wages of sin is death. But in His divine wrath, God remembers mercy. Men will still have the opportunity to repent."

The Lord will scourge the earth ahead of the Second Coming of Jesus.

Our God saves *any* and *all* who will call upon His Name, trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross for the forgiveness of their sins.

One commentator put it like this:

“The Lord delights in saving people and is committed to doing that. Judgment is not what He delights in, but rather the regeneration of lost people. The Great Tribulation, while having terrible judgments, is primarily a time for salvation.”