**The Seventh Seal & Saintly Supplications**

Blessings to all the saints who are joining us. Please take your Bibles and open at Revelation chapter 8. Tonight, we will be continuing with our verse-by-verse exposition through the book of Revelation. For this this sermon we will only be looking at the first 5 verses of Revelation chapter 8. I’ve titled this sermon **The Seventh Seal & Saintly Supplications** with the hope that the alliteration helps you remember what the passage is about, but also, I wanted to craft a title that places an emphases on where we are in the story of Revelation so far and what the emphases of this passage is, in other words, what is the purpose of these 5-verses in the context of the larger drama that is Revelation.

As I was studying this passage, I attempted to research the thoughts and commentaries of various theologians and scholars on this passage. The first thing I noticed was that there is very little written on these 5-verses in comparison to any other section of the book of Revelation. When I was able to find a journal or a commentary that did expand on these verses it would normally be in the context of the Pre-tribulation, Post-tribulation debate. I did however discover a few good resources that took the time to expand and explain what the purpose of these 5-verses are in the larger context of Revelation. After looking at what the scholars and theologians had to say about these verses I attempted to look for some pastoral or devotional writings or recordings regarding these 5-verses and it should come as no surprise to, that there are even fewer resources available. The few that I was able to find, however was spectacular in their commentary and application of these verses and I feel the need to share them with you, so please look from them on our website attached to the page that you will find this sermon on once it has been uploaded sometime during the week.

**Let’s read Revelation chapter 8.**

**Let’s Pray.**

One preacher divided this passage into 4-sections, I chose to go with this outline because stays in step with our theme of the “S”-letter alliteration. The four division of this passage are as follows:

* Verse one we can call, **The Silence.**
* Verse two we can call, **The Sounding.**
* Verse three and four we can call, **The Supplications.**
* Verse five we can call, **The Storm.**

I’ll mention them again as we progress through the passage. Let’s start with the first point, **The Silence** in verse one.

**THE SILENCE [read verse one]**

The verse starts with the opening of the 7th seal. You’ll remember that the book of Revelation starts with John introducing himself and giving the purpose of the book after which Jesus appears to and instructs him to write 7-letters to the 7-churches that are in modern day Turkey, but back then would have been known as Galatia or Asia-Minor. After writing to the 7-churches the Apostle John is then transported up into heaven, into the very throne room of God. There he says the most magnificent scenery and witnesses the most terrifying and spectacular looking angels and beings worshipping God on his throne. In chapter 5 John’s attention is drawn to the right hand of Him who sits on the throne. In his hand God holds a scroll that contains his last will and testament, his last sovereign decrees for this universe and all who dwell in it. An angels calls out to all creation, challenging any one to step forward who dare take the scroll from the right hand of him who sits on the throne. Not a single angel or human or beast dare step forward to take on the challenge. After all creation has been humiliated in its unworthiness to come forward to the one who sits on the throne, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb who was slain steps forward. Jesus the Son of David the Son of God is the only one worthy to take the scroll from the Father who sits on his throne. This scroll contains the final judgements of God. These judgements will poured out unto the earth and all who have rejected their Creator will be subject to the horror of his wrath and judgement. The scroll is sealed with seven seals indicated the legitimacy of it. Is Jesus opens each seal one by one, the reverberations of the openings are felt in creation. You see, the opening of the seals are not the acts of judgement that God had preordained, no those judgements are written in the scroll and we will see them in the comings, but the mere opening up of the scroll, the mere breaking of the seals by Jesus is enough the inspire fear in those who have disobeyed God. As each seal is broken a judgement occurs on earth. They range from war to famine, darkness, and earthquakes.

Before the 7th seal is opened there is a pause in the narrative. God first marks his servants Israel on earth so that they will be protected from the coming judgements that will be poured out on earth the moment the last seal is broken and God’s wrath comes bearing down on this world. Finally after God’s servants are marked, the Lamb opens the seventh and last seal. After John had seen the horrors that took place with the breaking of each seal he could only imagine what lays in wait as seventh seal is being cracked open by Jesus the Almighty one and when Jesus finally breaks, nothing happens. There is silence in heaven for about half an hour. This is very strange, something is very wrong. The whole time that John has been in heaven he has been surrounded and bombarded with sounds and noises. John entered into heaven with a voice speaking to him as if it were as loud as a trumpet. He hears the 24-elders worship God and from the throne he hears rumblings and peals of thunder, he hears the four living creates worship God day and night. There are loud announcements. There are songs of worship and there are great multitudes praising and calling out to him who sits on the throne and then all of a sudden **SILENCE!** No comment is given as to why there is this silence. Some speculate this it is the calm before the storm. There have been judgements already that have occurred on earth, but those were the just the precursors, the reverberations of the seals being opened. The judgements have not yet even begun. The scroll is only now being opened. Some mention that the reason for the silence could be because of the utter shock and speechlessness of those who are now able to see and read the contents of the scroll. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Silence is the only proper response.

Psalm 76:8-9, ***“From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth.”***, Habakkuk 2:20, ***“But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”***; Zephaniah 1:7, ***“Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near;”***; Zachariah 2:13, ***“Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.”***

The silence is agonizing as all the angels and all the saints await the promise of God’s judgements that he has made thousands of years ago starting with the curse of the Serpent in Genesis chapter 3. This brings us to our 2nd point in the outline. **THE SOUNDING**

**THE SOUNDING [read verse two]**

With the breaking of the last seal the scroll is finally opened. The breaking of the seals climax with the opening of the 7th seal that usher in the judgements of the 7-trumpets. The seven trumpets will each in turn bring about the judgements written in the scroll as the wrath of God is poured out on earth against all who have refused to submit to their Creator.

Not much is mentioned about the identity of these 7-angels. We know that they have a special place before the throne of God, but also these 7-angels are not just 7-random angels who happened to be there. The definite pronoun makes that clear. “Then I saw *the seven angels who stand before the throne of God*”. Tradition holds that these 7-angels are the Arch-Angels of God since we see in the Old Testament that there is a hierarchy of angels, Cherubim, Seraphim and as mentioned as mentioned, Arch-Angels. In Luke 1:19 the angel that appeared to Zachariah, Gabriel mentions that he stands in the presence of God. Maybe Gabriel is one of these angels, we don’t know and we should be careful of being dogmatic about it when the Scripture say nothing.

But what we do know is that these 7-angels will bring about great and catastrophic judgements on earth at the blowing of their trumpets. We will take a look at those angels and trumpets again in the comings week as we progress through chapter 8 and 9, but for now, in verse 2, their trumpets are only given to them. They are not yet to blow them, but later the sounding will be one of judgement.

The trumpet is an object that carries a lot of meaning and symbolism. Dr Barrick mentions that they were used in the Old Testament as an alarm during war times or to maneuverer troops on the battlefield. They were also used to gather people or the symbolize the starting of an event or as celebration. But the angels are not yet to blow on them.

John then sees another angel in verse 3. This angel is next to or over the alter of God. This brings us to our next point in the outline, **THE SUPPLICATIONS**.

**THE SUPPLICATIONS [read verse 3 and 4]**

This other angel that John sees has a golden censer, a censer being like a golden container or a gold bowl almost. Some people identify this angel as being Jesus Christ because the angel is referenced as being before the alter of God and the censer is referenced in the context of prayer, however this isn’t the case. Jesus is already identified in verse 1 as the Lamb and the word used in the start of verse 3, “And another angel came”, that word another carries the idea of being of the same kind or type. So, this angel isn’t the Lord Jesus, and this angel isn’t part of the original 7 that stand before God with their trumpets.

This angel carrying the golden censer was given incense to offer to God. Incense being almost like a type of perfume or sweet-smelling fragrance that was placed on the golden alter before God. This setup is the original parallel of what the tabernacle and later temple had to replicate as can be seen in Exodus 30:3. This exact same golden altar was also seen by Isaiah in Isaiah 6:6.

The angel was not just offering sweet-smelling fragrances to God for the show it, no. In the Old Testament incense was closely related to prayer. The sweet smell of incense always represented how the prayers of the saints was enjoyed in the sight of God. In fact, in both verses, verse 3 and 4, the incense is mentioned along side the prayers of God’s people. This angel is coming to God who sits on the throne with the prayers of the saints throughout all the ages.

How often do we not think of our prayers as a vapour? We imagine our prayers disappearing into thin air the moment the words leave our mouths or the moment we say amen. We pray because it is the thing that we should do, or we pray because we hope that by some miracle our prayers will get past the ceiling and maybe at least some of the words make it to God. It is such a shame that we have such a low view of prayer, because as we see in this passage, and affirmed by many other passages through out the Bible, God delights in our prayers. Our prayers are like a sweet fragrance to him, because our prayers are an act of worship and a confession of dependence. We do not pray to God as if he was a genie that needed convincing, we pray to God because the Almighty, the greatest sovereign, the all-knowing one, the all-present one has allowed us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to speak to him directly as he sits on his throne. No one even dared to approach him as he offered the scroll to anyone willing and worthy to take it, but yet he gives us his ear to freely talk to him.

Our prayers are to God like a sweet fragrance and as the text says in the 2nd half of verse 4, our prayers are before God. Our prayers are not wasted, are prayers are not insignificant, our prayers are precious to God. So precious that they make it into the very throne room of God, unto his alter and rise before him as a fragrant offering.

Paul LeBoutillier uses the example of Zachariah and his wife Elizabeth that were unable to have a baby. In Luke chapter 1 it was Zachariah’s turn to burn incense in the temple of God. While in the temple an angel appears to him and informs him that his prayer has been answered, but Zachariah didn’t believe it, which makes you think they haven't prayed that prayer in a long time. Here comes the angel, saying, Hey Zach, God's gonna answer your prayer. He's like, which one, the angel goes, the one about having babies, Zachariah reacts, what? You mean the prayer we prayed 30-years ago? When we were supposed to be able to have babies? Before the Baby factory kinda closed down? You see, there is a lot of reasons for us to believe that they stopped praying for a child in their very old age as indicated by Zachariah’s hesitancy due to their age, but despite not having prayed that prayer in a long time, that prayer was still before God, and God did answer it. Their prayers were not wasted.

But here is where things get interesting. This angel, after bringing the prayers of the saints before God almighty, he initiates the judgements of God. The reason the seven angels stood waiting with their 7-trumpets was because they were waiting for God to answer the prayers of his saints. So, this takes us to our next and last point in the outline, **THE STROM!**

**THE STORM [read verse 5]**

As the Lamb opened the seventh seal, we see the judgement of God being prepared through the seven angels being given trumpets of judgement. It is ultimately then the saintly supplications that start of the trumpet judgements.

As the angel takes the censer and fills it with fire from the alter after the prayer of the saints were offered to God from the censer on the alter, the angel takes the censer and throws out its contents from heaven unto the earth as if someone were taking a bucket of water and pouring on the ground, but instead of refreshing water, the contents of the censer contain fiery judgements.

Just picture it visually in your head. As the fire is thrown from heaven from the censer it morphs into and transforms into peals of thunder and rumblings and flashes of lightning and hits the earth causing an earthquake. After this, verse 6 says that the seven angels prepared to blow their trumpets. It is interesting to note that all 7 of the trumpet judgements happen from above or happen from heaven.

**[Read verse 6, 8, 10, 12, 9:1, 9:13, 11:15]**

The judgements that are brought about by the trumpets are in turn brought about by God answering the prayers of his saints. Every prayer for vindication, every prayer of innocence, every prayer begging persecutors for mercy, every prayer pleading abusers to stop, every prayer asking God to intervene is now being fulfilled.

**[Read 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8]**

And it is like we heard in this morning’s sermon that we must never avenge ourselves, instead we must leave it to God to fight our battles.

**[Read Romans 12:17-19]**

Do not think that God is ignoring your please of help, he is waiting. Your prayers are before because he loves you and he cares for you! The one who sits on the throne has decided that he will shower you with ceaseless mercy and grace. He has opened his ear to listen to you speaking to him! This passage teaches us that we must be patient. The Lord is working all things towards a perfect conclusion.

And so, in the coming weeks we will take a closer look at the trumpet judgements, and we will see the terrifying reality that awaits those who refuse to bow the knee to Christ.

You may think in the weeks ahead that the judgements of God are too harsh or severe, but I want to remind you, that we have violated the law of the one who sits on the throne. When Satan and his angels sinned against God they were banished never to return, and we have done the same, yet, God has decided to show grace. These judgements that lay ahead are the least of what we deserve. The question is not, how can a loving God be so harsh with sinners, the question is, how can a holy loving God be so patient with us to give us time to repent.

All of history is leading up to this. God is preparing the world for the grand finale. Are you prepared? Are you in Christ? Are you looking to him? Christ came to bring the sinner to God. Just trust him! It’s easy. Put all you have unto Christ and let the perfect Lamb of God take care of you. Escape the coming wrath and find shelter in Jesus Christ the Lamb who was slain.