

The Pouring Out of God's Wrath

Revelation 8:1-13

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Introduction: Following the parenthetical chapter 7 dealing with the protection of God's children (those protected from death, & those preserved through death), John now reports the opening of the 7th seal. This 7th seal opens the 7 trumpet judgments, to be followed by the 7 vial (bowls) judgments. These developments lead up to the Second Coming of Christ in Glory. With the opening of the 7th seal, John records that *"there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour"* (:1). Walvoord comments, "Though 30 minutes is not ordinarily considered a long time, when it is a time of absolute silence portending such ominous developments ahead it is an indication that something tremendous is about to take place." (Compare the silence before the jury foreman or judge reads a verdict). Note further that such an intense silence would give time for all mankind in heaven & on earth to respond in one of three ways: **Reflection** (time for the saints to meditate & pray); **Repentance** (those who have now realized God is pouring out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world); & **Rebellion** (those who have previously rejected Christ continue to rebel). The silence is broken & John goes on to report the praying of God's witnesses, the pouring out of God's wrath, & the promising of God's woes.

I. The Praying of God's Witnesses (:2-4)

A. The seven angels (:2) >

1. Who? Seven 'archangels' (number of perfection, completion); possibly Michael & Gabriel??
2. Where? *"stood before God"* - in His immediate presence.
3. Why? *"trumpets"* - speak of admonition (warning) & announcement (witness).

B. The single angel (:3) >

1. Who? *"another angel"* - (a) a mighty angel (higher than the 7) (b) Our Intercessor & Mediator, Jesus Christ.
2. Where? *"stood at the altar"* - in the role of the great high Priest.
3. Why? transmitting the prayers of the saints to God (cf. Hebrews 9:24).

C. The saints (:3-4) >

1. The essence of prayer (*"incense"*).
 - a. "Incense was symbolic of worship & prayers & a reminder that intercession to the Lord has the character of sweet incense" (Walvoord).
 - b. Incense in Exodus 30:34-38 was composed of 4 spices & regarded as holy - never to be used for common purposes or pleasure.
 - c. Incense speaks of the perfections of Christ - His worthiness makes acceptable our prayers (His ministry of intercession).
2. The elements of prayer (in Revelation).
 - a. Praise - 5:9-10 & 12 (cf. Heb. 13:15).
 - b. Petition - 6:10 (& cf. Psalm 141:2).
 - c. Promise - claiming the promises of God.
3. The efficacy of prayer (:4), *"ascended up before God"*.
 - a. As we pray in His name & according to His will (cf. Psalm 141:1-2).
 - b. "Because He was the one sacrifice for sins for ever, our daily sacrifices of praise & intercession are acceptable to a holy God" (H. Morris).
 - c. "In the hand of our Great High Priest, wounded with the nails of our transgressions, are held aloft our cries of confession & petition, & God hears & answers" (H. Morris).

II. The Pouring Out of God's Wrath (:5-12)

A. The pronouncement (:5-6) >

1. The action (taken by the angel) >
 - a. "*Censer*" - instrument used to offer incense in the O.T.; made of gold & used to take fire (coals) off the altar to carry into the Holy of Holies where incense was added.
 - b. The censer is cast into the earth.
2. The application > (cf, II Thess, 1:6-8).
 - a. "...the censer is here used as a symbol of judgment, apparently in response to the intercession & prayers of the suffering saints in the midst of the great tribulation." (Walvoord)
 - b. "All who spurn God's loving forgiveness must receive His righteous vengeance." (Morris)
3. The anticipation (:6) > The sounding of their trumpets would signal into action a vast host of heaven to set about the task of purging & purifying the earth" (Morris). [cf. Rev. 11:15]

B. The progression (:7-12)

1. The 1st Trumpet:
 - a. The description - earth passing through the tail of a comet? Volcanic explosions world-wide? Compare & contrast with Exodus 9:23-24 & cf. Joel 1:19.
 - b. The destruction - fires ignite the trees & grass (earth dry because of drought).
2. The 2nd Trumpet:
 - a. The description (:8) - A giant meteorite, asteroid, or satellite of another planet? Causes 'blood-red' water?? cf. "red tides" - waters poisoned by multitudes of dead microorganisms.
 - b. The destruction (:9) - 1/3 of the sea creatures die; 1/3 of ships destroyed (tidal waves?).
3. The 3rd Trumpet:
 - a. The description - A star? More liquid ("*burning as it were a lamp*"); cf. :8, "*mountain.*" Fragments of this star fall on the fresh waters.
 - b. The destruction - Poisoning of the waters; "*Wormwood*" - "The deadly liquor ingredient known as absinthe, from the Greek "*absinthos*" (Morris) - cf. Deut. 29:18, Pro. 5:4, & Lam. 3:15 --It is bitter, produces drunkenness & eventually death. [Illustrate: Chernobyl]
4. The 4th Trumpet:
 - a. The description - Sun, moon & stars so smitten that their light is diminished by 1/3.
 - b. The destruction - The loss of solar heat will result in a drop in world temperatures & therefore affect the earth's meteorology & climatology (atmospheric storms?) cf. Lk. 21:25

C. The principles

1. "...the unmistakable implication of these judgments is that God is dealing in righteous wrath with the wicked earth" (Walvoord).
2. This is a warning for those who need to repent & receive Christ.
3. This is a reminder to those of us who know Christ - Consider what we take for granted!

III. The Promising of God's Woes (:13)

- A. A declaration - these previous upheavals were sent by God mostly upon the natural world.
- B. A revelation - the proceeding woes will be directly upon man.
- C. An invitation - the prospect for men to heed the warnings & be saved.

Conclusion: "Fearful as these judgments are, they are only the beginning of God's dealing with the earth; & as indicated in a special announcement, three great woes are still to fall. Though it is difficult in this day of grace to imagine such catastrophic judgments, the Word of God is plain, & men are called everywhere to avail themselves of grace before it is too late" (Walvoord). Unfortunately in that day, "most will merely stiffen their self-righteous & rebellious necks & continue on their collision course with hell" (Morris). How about you tonight? Remember the opening verse, silence in heaven for the space of 1/2 hour? There will be time for men to **reflect, repent, or rebel**. Those options are yours today. As a believer, will you reflect upon your relationship & responsibility to God? If you are not saved, will you repent & trust Christ as your Savior? Or will you continue to reject Him & rebel against His witness - I John 5:9-10?