

## THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL

### Introduction

1. Chapter 6 recorded the opening of the first six seals of the scroll – revealing the persecution of the saints and the coming judgment of God upon the enemies of the church.
2. Chapter 7 revealed an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals – during which the faithful were sealed by God and shown in the glory of their eternal reward.
3. Now, in chapter 8, the last seal is finally opened.
4. What will be revealed?

- I. Silence in Heaven (8:1-6)
  - A. The opening of the previous seals has brought forth striking visions and loud noises.
  - B. When the seventh seal was opened, there was silence in heaven for about 30 minutes.
    1. In one sense, this silence is the calm before the storm.
      - a. A half hour does not seem like a long time, unless you are waiting for something important.
      - b. Here, it creates anticipation for what is to follow and emphasizes its significance.
    2. This precept of silence before great judgment is found elsewhere in Scripture (Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13).
  - C. It is obvious that this silence will not last, for seven angels are each given a trumpet.
  - D. Yet, before they sounded them, another angel appeared at the altar, carrying a golden censer. {*This is the altar of incense (Exodus 30:6; Hebrews 9:3-6; etc.).*}
  - E. This angel was given much incense to offer with the prayers of the saints.
    1. This gets to the heart of this passage.
    2. Despite all the chaos and noise on earth, there is silence before the throne of God as He listens to the prayers of His children.
    3. The Christian's most powerful weapon is prayer (cf. Psalm 55:1-7, 22-23; 1 Samuel 1:15; 1 Peter 3:12; James 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15)!
    4. We need to make times of quietness and stillness in our lives that we may pray (Job 2:13; Psalm 46).
  - F. The prayers of the saints were heard and answered – the angel cast fire onto the earth (cf. Luke 18:1-8).
  - G. This is the beginning of judgment upon the enemies of the church, symbolized by thunder and lightning (4:5) and an earthquake (6:12).
  - H. This is a summary statement of what is to follow with the sounding of the trumpets.
  - I. Thus, the seven angels prepare themselves to blow their horns.
  - J. The lesson is: God hears and answers the prayers of His children. He is in control even when the church is persecuted. Judgment will come.

## The Book of Revelation

### Lesson Sixteen

Revelation 8:1-6

#### II. The Altar of Incense

- A. When one entered into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, to the front stood the altar of incense – made of acacia wood covered with gold.
- B. The instructions for it are given in Exodus 30:1-10.
- C. It stood just before the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.
- D. Incense was to be offered upon it by the High Priest every morning and evening.
- E. God specified the fire and incense that was to be used (Leviticus 10:1-2).
- F. This symbolized the prayers of the faithful that ascend as smoke before the mercy seat of God (cf. Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4).