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Revelation 33 Seventh Seal Revelation 8:1-5

Revelation 8:1-5, *When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. ³Then 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. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. ⁵Then 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 climactic judgment event that ends man's control and Satan's rule on earth is called the day of the Lord.

Day of the Lord, term describes the final takeover of God, as He takes the world and the universe that is rightfully His from the usurper.

The day of the Lord involves a final holocaust of furious and wholesale deadly destruction.

We have learnt that before the day of the Lord hits there will be a series of judgments that express the wrath of God on the wicked world.

There will be some preliminary judgments leading up to the day of the Lord.

They are described in the first five seals in **Revelation chapter 6**.

Those first five seals, **Revelation 6:1-11**, are horrifying expressions of the vengeance of God on sinners.

Sixth seal opens up in **Revelation 6:12**, at which point the day of the Lord begins. Because the description of the sixth seal is so very parallel to biblical testimony to the character and nature of the day of the Lord.

The first five seals are these:

- False peace,
- War,
- Famine,
- Death and
- Vengeance.

Vengeance being illustrated by the prayer of the martyrs in **Revelation 6:9-11**.

By the time you have gone through the first five seals, hundreds of millions of people across the earth have been killed.

In **Revelation 6:12** hits the sixth seal. That begins the day of the Lord, the day prophesied by the Old Testament prophets predicting exactly what God would do in final judgment. This is even testified to us by our Lord Jesus Christ as well as the New Testament writers.

As we enter **chapter 8**, the full fury of the day of the Lord has already begun.

It started with the sixth seal, and we now find ourselves in the seventh seal.

This seventh seal is best understood to contain all the final judgments.

All that is described here by way of judgment is an earthquake when the angel throws the fiery censer to the earth, thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

There is much more to the seventh seal than just an earthquake.

Best understood to include within that seventh seal the seven trumpet judgments which follow immediately in chapter 8, and the seven bowl judgments which follow a little later in the book of Revelation.

The first six seals then were somewhat simple. They opened rather simply and directly described.

This one is more complex. The first seemed to be opened in a moment.

This one, while being opened in a moment, then leads to fourteen following judgments that are opened sequentially.

So, this one takes more development. It's more complex, and that seems to fit as the judgments begin to mount in speed, power, and devastation.

The earlier first five filled up the prolonged years and months of the seven-year period known as the great tribulation.

The first five seals take us past the midpoint. It takes three and a half, four, maybe even five years for those first five seals to take place.

We are well into the second half, the time known as the great tribulation, when the fullness of the sixth seal really hits.

We don't know precisely the timetable.

But once the seventh seal is opened and out of it comes trumpets and bowls, it's going to take time for these to develop.

Revelation 9:10 there is a description of what happens under the fifth trumpet. When that what happens involves scorpions with stings and their tails have power to hurt men for five months.

That tells us that the blowing of the trumpets and the effect of those trumpet judgments is going to stretch out over months.

So, when the seventh seal is opened and the judgments begin, they are going to take days and weeks and even months before they are completed. We don't know exactly the timetable.

Some believe that they are not sequential. That is, seven seals and then the seventh seal issuing in seven trumpets, and the seven trumpets issuing in seven final rapid-fire bowl judgments.

Some would make them a bit more simultaneous. Seven seals and at the end, somewhere around maybe the sixth and seventh seal, you have the seven trumpets, and then somewhere right in the seventh seal you have the seven bowls.

But it's hard to be dogmatic about that.

The way the book lays out chronologically, it seems to be reasonable to assume you go through the seventh seal. The seventh seal is opened.

We have seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet is blown, then we have seven bowls.

The last fourteen judgments, bowls and trumpets, are contained within that final seal.

So, this is the rapid-fire final holocaust, it's going to take some time to fully unfold, and even some time for us to fully describe as we study through the chapters ahead of us.

But here is the opening of the seventh seal and this is the last seal on the little scroll that is the title deed to the universe. Sealed in order that there might be no revelation of what is contained in it. Once opened and the revelation of not only what is there, but the actual action takes place as it's unrolled.

Now we have the seventh seal and as it's opened to us there are four things in these five verses.

- 1. Silence,**
- 2. Supplication,**
- 3. Sounding and**
- 4. Storm.**

All those four words alliterate just so we can remember them.

1. Silence.

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

The one who broke the seventh seal is the Lamb.

- ✓ He is the one who took the scroll out of the Father's hand on the throne.
- ✓ He is the one who is the heir to the universe.
- ✓ He is the one who is breaking open the seals.

This is why we have the word "He" capitalized.

The Lord Jesus then breaks the seventh seal.

The six judgments are passed.

The seventh one is now open.

The Lamb, the Lord Jesus, the heir to the universe breaks open that seventh seal. As He breaks the seventh seal open amazingly it says there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

It's kind of an interesting turn of events, when you think about it. Mankind has often complained about the silence of God.

Sometimes even expressing the complaint of the psalmist who said, "May our God come and not keep silence."

Up till then, in some ways angels and men have been noisy, but God has been silent.

God is about to speak in the full fury of judgment, and angels and redeemed men in heaven are silent.

The tables are turned. The prophet Zechariah called for such silence in the light of God's glorious judgment.

Zechariah 2:13, *Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!"*

When the Lamb opens the last seal, all of those in heaven know what it means. It means the end has come.

The final judgment is about to be unleashed.
There are no more seals.

The scene in heaven has been very noisy.
We all know God loves noise, a joyful noise, loud singing. He has been having all of that.

Four living beings have been praising Him, twenty-four elders have been singing of the praise, not only of God the Father but of the Lamb, innumerable angels.

There have been harps, there has been thunder, angels saying "Come," praying martyrs under the altar, singing tribulation

saints. There has been an awful lot of noise in heaven, the noise of praise.

But when the seventh seal is broken and what is to happen becomes visible as the scroll is unrolled.

The implication is they can all see what it says that they are reduced to utter silence.

All the triumphant ringing hallelujahs, all the exaltation halts. It is the silence of awe. It is the silence of the anticipation of the grim reality of what is coming as well as the joyous reality of the exaltation of Christ and the devastation of Satan and sin.

This half hour of silence is the calm before the storm, the silence of foreboding, the silence of expectation, the silence of awe.

It is interesting that John measures the time in his vision experience as about half an hour. Absolute silence in that large crowd of innumerable angels running into the millions, absolute dead silence for half an hour would seem like an eternity.

The margin of suspenseful expectancy seems to us brief, but it must have seemed to him very long.

Some have even suggested that it is a brief half hour for a few more on earth to repent before the next wave of judgment hits, a brief half hour of agonizing suspense.

The wicked are about to be destroyed, the Lord Jesus Christ is about to be exalted.

The greatest event since the fall of Adam is about to come. It is so stunning, glorious, right, fulfilling, and satisfying that heaven stands in utter stillness, all its praise is silent.

The hour finally came. The saints are to be vindicated.

Satan is to be conquered.

Sin is to be punished.

Christ is to be exalted.

2. Sound.

There is a second thing we should note and that is the sound.

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

Another component in this scene.

Here are the angels and John sees seven of them.

Now angels always seem to play a very important part in the judgment of the final day. We can find that all through the teaching of Scripture.

Certainly, if you give any attention to **Matthew chapter 13, 24, and 25**, those things that look ahead to the time of judgment in the end, you see the important role that angels play.

We find that John sees seven angels. In fact, they are not just any seven angels, but notice they are described.

V 2, And I saw the seven angels who stand before God,

A definite article there which is kind of interesting. It seems to indicate that there is a unique group of angels.

Some theologians have labeled these angels the presence angels, seven special angels who stand in the presence of God.

Maybe that's not unusual. Maybe all the angels do that. Perhaps they just kind are fit into all the angels and are merely seven select. Perhaps they are unique, hard to know.

These angels have been worshipping God since the time of their creation.

Psalm 104:1-5, *Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honour and majesty, ² Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. ³ He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, ⁴ Who makes His angels spirits,*

His ministers a flame of fire. ⁵ You who laid the foundations of the earth, So that it should not be moved forever,

Angels were created at the time of the creation of the universe. Since that time, they have been worshipping God. They were serving God in the ways that God designed them to do.

But here are seven angels who are the ones who stand before God. They don't seem to be just like other angels.

The definite article, the unique statement, "*who stand before God,*" kind of notes that they have a special duty, they are the presence angels.

The angels are divided into all kinds of ranks and orders. The New Testament talks about angels who are powers.

- Some of them are called principalities,
- Some of them are called rulers,
- Some are called dominions.
- Some are called cherubim,
- Some are called seraphim,
- Some are called archangels.

There are varying ranks and orders of angels, dependent on God's purpose and design as He created them.

There is one possibility that we can identify a presence angel, maybe one out of these seven could be a unique one.

Luke 1:19, *And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.*

If Gabriel is identifying himself as an exalted angel by saying that I am one of the angels who stands in the presence of God, then these seven must also be high-ranking angels.

Revelation 15:7, *Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.*

There are seven angels with seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls.

These seven angels who are not said to be standing in the presence of God. Perhaps they are not designated as presence angels because they are a different order of angels, hard to know.

V 2 the use of the definite article and it may denote them as a special group of angels.

Certainly, if they weren't special before this, they got special when they do what they are about to do.

Their duty is to sound out judgment on seven trumpets. Seven trumpets were given to them.

Now trumpets are used for many things in Scripture. If you have studied the Bible, trumpets are the most used and most significant instruments in the Scripture.

The only thing that comes even close would be a harp or a stringed instrument, but trumpets were used for very important events.

- Trumpets are used to declare war.
- Trumpets are used to assemble the people, to announce great convocations, or celebrations.
- Trumpets are used to introduce kings.
- Trumpets were used to call attention to Almighty God.

Here in the book of **Revelation trumpets are primarily used to announce judgment.**

But also, along with announcing judgment, these angels will blow their trumpets and judgment will fall.

For example, the trumpet of war announces the last great battle of God, the battle of Armageddon.

The trumpet of assembly, the one that called the people together calls forth all the saints to the Kingdom gathering and even calls the rapture of the church at an earlier time.

It is also the trumpet of convocation, the one that was blown to announce jubilees and festivals that will bring the great call of the greatest festival, the celebration of the reign of Jesus Christ.

There will be a trumpet to proclaim the King's arrival, announcing the return and reign of Christ.

Trumpets use fits all these typical things and certainly signifies that attention be given to the majesty of God.

Trumpets in the book of Revelation are also used to hail the fall of Babylon. They were used in ancient times to hail the fall of cities. So, trumpets had many uses.

Almost all those historic uses kind of come together in the trumpets that are blown in this book.

These seven angels hold seven trumpets and each of them when blown will unleash a specific judgment.

V 6, *So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

V 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.*

V 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.*

V 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.*

V 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.*

Revelation 9:1, *Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.*

Revelation 9:13, *Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

Revelation 11:15, *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world*

have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

They are prepared for sounding.

They are standing on the brink of the announcement of terrifying judgment.

1. When the **first angel** sounds, **hail and fire** mixed with blood are thrown to the earth.
2. When the **second angel** sounds, something like a great **mountain burning with fire** was thrown into the sea. The collapse of the universe certainly fits that.
3. When the **third angel** sounds, a **great star fell from heaven burning** like a torch.
4. When the **fourth angel** sounded, a **third of the sun**, a **third of the moon**, a **third of the stars** were smitten, so the third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it and the night in the same way.
5. When the **fifth angel** sounded and a **star from heaven which had fallen to the earth** and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him and he opened the bottomless pit and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace.
6. When the **sixth angel** sounded, a voice from the four horns of the golden altar and a great army is gathered, an **army of two hundred million**.
7. When the **seventh angel** sounds, there are loud voices in heaven crying, the kingdom of the world has become

the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Then out of that seventh sounding come those final seven bowl judgments.

As the seventh seal is broken there is silence and there are angels poised for sounding. This is one of the reasons that these angels make up the components of the seventh seal.

3. Supplication.

At this point another figure grasps John's attention.

V 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.

Here is another angel.

He is doing a very interesting thing.

He is standing at the altar and holding a golden censer which would be on some kind of a rope or a chain, and much incense is given to him that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

We have two altars there.

That was the way it was in the temple in the tabernacle of old, they had the **brazen altar**, and then **the altar of incense**.

- The brazen altar was basically the altar used to fire the coals to burn the sacrifices for sin.
- The altar of incense was where they poured the incense, and the fragrance of the incense arose and was emblematic of the prayers of the people.

Typically, the priest would go to the brazen altar, and take tongs out of the brazen altar, hot, fiery coals and he would put them in the censer which was just a little instrument by which he could transport these flaming coals.

He would fill that little censer with the coals, and he would take it into the golden altar, which was the altar of incense. He would put those coals on the altar of incense mixed with incense and they would rise, the smell of that incense would rise to the nostrils of God. Symbolically speaking of the prayers of the people.

This angel is functioning like an Old Testament priest.

He is standing there at the altar.

He has got the golden censer in his hand.

He gets the incense, probably given to him from God.

Since God is the giver in this scene, in order that he might take this incense and the hot coals from that brazen altar, that symbolic brazen altar in the scene that John's having.

They might go into the golden altar and put this down on the golden altar, mingled with all the rest of the prayers of the saints that are already there.

Because of this priestly work of this angel, some commentators have felt that this angel may be Jesus Christ. May be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His role as High Priest.

That is possible but doesn't seem best.
The reasons why this may not be Jesus.

First, the Lord Jesus Christ is already identified in this scene by the title as The Lamb. He is clearly identified as the Lamb in the heavenly scene.

Revelation 7:17, *for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

Revelation 22:8-9, *Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."*

John is severely rebuked for trying to worship an angel. If worshipping an angel is wrong, you certainly wouldn't want to identify Jesus as an angel, that would confuse the issue.

The mention of seven angels also in verse 2 seems to define the use of the word "angel" in the context. Whatever those seven were, this one must be as well since he bears the same name, angel.

No New Testament usage of the word "angel" is ever ascribed to Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament, He can be referred to as the Angel of the Lord, but that's a preincarnate title. Jesus is never called an Angel in the New Testament.

So, it's best to see this an angel of some exalted place, not the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everywhere Jesus Christ appears in the Revelation He is clearly identified,

- ✓ He is alpha, omega,
- ✓ He is Jesus Christ,
- ✓ He is the faithful witness,
- ✓ Firstborn of the dead,
- ✓ Ruler of the kings of the earth.
- ✓ He is Son of Man,
- ✓ He is the first and last,

- ✓ The resurrected One,
- ✓ The Son of God,
- ✓ The Son of David,
- ✓ The Lion of Judah,
- ✓ The Lamb,
- ✓ The root of David,
- ✓ Christ, faithful and true,
- ✓ The Word of God,
- ✓ King of kings,
- ✓ Lord of lords,
- ✓ The beginning and the end,

but He has never called an angel.

Some angel stood at the altar. This is the place where the angels' action begins and its amazing action.

This is the heavenly counterpart to the brazen altar where the fires of sacrifice for sin burned. The angel is there to gather fire into his censer.

He has a golden censer.

He filled it with fiery coals to ignite.

He would take it in and ignite the altar of incense.

But at this point the imagery seems to indicate the altar of incense is already burning. It's already burning, and the prayers

of saints are already going up and they are praying for Satan to be defeated, and sin to be destroyed and Christ to come.

They are praying, in **Revelation 6:9-11**, as the prayer of the martyrs. How long, O Lord, how long before You take vengeance and how long before Christ is exalted.

God gives this angel more incense to go in to add to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne.

The brazen altar was on the outside, the golden altar was on the inside of the holy place, against the veil of the Holy of Holies.

Twice a day the high priest would do this, once in the morning and once in the evening. At the morning sacrifice and at the evening sacrifice. The priest would go to the brazen altar, and he would get fire, he would mingle it with incense, take it in right before the Holy of Holies, right by the veil, put it on the golden altar.

He would ignite that, and it would send the incense upward. It symbolized exactly what the people were doing outside, for at the very time that he was doing that they were praying outside.

Luke 1:8-10, *So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the*

temple of the Lord. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

The people are all outside and they are praying, pleading with God, and petitioning. He goes inside and symbolically lights and ignites the altar of incense.

Here you have this angel doing it and it symbolizes the accumulated prayers of all the saints.

Notice the word “all” is used there that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints, all the prayers of the saints that have gone up, that are going up calling for Christ to come are all accumulated.

V 4, *And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.*

The residue that he still had in the censer, he went in, did what he was to do at the golden altar, still had a residue in the censer.

There is still some fiery coal and some burning incense. Still in his hand. Anticipation as this prayer rises, it’s rising off the golden altar and it’s even rising out of the censer.

4. Storm.

Divine firestorm.

V 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.*

We went through the description of the sixth seal here and the day of the Lord, passages in the Old Testament, how the sky begins to collapse and the heavens roll up and the celestial bodies start flying all over the place and crashing into the world, and we went through all of that kind of thing.

This is another description of that in heavenly terms.

As the trumpets blow the other things smashing and crashing and careening into the earth.

This flaming ball coming out of heaven that smashes the earth like a celestial comet, like a meteor, it is propelled to the earth with severe results. It is destructive.

Matthew 13:30, *Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "*

Lord says that the angels who assist Him in the judgment are going to bring fire upon sinful men. Tares are going to be bound up in bundles and burned.

Matthew 13:41-42, *The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

The angels are going to gather all the stumbling blocks and all those who commit lawlessness and throw them into a furnace of fire. Fire is associated with that final judgment. The Lord will destroy through fire.

This powerful angel hurls this thing out of heaven, and it crashes into the earth.

What is an amazing connection here?

The censer in the angel's hand is inextricably linked to the prayers of those people.

Because where did the angel get the fire?

He went in there with the added incense and the flaming coals and put it in, mixed it in with all the prayers already going on. When it got all mixed together, he then reached in and took some out and put it in his censer.

What the Scripture is saying is that the final holocaust of judgment that is hurled at the earth in the seventh seal is in direct response to the prayers of God's people.

Do you think prayers aren't powerful?

It is in response to the prayers of God's people.
He will hear His saints and judgment will fall.

How amazing that the prayers of the saints become the fiery comets that strike the earth. There followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Probably this is what Paul has in mind when he writes these very unforgettable words.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, *and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The flaming fire starts before the final end.

What about this earthquake?

There is no description. There have already been earthquakes.
Revelation 6:12, described a great earthquake.

It would probably got to be its equal or maybe a surpassing one.
A terrible, terrifying earthquake.

This is what the world must look forward to.

Why is it that during that period of time when the gospel is preached all over the earth by 144,000 Jewish evangelists are preaching the gospel?

An angel is flying through space preaching the gospel.

Two witnesses are preaching the gospel.

At some point there, they even are killed and rise from the dead, making their testimony, sealing the validity of their testimony.

Then we have got all the people being converted preaching the gospel. Then you've got the gospel according to Matthew 24:14 being spread to the ends of the earth.

Why in the midst of all the holocaust and disasters and judgment, why don't people believe?"

Why will people still be unbelief?

Why when salvation has been offered, and judgment has been tasted? Why?

The answer is the same answer that Jesus gave in John 3.

John 3:16-19, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

They love sin.

They love it even through the Tribulation they love it.

They love it.

The prophet of old asked, “Why will you die?”

Ezekiel 33:11, *Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’*

God’s provision in Jesus Christ is so that we need not die in our sins.

We don’t need to suffer this horrible fate and a worst fate, eternal hell.

Why will you die?

Jesus said, will you not come to Me that you might have life?
The answer.

Men love darkness because their deeds are evil.
They love their sin, but their sin damns them.