

The Sound of Silence

Revelation 8:1-7

October 21-22, 2017

When John was given this vision, the church was going through a difficult time. The church had already suffered under the Roman Emperor Nero, and now under Emperor Domitian the church was about to suffer again.

That background is important because we tend to see the Revelation only in light of current events and can sometimes forget that it has been a source of encouragement to Christians for many years.

In that day, Rome was the iron fist of an invincible and immovable power. Jerusalem was in ruins, the temple destroyed, Jews and Christians alike were taken by the thousands to Rome to be killed in the coliseum.

This book strengthened their faith. They were reminded that God was sovereign and reigned over all nations.

In Revelation chapter 8, the Lord Jesus who is seen as the Lamb who was slain in John's vision of heaven, opens the last of the seven seals that sealed the scroll that was in the hand of Almighty who sat on the throne. When he opens the seventh seal there is silence in heaven for half an hour. But the sound of

this silence has been heard throughout time as an ominous moment in the events of the last days.

What is the significance of this silence? Does it have an impact on us today?

I. Be Still and Know That He is God

- The scene in heaven had been filled with wonderful and powerful worship. Myriads upon myriads praised God; the four living creatures continually gave glory to God, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was, and who is and who is to come.”
- Over and over they worshipped the Almighty and the Lamb. Worship is profound; it touches the soul.

Illus – Matt Redman tells the story of death row inmates in Indonesia who came to faith in prison; full on Christians that were even transforming other people’s lives. Despite protests from around the globe, the authorities there decided to uphold the death penalty. But when the day came to face the firing squad, something extraordinary happened...

- Worship is powerful, but when the seventh seal is broken there is silence; complete and awesome silence.
- There are other examples in scripture, when Israel first entered the promised land, they came up against Jericho. They marched around the city for six days in complete silence. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times and on the seventh time seven priests sounded seven trumpets; and the city fell.

A. Silence can be powerful worship

- There is so much noise in this world and it often feeds the frenzied lifestyle that comes standard in our modern age.

Illus – Today, with our constant access to smart devices, we can fill up every waking minute!

- Many know little of the power of silence.

Illus – Matt Redman was recording a worship song and as it reached its peak of holy expression, the worshipers began to become quieter until a holy silence fell upon them all. The presence of God was powerfully expressed in silence.

Psalm 62:1-2, My soul waits in silence for God alone; from Him is my salvation. He only is my

rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken.

Psalm 37:7-8, Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil. NIV

- In other words, be still...and wait on God to move.
- Compare **Revelation 8:5, 8** to Psalm 46.

Psalm 46:1-11 Be still and know that I am God....

B. Our prayers are God's priority

- Silence in heaven is followed by incense being added to the prayers of believers before God.
- What are some prayers that have been prayed by many generations?
 - *“How long, O Lord?”* This is the prayer that the early church must have prayed. The Tribulation saints prayed this in chapter 6. Many right now have this prayer in their hearts.

- *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*
That prayer is about to be answered in dramatic way. God’s Kingdom will come to the earth and He will reign from Jerusalem. Oh, we can’t wait for the day when His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

➤ The scripture says that God attends to our prayer.

1 Peter 3:12, For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer,

James 5:16-18, The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. NIV

C. Incense is added to our prayers

- In verse 3 John saw an angel stand at the altar holding a golden censor and much incense was given to him to *add to* the prayers of the saints.

- It is interesting that the incense was ***added to the prayers*** of the saints. That explains a lot to us...
- The OT priests would come before the altar in the temple and offer incense to the Lord. **They were adding incense to the prayers of the people.** This became a picture of Christ because His intercession for us is perfect and is perfectly sweet before the Lord.

Romans 8:26, In the same way the Spirit helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself interceded for us with groanings too deep for words;

2 Corinthians 2:14-15, Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ *to God* among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

- There are several places in scripture that tell us that the prayers of the saints are like sweet smelling incense to the heart of the Lord.

Psalms 141:2-3, May my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my

hands as the evening offering. Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.

Illus – In the 60's incense was popular because the sweet smell would cover up other smells of smoke that weren't exactly legal.

It's a good thing that Christ intercedes for me because my prayers would be more like -- *my will be done*. My requests could have disastrous results, but He intercedes according to the will of God.

II. Fire from the Altar Sets Things Right

- When you see the tragedies inflicted by ISIS or consider the evil that Hitler brought to the world or the injustice of evil men; there is something inside that wants things to be set right.
- When the trumpets sound, fire will fall from heaven as the wrath of God is poured out on the world. Fire from God sets things right.
- How important is fire? “Our God is a consuming fire!” Hebrews 12:29.

- God spoke to Moses out of the fiery bush, fire fell from heaven and consumed their sacrifices, the altar in the temple was to have fire at all times...a picture of the temple in heaven.

Matthew 3:11, “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not worthy to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

- Fire from the altar is added to the incense before it is added to the prayers of the saints.
- The angel before the altar takes the golden censer filled with burning incense and hurls it to the earth.
- This is a picture of the prayers being answered. *How long, O Lord?* The answer will be fulfilled. *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...* soon and very soon.

A. The trumpets declare victory

- God has used the sound of a ram’s horn and trumpets made of silver throughout Israel’s history.

Illus – The sound of a trumpet was used in war to signal the troops, but it was also used as a prayer to God for help in the battle. A trumpet signaled the year of Jubilee; the year in which all debts were cancelled, and all slaves set free. (Lev 25:9)

The sound of a trumpet will call the church to meet the Lord in the air...

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

B. God answers prayer in greater measure

- When the trumpets sound, God will pour out His power on the earth and answer the prayers of saints.
- He answers prayer by promising a great victory.

Illus – Someone might wonder if God hears and answers prayer today; to which the scripture answers, yes – rest in faith on that rock of promise.

1 Corinthians 2:9, but just as it is written, “*Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.*”

Illus – In the days of King Herod, an old priest by the name of Zacharias entered the temple to offer incense before the altar and an angel appeared on the right side of the altar. Zacharias had great fear, but the angel said to him, “Zacharias, do not fear for your prayer is heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you give him the name John.”

- Being without a child would be considered a curse, a consequence of sin. But Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous and faithful to pray for more than 30 years. God’s answer was greater than they could have imagined – the forerunner of the Messiah would be their son.

Ephesians 3:20-21, Now unto Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

- When we pray, God attends to our prayer, and though it may seem that God tarries long

in answering, God will answer in the right time, “walls will fall, trumpets will sound, debts will be cancelled, and victory will be ours.”

- “Lord, help us to be a people who truly trust in you and become a people who pray.”