

REVELATION – SERMON 38

PREPARATION FOR DESOLATION

Revelation 8:1-6

INTRODUCTION

- The politicians of this world claim to have the policies that will make our nation great
- But a rejection of God and the Bible cannot bring greatness
- The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. (Psalm 9:17)
- In the world today, God is not merely forgotten, but is actively opposed
- Men are not indifferent to God, they *hate* him.
- The apostle Paul warns that “the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Colossians 3:5-6; Ephesians 5:5-6)
- God has been longsuffering with the ungodly inhabitants of the world
- Yet there is a day soon approaching when his wrath will be poured out from heaven
- During the tribulation period, that wrath will be on full display
- Chapter 8 resumes the opening of the seals after the parenthetical chapter 7
- These verses describe the opening of the seventh seal and the preparation for the seven trumpet judgments

I. SILENT AWE FOR AN INTERVAL OF TIME (1)

A. The Lamb opens the seventh seal

1. This is another demonstration in Revelation that the Lamb is in control of these events, that all authority in heaven and earth is given him; and “to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever” (1:6)
2. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets and the seven vial judgments

B. Half-hour of silence in heaven

1. Heaven is a place where the continuous sound of worship is heard (Revelation 4:8)
2. But at this moment, heaven will fall completely silent

3. In the Jewish temple, the music and singing that sounded during the offering of sacrifices would cease during the offering of incense
4. It was at this time the people would silently pray (Luke 1:9-10)
5. God's people should come before him in reverent silence (Psalm 62:1; 65:1)
 - a. This is not the silence of Roman Catholic "contemplative prayer" which abandons reason, empties the mind, and opens one to demonic influence
 - b. Biblical silence is to seek the Lord (Psalm 105:3; Isaiah 55:6); wait on the Lord (Psalm 69:6); meditate on the Lord (Psalm 104:34); and meditate on his word (Psalm 1:2)
6. The prophets indicate that there is silence associated with God's judgment (Psalm 76:8-9; Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13)
7. The silence elicits a heightened anticipation and awful foreboding of what is about to be poured out upon the earth

II. SEVEN ANGELS ISSUED WITH TRUMPETS (2,6)

A. The seven angels

1. The Jewish tradition says there are seven archangels that stand in God's presence, yet this is not supported by Scripture
2. They may be high ranking angels as they are said to "stand before God" (cf. Luke 1:19)

B. The seven trumpets

1. As the seals portray God's wrath *unveiled* (chs. 6-7) and the vials portray God's wrath *outpoured* (chs. 15-16), so the trumpets portray God's wrath *proclaimed* (chs. 8-11)
2. The children of Israel used trumpets for various purposes
 - a. To call the people together in assembly (Numbers 10:1-8)
 - b. To alarm for war (Numbers 10:9)
 - c. To proclaim special feasts (Numbers 10:10)
3. These seven trumpets of Revelation summon the hosts of heaven to execute God's judgments during the tribulation
4. Trumpets are associated with the day of the Lord and second coming of Christ (Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:16; Matthew 24:31)
5. The first four trumpets affect nature (ch. 8) – the land, water and heavenly bodies, while the fifth and sixth summon forth demonic forces against men (ch. 9)
6. The fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets are also called "woes" (Revelation 8:13)

7. Trumpets are generally associated with Israel, rather than the church
 - a. The last trumpet that sounded from heaven was at Christ's ascension (Psalm 47:5)
 - b. The next trumpet that will sound from heaven will be at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

III. THE SMOKE OF ASCENDING INCENSE AT THE THRONE (3-5)

- A. Another angel
 1. Some regard this to be the Lord Jesus Christ
 2. But there are several reasons why this is incorrect
 - a. This is "another angel", the Greek word indicating another of the same kind
 - b. While Christ appears as the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, he is never described as an angel in the New Testament
 - c. Christ has already been identified in this heavenly scene as "the Lamb"
 - d. In his every appearance in Revelation Christ is clearly identified
 3. This angel is not acting as mediator between God and man, but is merely serving as a ministering spirit (Hebrews 1:4), doing God's will
- B. Prayers on the altar of incense
 1. The scene is of the heavenly temple with the altar of incense, upon which the earthly tabernacle was a model (Hebrews 9:11,24)
 2. This golden altar was located within the holy place (Leviticus 4:7) before the veil of the holy of holies
 3. The offering of incense and prayer are frequently linked in Scripture (Psalm 141:1-2; Luke 1:11; Revelation 5:8)
 4. Of the numerous analogies of prayer in Scripture such as wrestling (Genesis 32:24-30), and persistent knocking (Luke 11:5-10), that of incense is the most beautiful
 5. The smoke of incense as representing prayer is instructive
 - a. The honour of prayer – it is a sweet savour and well-pleasing to God (Proverbs 15:8)
 - b. The holiness of prayer – it must be offered on holy ground from holy vessels on a holy altar (1 Timothy 2:8)
 - c. The humility of prayer – it does not descend from the heights downward, but from the lowly place upwards (1 Peter 5:5)

- d. The heat of prayer – as the smoke of incense is produced from burning, so there must be heat and fervency in prayer (Colossians 4:12; James 5:16)
6. The content of these prayers
- a. These are the prayers of all the godly throughout the ages, who longed for God's kingdom to be established and for his righteous rule to prevail (Matthew 6:10)
 - b. These include the prayers of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10
- C. The prayer answered (5)
1. Fire represents judgment and this verse is a precursor to the trumpet judgments upon the earth that are about to follow (Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 12:49)
 2. Note that this description of voices, thunderings, lightnings and earthquake appear at the end of the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh vial (Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18)
 3. As there was a causal relationship between the 144,000 and the great multitude of believers in chapter 7, so too the prayers of 8:3-4 activate the judgments of 8:5ff
 4. While God sovereignly "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11), he has ordained that the prayers of his people are effectual in his purposes
 5. Though the cries of God's people are prolonged and not yet fulfilled, God surely answer them according to his timing
 6. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7)

CONCLUSION

1. To be silent before the Lord is to humble oneself before him in fear and holy reverence
2. When did you last devote time to silent meditation before God?
3. These seven trumpets that will sound in the tribulation pronounce doom on those on earth
4. But there is another trump that will precede them – the "the trump of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16) that will summon the righteous into Christ's presence
5. Which trumpet is for you, the trumpet of *grace* or the trumpets of *judgment*?
6. These verses have reminded us of the privilege, sweetness and effectiveness of prayer
7. Do you daily offer the incense of prayer before the throne of grace?