
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 8:1-5: “The Seventh Seal”

General idea: The opening of the *Seals* resumes as an unexpected “lull before the storm” comes. A dramatic stillness comes about as the seventh seal is opened. Perhaps because it is so overwhelming, no sound could be uttered. Perhaps this silence indicates that the Lamb, Christ Himself, has arrived. Imagine being there with all the excitement and enthusiasm, and then, suddenly the worship and praise pause, as a sense of awe and contemplation takes place. Imagine that Christ’s presence comes, the witness and participants give their reverence, and then the self-examination and the reflection on all that is happening begins. Just imagine all that is about to happen, and how overwhelming, exciting, and awe-inspiring it would be. Keep in mind that a *pause* does not mean a lack of activity, as God’s earth-shattering events (literally) are in the making.

Now come the seven angels who have been given authority to carry out God’s judgments and plagues. In answer to the prayers of the saints, retribution and sentencing begin. God’s wrath has been mediated by His slow anger and abundant mercy; but now, as the sin and evil have reached their fruition, He reacts as the last seal is broken, and God’s judgment begins.

Vs. 1-2: This passage continues to set the tone for six judgments, from chapters five through nine, as “Cycle Two” of God’s judgments are slowly disclosed and unveiled (Rev., chapters 8-11). Jesus is the Redeemer and Sovereign Lord, exercising His love and protection as He opens the last seal. He has opened them one by one, but just before the last one, He gives the witnesses and the world a break. Now, His final, everlasting victory is complete! Now, His Seven Judgments that set the stage for Christ’s Second Coming will begin to take place.

- *The seventh seal* refers to the appearance of Christ, who is the Final Warrior and Judge, and His return to earth (Mark 13:24-26).
- *Silence in Heaven* indicates the trepidation and wonder of all who are there to see the Lamb (although not directly indicted in this passage, it is denoted by context and word meanings) and what God is about to do (Hab. 2:20; Zeph. 1:7). The context is worship, and this silence can be one of several things such as contemplation and reverence, prayer, a dramatic delay before God’s action, God pausing to hear the people’s prayers, the lull between the fall of the old world and the start of a new one, or the overwhelming awe of all who are there, rendering them speechless. It could, perhaps, be all of the above; the point is that this is the final act and drama of God’s patience and redemption before the coming of His Judgment. The details are yet

undisclosed to us because they are not important. What is? To Trust in His rule and His retribution on our behalf. In Hebrew culture, this silence could have brought shame and guilt to the witnesses as they realize their sin and have nothing to say. Also, there was silence in a courtroom before an accuser would speak or a judgment would be given (Psalm 31:17-18; 76:8-9; Isa. 23:2; 41:1; 47:5; Hab. 2:20; Zeph. 1:7; Zach. 2:13).

- *Half of an hour* suggests that God is getting ready. This was also the approximate time incense was burned in the Temple; before worship, and when the people prayed (Luke 1:10, 21).
- *Seven angels*. These are the agents God uses for His “Seven Trumpet Judgments (Rev 8-11).” This is also based on John’s vision in chapters four and five as the “First Cycle” of Judgments take place.
- *Seven trumpets* sound the will of God and His crucial event. Trumpets were used as war cries, warnings to a town or city, celebrations, the pronouncement of the presence of a king or important emissary, or to assemble people, much as they are used today. This indicates God’s Sovereign rule as He “invades” over all history, time, and place. It is similar to the battle of Jericho (Joshua, chapter six), where the sounds of the trumpets echo God’s voice and destroy the mighty city’s walls. As with Jericho, this means God’s complete and final victory (1 Chron. 15:24; Neh. 12:41; Rev. 11:13). Here, these trumpets also announce a sequence of devastating plagues (Rev. 16).

Christ is worthy to receive our praise; He stands at the foot of the throne and, as our Shepherd and Lord, leads us to the springs of life and fullness. We must praise and worship Him for who He is and what He has done. Christ earned it, He purchased it, and we can receive it. Consider this: Christ’s eternal power, authority, strength, and completeness in the life He gave us empowers us to live a life that is worthy. What would a worthy, spirit filled, and empowered life be like for you? Keep in mind that He will wipe away our tears and fears!

Vs. 3-5: This passage is about God’s Kingdom having come. It is our prayer and our hope as Christians. It is the basis of the “Lord’s Prayer,” (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) and a primary purpose of our Christian journey, our sojourn to glorify our Lord (Rev. 5:8). The application for us is to keep praying for Christ’s Kingdom to come.

- *Another angel*. Angels are God’s representatives and agents of His will and judgments, who carry out His plans and orders. Here, this angel stands as a priest would (Psalm 141:2; Rev. 4:6-7). Some see this angel as Christ the Priest (Heb. 9:24).
- *Golden censer*, is the “fire pan” that held burning wood or charcoal and that

herbs were placed on so their burning would be slow and produce smoke that made incense for worship (Ex. 27:3; 1 Kings 7:50).

- *Incense* represents prayers that are pleasing to God and also the sacrifice we do for Him and His glory. God calls us to be fragrant by our trust and obedience that is pleasing to Him. Incense was also used by the Romans for celebrations. In addition, this can be a sign of victory (Deut 33:10; Psalm 141:1-3; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:1-14; Heb. 8:1-5; Rev. 5:8-14).
- *The prayers of all the saints.* God answers the prayers for revenge and justice, and the cries from those betrayed, victims of injustice and evil, and martyrdom. The guilty appear to get away with it, but they do not. God does indeed “have our back” and will avenge us. That is His role and right, not ours (Rev. 6:9-11). It is important to note that God does hear our prayers, they are noted, and He is moved by them in His time and by His will. We cannot manipulate Him, although in some way, shape, or form beyond our comprehension, our prayers do move Him. Not because He is movable, but rather because He, for His purpose and out of His grace, love, and mercy for us, allows us to be heard.
- *Hurled it on the earth.* God is using the actual prayers and trauma of His saints who endured suffering as the very weapons against the ungodly.
- *Peals of thunder...* is an image of the awesome majesty and power of God coming to judge those who are unrighteous, and deliver those who are righteous. “Special effects” in ancient times indicated an important event. Here, it is pointing to God’s judgment (Ex. 19:16-19; Job 37:5-6; Psalm 18:11-15; 77:18; Ezek. 1:4, 24; 43:2; Dan. 10:6; Heb. 12:18-29; Rev. 4:5; 11:19; 16:18).

Jesus, in the context of this passage, is also portrayed as our Shepherd (Rev. 7:9-17), meaning He is our Guide, the One who is to show us the way in life. A shepherd knows his sheep and they follow his voice. They get to know each other quite well. The shepherd knows their predispositions and personalities, how they will react and respond, and the sheep will change their ways to respond to their shepherd. No other shepherd, no matter how knowledgeable or experienced, can lead another’s sheep; the sheep simply will not follow. Christians must come to the place where Jesus is the only One we trust and follow. We must not let the interruptions of life, our fears, or our limited understanding motivate us away from Him. We must bow to Him, learn to walk in His ways rather than relying on our own experiences and knowledge, and avoid looking at the world from our experiences and view by seeing His. This means we do not contort ourselves because of apprehension or societal trends; rather, as mature believers, we must trust and obey Christ as our Shepherd and Lord. Because He is our Shepherd, He knows us-and we can know Him. He knows our predispositions and what will lead us astray, our personalities, what excites and

motivates us, and He is leading us to where and what is best for us. When we trust Him, we will see that He indeed has the best, most perfect plan and we have the worst plan. So, whom do we follow? For whom do we wave palm branches? What will resound in eternity from us?

The Preterist view: In this passage, they see the brief silence in Heaven as a contrast to all the noise of the worship. Or, perhaps there is silence because the saints get what they want, which is revenge. Others see this as God not being in a hurry. They see the angel taking the prayers of the saints and turning them into weapons of judgment against apostate Israel (Deut. 13:16; Judg. 10:40). The *trumpets* are instruments to rally the troops (Rome) to war against Israel.

The Futurist view: They see this passage as the subsequent progress leading to the Second Coming of Christ. The silence is like a foreboding pause and expectancy as people wait for the sentence, as rendered by a jury or judge. The incense points to the prayers being used as weapons against the earth. They see the saints as those who are saved during the tribulation and who pray for relief. They see the angel as Christ the Priest, who takes the prayers and turns them into judgments (Heb. 9:24).

The Idealist view: They see the silence in this passage as the mesmerized witnesses waiting for God to act and complete His will. The *half of an hour* is short in time but seems long when one is waiting for something good. The *silence* and *trumpets* recall the fall of Jericho, how the people were silent before the trumpet blast, and are symbolic for God's judgment. The *seven angels* are introduced as God's agents of judgment. Some see the seventh seal as another view of the previous six, not a separate judgment. The incense is intercession to Christ Who adds His power and strength to them, and uses them for His judgments.

The Historicist view: They see this passage as a brief interval before the series of invasions by the Barbarian invasions of Rome and Asia Minor in the 90's A.D. and/or 324 A.D. This follows Church history, such as the invasion of the Turks in 1453 and the Word Wars of the 20th century. Some see this as the 70 years of peace after Constantine's conversion and the closure of the pagan temples. They see the *half of an hour* as 70 years from Roman mysticism and history. Others say it is the somberness before the final seal's opening and God's judgment. The pause was not meant as a rest, but rather as a warning and heeding of what was about to occur. Some see this as a brief respite of peace after the destruction of the Temple, while others see this as the silence from Zechariah 2:13. They see the angel as Christ in His priestly role hearing the prayers of the saints that have reached Him. The saints are those who were slain in the days of the Early Church by Roman injustice. The seventh seal is seen as God's retribution, revenge, and vindication upon those who scorned His faithful ones. The judgments are for those of the Roman Empire who destroyed Jerusalem by the Barbarian raiders in the fourth century.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Do you like a time of silence when or before you worship? Why, or why not?
2. Look at Habakkuk 2:20. How can our silence be glorifying to our Lord? Why are some people uncomfortable with silence?
3. Why do you suppose there was silence in Heaven during these events? How would you react when Christ Himself arrives?
4. What role does “reflection” play in your faith? What are some of the things that cause you to be overwhelmed?
5. What does it mean to have reverence for our Lord? What about somberness? Do you need to do any self-examination so you can be more reverent?
6. What would a sense of awe and contemplation mean for you? How can you be a person who is more in awe of who God is and what He has done for you? How would that build up your faith and attitude even more? What would your life look like then?
7. How is our failure to overcome disappointing in our Lord’s sight? Keep in mind; *what we learn here on earth is what we carry into eternity.*
8. Our application is to keep praying for Christ’s Kingdom to come. How can you and your church practice this more? What does it mean that Jesus enables and empowers us to live a life that is worthy? What would a worthy, spirit filled, and empowered life be like for you?
9. What does it mean to your faith that no matter what is facing you or what you

have experienced, what you go through in life is meant to form your character and maturity?

10. What can you do to better praise and experience Christ? For example, how can you go from just “pew sitting” to being more involved in your worship of Christ?
11. God indeed has a plan and purpose for you! He is leading you now to what is best—including your growth. So, what can you do to believe this more so you will succeed and prevail in what He has for you and your church?
12. What would your life look like if you were more contemplative with your faith—that is, more prayerful and thoughtful with your faith, as faith requires reason and trust, action and understanding. For example, you could take what is given by His Word and then think it through on a deeper level so you have a real existential (deep rooted) understanding that will help produce a deeper change in your life. This means who you are in personality and how you change when you react to others and situations. What would that mean? What would it look like?