

Heaven . . . Hushed

The Trumpets of Seven Archangels – Part I

Revelation 8:1-6

Introduction

Pastor Bill White wrote about a forty-five minute ride that he took with a man he knew. They were in the man's van, which was on its last gasp. This man had been arrested several times and his wife had already told him she was going to leave him. Bill took the opportunity during this ride to talk to the man about the gospel of Christ.

The man's response was startling. Bill wrote later that after the gospel was presented to him, the man looked at him and said, "You know, my biggest problem is pride. I just can't humble myself. And you wanna know the reason I can't give up my pride?" He leaned onto the steering wheel, paused for effect, and then said, "Because it's brought me so far."

Bill wrote, "I could hardly believe my ears . . . his pride had brought nothing but trouble. Unemployed; his van would be repossessed in a week; his family a shambles; his daughter is terrified of him; in fact, he was actually going back to jail a week after I took that ride with him . . . but he was convinced that his pride had brought him so far."ⁱ

"Look how far I've brought myself."

As tragic and self-destructing as this man's pride was, he happens to be an illustration of the human race.

Proud; defiant; obstinate; unbending; unyielding – even in the face of terrible suffering, fractured relationships, financial distress, and problem after problem, mankind will tell that he has come so far, and all by himself. Even though their

lives are a mess, mankind will defend them and with great pride announce, "Look how far I've come!"

One author wrote that most people who hear the gospel are so caught up with themselves that they will only eye the Trinity for a possible vacancy.ⁱⁱ

This kind of obstinacy and pride is never more evident than during the Tribulation, when everyone's world is crashing down around them. Even then, they hold to their stubborn rebellion against God who sits upon the throne.

Thus far in our study of the book of Revelation, we have studied the six seals and the world madness that unfolded. During this time, 144,000 sealed evangelists, who are given special protection, deliver the gospel worldwide and bring in a great harvest of souls. Millions are martyred for their faith in Christ.

Meanwhile, the world is reeling from the plagues of pestilence, earthquakes, asteroid impacts, darkness, and famine. Yet, in spite of all this madness, millions of humans the world over will say, "We will not humble ourselves before God. We're clinging to our pride and obstinacy – it has brought us so far!"

These people are no more foolish in their pride than the man who works in the office next to you or the woman who lives next to you or the student who sits next to you whose world is a shambles, whose relationships are self-serving, whose bank account is never full enough, and whose world is never quite secure enough, and yet they believe they are doing a pretty good job with their lives and will even say that they have everything under control. In fact, if they had an audience with God, they would only do so in order to give Him some advice.

Paul wrote of this irony in the unbeliever's life,

*Destruction and misery are in their paths,
and the path of peace they have not
known.*

*[Yet] there is no fear of God before their
eyes.*

(Romans 3:16-18)

We are about to see in the record of John's vision, an even further hardening of men's hearts against the Lamb. They are now prepared to follow the antichrist with passion and purpose.

God tips the scales of His judgment as the seventh seal is about to be opened. In the final years of the seven year Tribulation, more terrifying apocalyptic events of world catastrophe and wrath than ever witnessed will assault humanity and planet Earth.

Seven angels are about to make an appearance and seven trumpets are about to sound. These seven trumpets are actually a part of the seventh seal; the first four are unique in that they occur in rapid succession, if not simultaneously.ⁱⁱⁱ

All of this will occur in the last three and a half years of the Tribulation period.

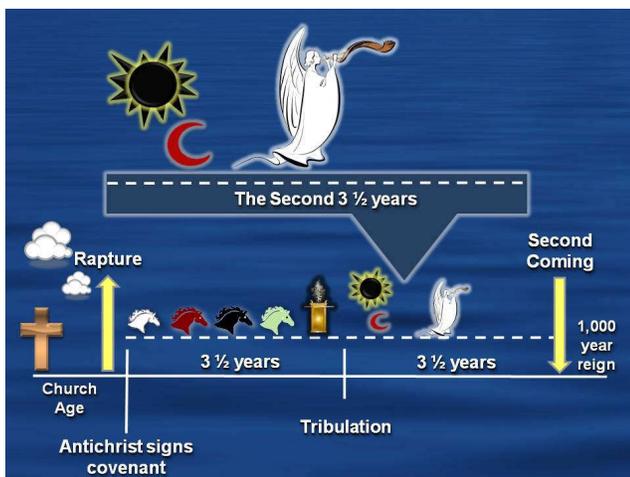
The Seventh Seal

Notice the opening phrase of Revelation chapter 8, verse 1.

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal . . .

Understand that this final seal – the seventh seal – will actually contain all the judgments of the remaining time left in the Tribulation. All of this judgment is going to unfold with the image of trumpets being blown and bowls being poured out.

The seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath are all contained in this seventh seal.



Remember:

- the **first seal** was a white horse and temporary peace;
- the **second seal** was a red horse and a horseman representing war and bloodshed.
- the **third seal** was a black horse representing global famine;
- the **fourth seal** was a pale green horse representing pestilence and death;
- the **fifth seal** was the prayers of martyrs ascending before the throne of God as incense from the golden altar;
- the **sixth seal** was a total eclipse of sun and moon – the sun turning black and the moon blood red.

Now the **seventh seal** is broken – containing all the rest of the judgments, represented by trumpets and followed by bowls that symbolize the pouring out of even more wrath to come.^{iv}

We are getting close – the trumpets and bowls occur just a few years prior to the return of Christ with the church, His bride. His bride has already been raptured and is now with Him – delivered out of and away from this wrath to come (I Thessalonians 1:10).

When this seventh seal is opened, there are only about three years left before we come back and Christ establishes His literal reign on Earth for a thousand years. We will study this in detail later, when we arrive at the revelation of John in which he reveals incredible sights and sounds of this coming millennial kingdom.

Christ will fulfill all prophecy in His second coming, as He did in His first coming, and He will sit in Jerusalem – the Son of David, the Sovereign-Messiah, the Shepherd-King. And, if you dare to believe it – and you can because He promised it in Revelation 20 – He plans for us to reign with Him as co-regents in His Kingdom. What amazing grace!

Now, as this scene unfolds in Revelation chapter 8, we are immediately struck by several dramatic elements.

1. The first element is silence.

Notice further in Revelation 8:1.

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

This one verse forces us to again rethink the issue of time in heaven. I know the hymn writer wrote,

“When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more,” and I really do not want to be stoned outside the city gates for disagreeing with a hymn writer, but it is not true. Evidently, according to Revelation chapter 8, someone is keeping time in heaven.

Add to this the reference to trees in heaven bearing fruit every month (Revelation 22). Someone is keeping record of days and weeks in heaven.

Furthermore, we discover the progression of events – as seen in this scene with an angel blowing the first of seven trumpets after thirty minutes of silence.

Also, we evidently are not always going to be singing before the throne of God because in this verse, we have been told to stop and watch an amazing scene for at least thirty minutes. This indicates there might be other stopping and starting points along the way as well.

I am struck by God’s ordering of silence in heaven. Until this point, heaven has been filled with amazing sounds, such as:

- lightning flashing with peals of thunder (chapter 4);
- creatures before the throne of God chanting “Holy, Holy, Holy” (chapter 4);
- the amazing singing of the saints (chapter 5);
- the cries of martyrs before the throne of God (chapter 6);
- millions of martyred saints waving palm branches and shouting, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (chapter 7).

Heaven is a filled with praising, singing, and praying.

Now, however, evidently at the command of God, heaven is hushed. In fact, the focus of our attention is riveted on an unfolding angelic scene.

Notice Revelation 8:2.

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

For thirty minutes heaven is silenced as this scene unfolds.

Have you ever watched a courtroom scene on television – or perhaps been in the gallery yourself – as the foreman stood and read the verdict? Just before he got to the last word, which would either be “Innocent” or “Guilty,” there was a dramatic pause. Everyone leaned forward in hushed anticipation.^v

This is the silence of anticipation in this scene.

One author said that this silence was the silence just before the singing of the last “Hallelujah” in the *Hallelujah Chorus*; the pause before the singing of the final magnificent “Hallelujah”.

This is the silence of awe here.

Perhaps you are a parent of little children. If the house gets quiet, it is not necessarily a good thing, right? All of a sudden you realize you have not heard your child playing – and it is probably not a good sign.

It might mean your little three-year-old boy found some magic markers and is pretending to be Michelangelo – creating his masterpiece on his bedroom wall. Or, your little girl has somehow opened a cupboard door and is inside – nicely and quietly – with a two pound bag of flour, pretending to be Betty Crocker.

Silence in your home is not a good thing. It might be a warning that something is up.

Something is about to happen on Earth. And all of heaven watches this ceremony as seven angels are given seven trumpets.

I am struck, not only by thirty minutes of silence in heaven, but by seven special angels.

2. The second element is seven special angels.

These angels were introduced in verse 2, but notice the use of the article “the” before “seven angels”. These are not just any seven, but,

... the seven angels who stand before God . . .

Jewish tradition has long held to what they call the “seven archangels of the Presence,” and they are named. In scripture, they are not named, but the article, “the” with “seven angels” proves their existence as a special class or a specific grouping.^{vi}

Add to this the perfect participle translated “stand” – they stand before God. This also indicates that these angels have been in this position before and have been for some time.^{vii}

You may remember that the Bible describes a number of different classifications for angels. These include:

- cherubim (Genesis 3:24);
- seraphim (Isaiah 6:2);
- archangels (I Thessalonians 4:16).

These seven angels are more than likely archangels – a high ranking class of angel given the incredible task of announcing the judgment of God.

It is interesting that when Gabriel announced to Zacharias the news of the coming Messiah, he introduced himself rather uniquely as,

. . . Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God . . . (Luke 1:19)

It is fascinating that the same angel who announced the triumphant birth of the Lamb is now about to sound a trumpet announcing the terrible wrath of the Lamb of God.

This is something you and I, as believers, are going to witness firsthand. This is our future. We will have been raptured and are in the presence of our Lord.

We have been hushed and are now watching Gabriel, and probably Michael, and five others who have never been mentioned, place trumpets to their lips, ready to sound them to the ends of the universe.

This struck me too – seven trumpets.

3. The third element is seven trumpets.

In the ancient world, the trumpet was used more as an instrument of announcement than of music.^{viii}

In the apostle Paul's day, the Roman army was called to gather for battle by the first trumpet, while the last trumpet, which made a deeper sound, signaled to them to end the battle and come back.

I believe this was the use Paul had in mind with the phrase "the last trumpet" in I Corinthians 15:52. This is the trumpet call for the believer to end the battle – we will not need weapons anymore because our Commander has called us home.

"The last trump" can also be understood in this way in the Jewish Feast of Trumpets. The Jewish practice involved blowing trumpets at this feast each year. During the ceremony, there was a series of short trumpet blasts of various lengths, concluding with the longest blast of all, called the "tekiah gedolah," or "the last trump". Judaism connected this last trump with the resurrection from the dead.

Paul could also have had this thought in mind when he wrote to the Thessalonians about the trumpet call of the rapture. He wrote,

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 [the Latin word "rapturo," or raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air . . .

(I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

So, whichever way we want to understand the trumpet of God related to the rapture – through Jewish or Roman culture – it holds great significance to the truth of the coming rapture as a call to end the battle or a call of resurrection.

Throughout scripture, the trumpet is also sounded in relation to God's law and judgment.

At Sinai, when God descended to give the Law, the trumpet sounded long and grew louder and louder (Exodus 19:19).

Before the walls of Jericho fell, the priest blew seven trumpets to warn the inhabitants for six days and then, on the seventh day, blew the trumpets and the wall came tumblin' down (Joshua 6).

The prophets connected the sounding of trumpets with the Day of the Lord and His terrible wrath (Zephaniah 1:16; Zechariah 9:14).

These are the trumpets of Revelation 8 – unleashing further warning, but primarily unleashing great judgment.

If these events are just around the corner, you will either hear the trumpet call home, as a believer in Christ, or you will hear the trumpet of judgment as God unleashes His wrath in the greatest, most terrifying measure ever unleashed on planet Earth. I exhort you to believe in Christ, and ready yourself for the trumpet of God that ends your battle on Earth; I advise you to escape the trumpets of angels that signal the wrath of God on Earth.

In this opening scene in Revelation 8, I am struck by the silence of heaven, the special angels, the seven trumpets, and one more element.

4. The final element is the prayers of the saints ascending to God.

Notice Revelation 8:3-5.

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer [a small fire pan]; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

This can only be understood in light of the Old Testament system of worship. Incense played a part in symbolizing the prayers of the believers ascending to God.

After the sinless lamb was offered, two priests would take hot coals and ashes from the golden altar as they entered the Holy Place, just outside the Holy of Holies. One priest filled his golden saucer – or censer – with grains of incense. The other priest would place hot coals from the golden altar into a golden bowl. The incense would be sprinkled on top of the coals and the smoke would waft upward, a pleasant aroma, ascending as it were to the throne of God. During the solemn ceremony, silence would pervade the outer court as people prayed.^{ix}

This is a dramatic scene – and we are watching it unfold.

Then, the angel in this scene takes the censer and casts it toward Earth to signify that the judgment of God is about to be unleashed.

Heaven is hushed as the prayers of the saints waft their way to the presence of God.

One author suggested the precious thought that it is as if the prayers of the saints are about to go up to God – and it may be that everything halts and hushes in heaven so that the prayers of the saints may be heard.^x

Now, God does not need it to be quiet in heaven for Him to hear prayers from Earth. However, we can say that the prayers of the saints are given His fullest attention in this awe-inspiring ceremony. In fact, His actions are seen in direct relation to the prayers of the saints.

Frankly, I think this will be one of the unrehearsed moments in heaven that will have great meaning to every one of us who will be there.

We will be there. We will see the drama of prayers long unanswered, but not forgotten. They have been reserved for this time.

Frankly, we do not know if these represent the prayers of those martyred in Revelation chapter 5 or beyond them. They may very well represent the prayers of all the saints of all time –

- every cry out to God;
- every frustration uttered to His throne;
- every praise given to His glory;
- every surrender uttered by His children;
- every impatient request for His will;
- every longing uttered for relief;

- every anguished cry for His will;
 - every plea for justice and equity;
 - every hope breathed to God
- and God heard all of it.

Every need we ever uttered in prayer – God heard. He may have denied the answer for His reasons, known only to Him, but He heard.

I remember when my twin sons were six years old that they began to pester me every Sunday after church. We would get into the pickup truck and they would ask me to let them drive. They were convinced they could do it too. I remember one of them saying, “Daddy, we can do it together. One of us can push the pedals and the other one can steer. We can do it.”

“No, you can’t. It’s my truck.”

God may deny the answer; He may delay the answer; He may disguise the answer – that is, it is answered, but in a different way. In fact, we might not even notice He answered.

Can you imagine the prayers for righteousness and justice and for the power of God to be seen? None of these prayers were ever answered – until this time when we are in heaven. And we will stand there, mouths closed, hearts beating, awe inspired as we see a dramatic demonstration to this fact – that God never ignored one request.

In this moment in Revelation chapter 8, if we have not gotten it yet, we will get the fact that the greatest issue of prayer was not the request in prayer, but the relationship by means of prayer. What we needed most was not something from Him – but Him.

One of the most beloved hymns of the church is entitled, “I Need Thee Every Hour”. Many of our hymns are written by pastors, church leaders, or theologians. We have sung for centuries the lyrics of Martin Luther, Isaac Watts, and John Newton. But this dearly loved hymn, which so well expresses the heart of us all who care to admit our deep need every hour for God, was written by a wife and mother of three children. She was living through the challenging, stressful days of the mid-1800s in Brooklyn, New York.

This hymn writer’s name was Annie Hawks. In her retirement she would write four hundred more hymns, but this one, written at the age of thirty-seven, is the only one we are still singing today. The lyrics summarize it all.^{xi}

*I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford;*

*I need Thee, O I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
O bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.*

*I need Thee every hour; stay Thou nearby;
Temptations lose their power when Thou art
nigh.*

*I need Thee every hour, in joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide, or life is in vain.*

*I need Thee every hour, most Holy One,
O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son.*

*I need Thee, O I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
O bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.^{xii}*

Ladies and gentlemen, this scene in heaven reveals to us that,

- prayers, long unanswered, had been heard all along;
- prayers, unexplained by God's silence, are now experienced by God's swift justice;
- prayers that seemed good and right at the time, were delayed until God's time was good and right;
- prayers that we assumed were worthless to God, have taken priority over all other worship of God;
- prayers that returned to us nothing but silence, are featured in the silence of heaven.

Look at Revelation 8:6.

And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

They are ready – these seven archangels are prepared. In fact, they have been ready for centuries.

God's time piece said, "Now!"

"Gabriel, here's your trumpet. Sound it out to the furthest reaches of the universe – through every crevice and corner of Earth."

The apostle John will give us front row seats for the playing of seven trumpets of seven archangels.

Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest, grandest prayer we could ever pray is, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven."

In the meantime, as we wait for His will – not only for the future of the world, but the details of our lives here and now – we admit to this sovereign King our deep need for Him. We join Annie Hawks in saying,

*I need Thee, O I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
O bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.*

Pray – silence,

May these moments of silence on Earth and the hush of our hearts in Your presence, Lord, infuse us with courage that You have heard in the past, and You hear in the present, and You will hear in the future every single prayer from the heart and lips of Your people. And the silence on Earth while we waited for some assurance that You did, will one day be replaced by this silence in heaven – a holy hush; a memorial hush of all the hosts of heaven and all the saints, as we watch the living drama unfold that reveals to us that You indeed heard our prayers. You heard. You hear even now. And You will act according to Your divine purpose and will move heaven and Earth to fulfill Your will on Earth, as it is fulfilled in heaven.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/12/2008 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Bill White, Paramount, CA, 2008, <http://preachingtoday.com>.

ⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *Leadership Journal* vol. 7, no. 2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Graham Scroggie, quoted by Edward Hindson in *Revelation: Unlocking the Future* (AMG Publishers, 2002), p. 100.

^{iv} John MacArthur, *Because the Time is Near* (Moody Press, 2007), p. 151.

^v Adrian Rogers, *Unveiling the End Times in Our Time* (Broadman & Holman, 2004), p. 106.

^{vi} Stewart Custer, From Patmos to Paradise (BJU Press, 2004), p. 96.

^{vii} Robert L. Thomas, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1995), p. 7.

^{viii} Custer, p. 97.

^{ix} Hindson, p. 99; Thomas, p. 10.

^x William Barclay, The Revelation of John: Volume 2 (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 40.

^{xi} Robert J. Morgan, Then Sings My Soul: 150 Hymn Stories (Thomas Nelson, 2003), p. 179.

^{xii} Annie Hawks, I Need Thee Every Hour (1872).