

Introduction:

In a book entitled *Down to Earth*, John Lawrence tells the story of a city that dared God to show Himself. The city was Messina, Sicily, home to many wicked and ungodly people. On December 25, 1908, a newspaper published in Messina printed a lampoon against God, daring Him to make Himself known by sending an earthquake. Three days later, on December 28, the city and its surrounding district was devastated by a terrible quake that killed 84,000 people. The Bible declares in Hebrews 10:13 - It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Jesus warned Satan, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Folks, we must never put the LORD your God to the test except where He challenges us to. Revelation chapter 8 foretells of a future time when men will test and despise God and woe will be the inhabitant of the earth.

I. The Seventh Seal Introduced

1. God is a compassionate God and a patient God but one day His wrath will be unleashed with such fury that not even the rocks will be able to hide those who deserve His just punishment.
2. Dr. Henry Morris in his book "The Revelation Reveal" puts it this way, "There was only one seal yet to be opened, but it would unleash more fury than all that had gone before." The first five seals, you remember were: false peace, war, famine, death and vengeance; vengeance was illustrated by the prayer of the martyrs in chapter 6 verses 9 to 11. By the time you've gone through the first five seals, hundreds of millions of people across the earth have been killed. Then in verse 12 of chapter 6 the sixth seal opens. That begins the day of the Lord, the day prophesied by the Old Testament prophets predicting exactly what God would do in final judgment.
3. You will notice that this "seventh seal" of judgment has within it "seven trumpets" containing judgments that will be discharged upon the earth! These three series of judgements are not strictly sequential, but they move in cycles, some overlaying this time period and each reaching to the end and beyond the tribulation period. The death and destruction unleashed upon earth is so staggering that even the inhabitants of heaven are taken.

II. The Prelude and Preparation to Judgment. Vv. 1-2

1. When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. So 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. Before and after this time, heaven and earth are filled with sound!

We heard the great multitude shouting and praising God before the throne. On earth were the noises of war and shouts of fear and blasphemy. But here, heaven is silent as they contemplate the coming events of this 7th seal. This half hour of silence is the calm before the storm, the silence of foreboding, the silence of expectation, the silence of awe.

It's interesting that John measures the time in his vision experience as about half an hour. Absolute silence in that innumerable crowd of men and angels possibly running into the millions seems incredible. Absolute dead silence for half an hour would seem like an eternity. If I stopped my sermon and remain silent for ten minutes, it would seem like an eternity. Since heaven is a place of constant praise and worship to God silence for half an hour is a long time.

2. In verse two the seven angels prepare themselves. Many believe that these are none other than Michael, and Gabriel, and five other "archangels" not mentioned specifically in scripture. Jewish tradition, in a book called "Enoch", suggests that other archangels are, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, and Sarakiel. Whoever the other angels are, here they are before the throne ready to carry out what the Lord has planned since the day they were created.

III The Incense before the Altar (vv.3-5)

1. Then another angel, (vv.3-4) has this 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. We see Him preparing to present the intercessions of God's people to the Lord. The "incense" offering is the prayers of the saints! Those that were martyr crying under the altar. Note Chapter 6 and verse 10.

Application:

How appropriate that these prayers "ascend before God from the angel's hand." Without the cross there would be no "saints" and prayers would be futile to an angry God! The prayers of the saints are only acceptable because of Jesus Christ! We must never minimize the power of our prayers. *The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

3. In verse #5 after the incense and prayers ascends to the throne the angel fills the golden censer with fire from the altar and hurls it to the earth and there come booms of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. The judgment of God upon the earth has begun! The martyr saint's prayers are about to be answered! Notice that it is the same golden censer that carried the prayers of the saints that becomes a fiery weapon of judgment for those who dwell upon the earth! Every prayer from every saint that had ever prayed for justice to prevail was about to be answered!

Application: Divine judgment is upon sin and sinners. It does not merely mean that it is a casual response by God to ungodliness, God is by nature love (1 John 4:16), however, in His

justice He must punish sin. The punishment is called the wrath of God. It is, though, presently being released upon the ungodly (Rom. 1:18-32) in the hardening of their hearts. Wrath is described as God's anger (Num. 32:10-13), as stored up (Rom. 2:5-8), and as great (Zech. 7:12). The believer's deliverance from God's wrath is through the atonement (Rom. 5:8-10). "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"- (1 Thess. 5:9).

4. The silence has been broken!!! And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And on earth there are cataclysmic disturbances!

IV The First set of Trumpets Blast vv 7-9

1. 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.

The earth had just experienced a violent earthquake, and now it is followed by a fiery hailstorm! This could be volcanic eruptions, it could be asteroids coming out of the sky or changing the weather patterns, bringing a complex of rain and hail, flaming fragments of a shattered comet, asteroid or meteor coming blood red with smoke through the sky, crashing to earth.

a) In Exodus 9:23-24 We've seen this once before... And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran upon the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

(b) The first was local, this one will be global, this one will be mixed with blood, possible some form of a red acidic rains. The earth's forests are going to be devastated. And then all the green grass burns up. No shrubs, no grass, no vegetation, no crops.

(c) "One third of the trees" and "all of the green grass" was burnt up! With 1/3 of vegetation destroyed that will undoubtedly create havoc with the atmosphere, and air quality. The devastation will result in the loss of wood for construction, the loss of watershed for protection, the massive death of animals, crops totally devastated, which provide food for animals which people eat as well, food directly used by us. The earth becomes devastated and the globe is scorched.

2. Then the second angel sounded: Something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, you will note the word *as*... and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed by fire or tsunami.

1. This "mountain" doesn't seem to be like anything John has ever seen before!

a) It is very possible that this is an exploding volcano something that would make Mt. Saint Helen look like a firecracker on the fourth of July. Others believe it is possibly a giant meteorite, asteroid, or nuclear missile that lands in the ocean. Whatever this is it is surrounded by combustible gases which ignite as it enters the atmosphere and makes it a flaming ball.

This will have only one impact point but the whole world will know about it and experience its horrific effect. Maybe scientists and the populous will see it coming and the world will watch the splashdown via satellite! The affect and destruction will be greater than that of an atomic bomb!

A newly discovered asteroid roughly the size of an Olympic swimming pool has a chance of colliding with Earth in 23 years, with the potential impact occurring on Valentine's Day 2046, according to NASA's Planetary Defense Coordination Office.

(1) 1/3 of all sea life will die and the tidal wave will be so intense so as to destroy 1/3 of all the ships on that ocean! 1/3 of that ocean will be as blood! Waters have turned to red before; it is known as Red Tide and is caused by tiny organisms from the ocean's floor that contaminate it. The ships go because it's going to create a tsunami, or a tidal wave like the world has never seen. And a third of the creatures 28:54 were in the sea are going to die.

Conclusion:

There are some visions that God gave to a few of the Old Testament prophets in which they saw this as they looked into the future. They saw, -- for example, Hosea chapter 4 verse 3 -- a time when "the land mourns and everyone who lives in it languishes along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and also" -- he writes -- "the fish of the sea will disappear. In Zephaniah chapter 1 and verse 3, "I will remove man and beast, I will remove the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea." God said it therefore this will come to pass. Will you be here to witness these horrific events or will you be in heaven awaiting your marching orders and assignment in the return with Christ. Are you saved?