

July 17, 2022  
La Jolla Christian Fellowship  
**SEVEN: A Study of the Book of Revelation**  
**Episode 7: The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer**  
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**Revelation 8:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. <sup>3</sup> Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. <sup>4</sup> The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. <sup>5</sup> Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

[Revelation 7](#) is an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. During this time, John sees an innumerable throng of people before the throne of God, loudly proclaiming in chorus, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" ([Revelation 7:10](#)).

Then in [Revelation 8:1](#) Jesus breaks the seventh seal. John says that, after this seal was broken, "there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." This silence immediately follows the loud and jubilant songs of heavenly worship in chapter 7, making the absolute, sudden silence even more dramatic. There is something about the seventh seal that stops every mouth and silences all of heaven.

**Thesis:** The focus of Revelation is God's throne.

**Heavenly Silence: Vs. 1** When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

- In a way, the silence in heaven could be seen as the calm before the storm—the storm of final judgment coming upon the earth. The silence emphasizes the importance and impressiveness of the seventh and final seal. With the opening of the seventh seal comes a climax in the [Day of the Lord](#). Evil has had its day; now the Lord will have His.

**Angels before the throne**

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

**The 8th Angel: Vs. 3** Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne.

- **PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS: Revelation 5:8** And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.
  - God established incense as a part of the sacerdotal system (and therefore as symbolism) in [Exodus 30:1–10](#) when Moses was told to build the [altar of incense](#).

**Revelation 8:4** The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand.

- **Prayer is linked to the incense in the temple in other passages, as well.** When Gabriel appears to Zechariah in the temple and tells him that his prayers have been answered, Gabriel is "standing at the right side of the altar of incense" ([Luke 1:11](#)). This happened when "the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense" (verse 10).
- **Whom are these prayers of the saints for in [Revelation 5:8](#)?** Since these prayers are the aggregate of all believers' prayers through all time, they are about everybody and about everything that is consistent with God's will.

**Revelation 8:5** Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

- The prayers of God's people are hurled down upon the earth, thus starting the next phase of God's judgment on the earth.

#### **Practical Takeaways:**

- Centrality of the throne.
- Silence is a virtue.
- God leaves no prayer unattended.
- Prayer releases power.

#### **Small Group Questions:**

1. In Revelation 7-8 we see both vibrant worship and silence. What do you think is the significance of this and does it have any practical application to our daily walk with Christ?
2. Often in Revelation, angels stand before God's throne before being given a task. What do you think is the significance of this and does it have any practical application to our daily walk with Christ?
3. Prayers are seen as incense before the throne of God. What is the symbolism of this?
4. Why would the angel with the censer hurl the prayers of the saints upon the earth?
5. Describe your prayer life. Does this passage from Revelation inform it in any way?