

19. The Opening of the Seventh Seal

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain who the great multitude is that will come out of the great tribulation. In this topic, we will see what happens when the seventh seal is opened. Within this seventh seal will be all of the other judgments.

We saw in an earlier topic that the Lamb (Christ) was both able and willing to open the seven seals. In this topic, we see that He will open the seventh seal which will contain all of the other judgments that will come on the creation. Revelation 8:1-3 says, “When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a 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.” Here, we see that there was complete silence in heaven for about half an hour when the seventh seal was opened. This silence shows that there will be amazement as those in heaven see what the judgments that are coming on the earth will be like.

In this chapter, and the next, we will see the first six of the trumpet judgments. We see that seven angels come and stand before God. Then, each of these angels is given a trumpet. They will each take their turn to blow their trumpet. As each trumpet is blown it will announce the next judgment that will come on the earth. However, before any of the angels sounded their trumpets, John saw another angel come that has a golden censer in his hand. John saw this angel come and stand in front of the altar. This angel had a golden censer. In the Old Testament, a censer was a pan used by the priest to carry incense into the tabernacle and later the temple to burn on the altar of incense each morning and evening. Leviticus 16:12-13 says that on the Day of Atonement, “Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring *it* inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die.” On that day, the High Priest would start with coals of fire from the burnt altar and add incense before he went into the Holy of Holies.

Here, in Revelation, we see that the angel will have a golden censer. We see that he will be given much incense. We see that the angel will offer incense with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar, which will be in front of the throne. One of the prayers of the tribulation saints is given in Revelation 6:9-11, where we read: “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.” The various trumpet judgments will be a part of the judgment the Lord will bring on those who have killed the tribulation saints.

Revelation 8:4-5 goes on to give the introduction to those judgments when those verses say, “And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.” Here, we see that the prayers of the saints are mixed with the incense that is offered to God by the angel. Then, the angel filled the censer with fire from the altar and threw this fire to the earth. In this way, God illustrates that the judgment that is about to come on the earth is His judgment because of the many tribulation saints who will be killed for their faith. Galatians 6:7-8 says, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” During the tribulation, God will judge all sins against His saints.

God will respond to this fire thrown to the earth by causing three things to happen to introduce the trumpet judgments. Normally, thunder is followed by lightning. Here, we see the order reversed. The thunderings will come before the lightnings. This reversal shows that God is the one who is in control. The judgments that follow will show that God is carrying out His purpose to judge those who have sown to the flesh by their sins against the tribulation saints. The thunder and the lightning will be followed by an earthquake. We read about a great earthquake in the sixth seal judgment. Revelation 6:12-14 says, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.” The earthquake mentioned here will probably be at least as severe as that earthquake.

The early trumpet judgments will affect the entire creation. Then, the later trumpet judgments will affect the people. These judgments will come quickly one after another so that the people of the earth will be forced to realize that God is the One who is bringing these judgments. Revelation 8:6-7 says, “So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. 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.” Here, we see that the seven angels will each sound their trumpets. The sound of each trumpet will cause a new form of judgment to come.

We see that several things follow the earthquake when the first trumpet is sounded. Then, we see the impact that these several things together will have on the earth. First, we see that the first thing that will follow the earthquake is hail. When God judged the land of Egypt with ten plagues before Pharaoh allowed Moses and the people of Israel to leave the land of Egypt we are given just a tiny picture of what this hail will do to the entire earth. Exodus 9:25-26 says, “And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.” This verse shows that the hail had a huge impact on the nation of Egypt. Only the area where the people of Israel lived was spared. However, this hail, in Revelation, will be hail that strikes all parts of the earth with great destruction.

In Exodus, we see that certain other things brought destruction to Egypt, in addition to the hail. Some of these same things will happen in Revelation. Second, we see that there will be fire along with the hail, just as happened in Egypt. Exodus 9:23-24 says, “And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to 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.” In Egypt, the hail broke the plants and trees, and then, the fire caused them to be burned. This same thing will happen when the first trumpet sounds resulting in a great destruction on the earth.

Third, we see that blood will be mingled with the hail and the fire. In Egypt, we saw that animals and people that were out in the fields, when the hail and fire struck, were killed. This caused blood to become mixed with the hail and the fire. The same type of judgment will come on the earth during the first trumpet judgment, because the result will be that there will be that the hail and fire will be mingled with blood. These things together will have a severe impact throughout the earth as we see that there will be two major consequences to the earth itself from this hail, and fire mixed with blood.

The first consequence that we see is that one-third of all of the trees on the earth will be burned. This destruction will include all of the different kinds of trees on the earth, including one-third of the trees that produce fruit, nuts, and other forms of food. This will quickly lead to food shortages throughout the earth. One-third of the forests will also be burned. Most people have seen the destruction caused by a large forest fire. Hundreds and even thousands of acres of trees are destroyed in such fires. However, this will be world-wide and will mean that one-third of all of the forests in the world are destroyed. Such destruction on the trees of the earth will also mean that the skies in most parts of the world will be filled with smoke. This will make it difficult for people to breathe

The second consequence is that all of the grass throughout the earth will be destroyed. Like the destruction of the trees, this will also have a great impact on the earth. There will be no food for the animals. Since all grass is destroyed, this will also bring destruction to the vegetables, grains, and other small plants. This will result in the loss of additional food throughout the earth. In addition to the trees and grass, every person on the earth will be directly affected by the results of this judgment because of the shortages of food that will be created throughout the earth.

Instead, we see that the entire earth will feel the impact of this first trumpet judgment. This is just the beginning of a series of judgments. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain how this judgment will affect every person that will be alive on the earth at that time. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and explain these things.