

Revelation_8

1] When He [the Lamb] opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about half an hour. So far, seal removals enlightened our mind toward clearer and wider understanding of some preceding Bible teaching and application. A very dynamic moment of the Apostle Paul's ministry in Acts 22: 2 was silent. When the furious Hebrew mob heard Paul speaking to them in Hebrew language, their expectation of hearing something meaningful caused a spontaneous silence and undivided attention to hear Paul's speech. After the Lamb opened each of the six seals, major action, major change followed; first: silence. This silence apparently indicates some solemn expectation. The following verses seem to present a silent action. Silence is lasting only a short time, the time used for preparing the next major change.

2] Seven angels standing before God received seven trumpets. They have their instruments ready. These angels wait for the Lord's appointed moment to use their trumpets. A very important duty of all Christians is proclaiming the Gospel. Another important part of the Gospel message is a good understanding when to keep silence and wait on the Lord. In Luke 24: 47-49, the disciples received both. Prior to the powerful Gospel proclamation the Lord gave them the Gospel trumpets and appointed for them a full time of supplication and prayer, unknown to the world. When we walk with our Lord in the light of His Word, we fulfill His commandments by the power of His Spirit: God is mighty in His ministers. The solemnity of this silence is continued. The silent revelation can focus our mind on the next verse.

3] Another angel having a golden censer came to the altar. To him was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar before the throne. Incense has been prescribed by God. Offering other than genuine incense was a grievous offence; as also was an offering of the genuine incense to anyone other than our Lord God. In Exodus 30: 34-36

God gave Moses instruction how to make incense pleasing the Lord. In Christ, the Living Word of our Heavenly Father is instruction for us. Our prayers may be fervent, but without the fragrance of Christ's Holy Spirit, we cannot know and seek our Father's favor. In the verse 3 the angel has the censer as he came to the altar. We also must have our Lord's calling and election to be able and sanctified for a proper service in any ministry of our God. Just as the censer was God-given to the angel, so was the incense provided by our Father in our Savior and Priest. An abundant amount of incense is provided and the angel takes and uses it as our Lord intended. These are some basic lessons for any Christian ministry, charity, outreach, prayers and plans.

4] The smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. The prayers of our Father's children, guided by Christ's Spirit and offered desiring His honor, are streaming to our God's throne. Angel's hand is helping, not interceding like our High Priest, Jesus Christ. Every Gospel servant and all faithful disciples have some ministry of helping, inspiring and encouraging believers' prayers to the Lord in proper godly manner and for a worthy God-pleasing purpose. All our labor and prayers could not avail anything without our great Intercessor, the mighty Lamb of our God. All our labor and prayers are a blessed privilege and delightful ministry when we are in eager submission to the Lordship of Christ's Holy Spirit. All the holy angels' work, all Christian prayers and Gospel-labor have their origin and the ultimate goal and accomplishments in the Son, our Father's eternal delight.

5] The angel takes the censer, fills it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. Voices and thunders are heard, lightnings are seen, and frightening earthquakes happen. An amazing revelation of power! The same censer, that already lifted fragrant prayers and praises before the throne, is back among us. This censer is not an empty ornament; it is fullness of meaning and essence of purpose: it is filled with the fervor of God's own Son. When our prayers and praises, like those of Paul and Silas

in the dungeon [Acts 16: 25-40], are filled with the holy fire from the heavenly altar, the world around us is changing. Deaf ears of sinners start hearing voices and thunder. Eyes, blinded by Satan's deception, are seeing God's lightnings, slaves of darkness without any sense of spirituality experience the instability of their earthly confidence and worldly security. Satan, the adversary of salvation suffers defeat after defeat. This angel casts the censer to the earth in a similar act of respect and service to the Almighty and to His Lamb as the elders cast their crowns before the throne in the chapter 4: 10; here is God's will in action, but in 4: 10 it is adoration. Our Father is honored and adored in everything done in the Name of His Son. We pray the Lord of the harvest to increase the fervor from His altar in our service and adoration. Our Father in His infinite grace and power allow some souls to hear only gentle voices and others deafening thunders. To some sinners He reveals His lightnings; to some others He gives experience of earthquakes. All we need is to follow His guidance and He alone knows what is best for one to get persuaded, trust, and obey the Savior, but for another to fulfill the measure of iniquity that will justify God's severe judgment in the sight of the hosts of heaven and the multitude of His redeemed souls. God is awesome! How many of us remember testimonies of some converts: how they were like hunted by the same tiny voice in their conscience that refused to be silenced until they broke into confession and begged our Father's mercies. How many sinners were scared out of hell by one frightening event they never forget?

6] The seven angels with trumpets are ready to sound. All the angels in God's Kingdom are always ready to do God's will. When our life is reflecting the desire of Matthew 6: 10 - Thy will be done in earth as in Heaven, we resemble the heavenly ministers and their example is our encouragement in Christ's Spirit. If our enemy, the devil, cannot turn our heart away from our Lord's guidance, he will try to flatter us by pride, to neglect prayers, to labor in our own strength and for our own purpose. Then we can't see these angels; we feel heaviness of our burdens, lack of success. Then we

are tired of our own dissatisfaction.

7] The first angel sounded, hail and fire mingled with blood were cast upon the earth. One third part of trees and all green grass were burned up. The first messenger sounded; Christ's ministers are instructed concerning His order of their assignments. Hail, fire and blood are an unusual mix, indicating judgment. This sound is first of seven and gives us impression of a period of plagues; a set of signs indicating God's displeasure. In the old prophecies against godless kingdoms, nations and rulers, we can notice a striking resemblance and, also a difference. Adam's loss of Eden was both, a sign of the judgment and its part. Destruction of the first world by the flood was both: first manifestation of God's judgment and the final halt of sinful madness. Our Lord allowed some signs of His displeasure to sinners among His own people before His major sign of judgment came upon them after their long time, stubborn rejection of His call. The past signs are confirmations of the preceding prophecies and also signs of God's judgment coming to end all sin and woe. Once I witnessed such intense storm in which lightnings and hail were beating the ground at the same time. So far, I have not seen nor heard any of my peers having seen all the three.

What could be the meaning of such a combination? Hail makes physical & mechanical destruction. Fire is a chemical destruction. Both can be applied to the nature and to the creatures. Blood of the Lamb is for removal of sin-stains to all that trust and obey the Son. Impenitent sinner is guilty for his own blood. In Luke 13: 1-5 our Lord teaches us an important point: to be washed by the blood of the Lamb and not to think that comfortable living and quiet death of our body is a certificate of our secured salvation in the sight of God. Our only safety & security is in Christ when we are in Him and He is in our heart & life. If we are 'shallow' believers, our main concern might be to interpret all plagues and disasters as a sure sign of God's judgment that in no way might touch His people. The most important fact is not how much we suffer in this life, but that we live & die redeemed by His

offering Himself for us; that we live in Him. In Exodus first few plagues were suffered by both, Israel and Egypt. Israelites were heading for the Land of Promise, but the Egyptians for their destruction. Through much tribulation we enter God's Kingdom [Acts 14: 22]. We trust our Father's wisdom and grace to allow us to suffer for His purpose, or to escape. In the book of Acts we can see that at times our Lord elected for His disciples escape and deliverance from torture and death. God's choice was always for the furtherance of Gospel testimony and our faith and knowledge of His Son. In this verse [7] we see that destruction is limited to a third part of the earth. I would expect the entire earth to be subject to the final judgment. One third is a great part, but it's only a portion of the whole. The Lord has elected to rebuke many world powers in the past and in the future we should not be stunned if He sends some powerful signs of His justice before His awful final judgment. We can notice that two thirds of the trees were not scorched, but all the green grass perished. This fact makes one impression more that at least nominal believers are included in this part of the vision. Our Lord mentioned a dry tree in Luke 23: 31, which is very applicable to nominal religious but fruitless men. Those of us living in wild fire regions know that green trees survive, but dry trees enhance fires. Green grass resembles believers thriving in the times of ease, but totally unprepared for prolonged suffering [Matthew 13: 5, 6, 20&21]. In I Peter 4: 17 God's judgment begins at the house of God; none can escape. This first part of the sevenfold judgment targets the life on the earth. It is likely focused on the nominal believers and religious people having some form of godliness yet not living in Christ. Their life is in this world of carnality and short duration. I'm hopeful that the two thirds of the trees might bear real fruits.

8&9] The second angel sounded. A great mountain in flames is cast into the sea; a third part of the sea became blood. The third part of the living creatures in the sea died. If the sea indicates unbelievers, that is the gentiles, people not heeding God's Word; not even outwardly, what life could the dead men lose? I would think that before this sign of God's

judgment there was a form of godliness sustaining some hope that someday somebody will wake up. Finally, the time of God's patient waiting and the sound of Christ's loving Gospel call, is ended. Then the fading hope for sinners died. They despised God too long. We still can hope and pray for the remaining two third, although they might ignore our testimony. One third part of the ships was destroyed. These ships can be understood as human technical & intellectual devices designed to explain the universe without acknowledging God's creative might and authority. For thousands of years the fallen mankind is creating devices for salvation without the only Savior. All human efforts toward self-salvation failed; men are still corrupted more and more just like before that great flood and before Lot's deliverance. A simple Christian can see the Truth; sinful leaders are blinded.

In Matthew 21: 21 and in Mark 11: 23 our Lord Jesus is teaching the power of true faith casting mountain into the sea. Jews had their religious mountain in the temple and Jewish self elevation. Romans had their mountain of gods and their pride in conquering the world. Sinful kingdoms make their mountains. All manmade mountains are burning with degradation until they burn themselves out of existence. Each time a major kingdom crumbled, numerous changes and much turbulence shook up their world. Verses 8 & 9 are adding enlightenment to our faith revealing the worldly glory as fallen while still in existence. One third part of the sea became blood. The God-given environment the sinners corrupted by their carnal, intellectual and spiritual decay and now instead of life sustainment, they are dying in their own blood because they rejected the holy and saving blood of the Lamb of God, the only Savior of believers.

10&11] The third angel sounded. A great star fell from heaven, burning like a lamp. It fell upon the third part of the rivers and the fountains of waters. The name of this star is wormwood, bitterness, poison. One third part of the rivers and water springs became wormwood and poisoned many worldly men. In the verses 8 & 9 the decay ruined the sea; a long standing stable power of standards supporting social and religious norms has been

corroded by human perversion. Verses 10 & 11 show the awful gangrene of sinful decay is spreading to the sources of long revered traditions and, horrific crimes are legalized. Perversions, abuse and murder of weak and helpless is not persecuted, but supported and encouraged. The deepest shame becomes puffed up pride. The leaders of false religion were competing with proud sin-activists for leadership and power. Now they are not rivals any more: united, they push men to hell. The star fell from heaven; not shining with the majesty of our Heavenly Father, but burning in its own rebellion. Our ever shining Sun of Righteousness told us in Luke 10: 18 "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven"... By his deception Satan is corrupting his victims to ruin their present life and, eternity. To his slaves the old liar promises joy, happiness, security and glorious future in corruption, oppression, sin, and violence. The real return for believing Satan's lie is this deadly wormwood; wasteful bitter life often cut short by suicide. We still can prayerfully reach out to the two thirds - with a godly testimony.

12] The fourth angel sounds. A third part of the sun, moon and stars is darkened. One third of the day and night is lightless. This part of the vision is hard, if at all possible, to imagine in the present nature. It might be easier to understand some of the spiritual meaning as a continuation of the preceding events. As sins multiply and godlessness abounds, the spiritual environment deteriorates, the mental condition of men is increasingly unstable and confused, and the natural environment degradation - follows. God cannot be blamed for any evil caused by human rebellion and disrespect of God's laws and teaching. Our Creator made all things good [Genesis 1: 10-31], but men sought misuse and abuse of His gifts [Genesis 6:5]. Our Lord God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth. He keeps mercy for thousands, forgives iniquity, transgression and sin [Exodus 34: 6&7] only in Christ. Only the Ransom of God's Son earns our Father's gifts for all who trust and obey our Redeemer as Lord. No sin will ever escape our God's judgment. For His redeemed, Our

Savior and Lord suffered God's judgment. Sinners, rejecting His Word of Salvation and Truth, choose to suffer His judgment themselves. In Genesis 37: 9&10 Sun, moon and stars, that Joseph dreamed, were interpreted by the father Jacob as the highest authority within that household: there were two wives not accounted for they were slaves. One third of human authorities appear corrupted in the verse 12. They are not light & salt to their world.

Perversion and corruption are corroding the rest of the human society. The highest office of government is polluted by sin and transgression. The next level of government justifies and supports the leader; since they are corrupted. The constituents follow the example: the secret shame turns to open pride & vanity. The sense of right and wrong is reduced to two thirds of what it should be. The questions, once difficult to answer, are now in total darkness as human mind is confused by misunderstanding. This entire loss began by violating God's perfect teaching and commandments. The two thirds retain some discernment.

13] An eagle flies with a woeful cry: "Woe, woe, woe, to the earthly minded men! Three more angels will sound three more sounds." Woe to the godless, but the revelation of the Gospel Truth to the godly. Comfort and power of Christ's Spirit in our heart, mind and walk replaces worldly bitterness with grace. The Revelation reveals the woeful end of sinful path, the dire consequence of rejecting God's grace in Christ, the blessed hope found only in Christ, our Savior, the comfort and encouragement of His Holy Spirit along our entire journey, and His glorious splendor, Majesty, and, triumph after His final victory.