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Silence in Heaven (I)

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets...

The first angel sounded... (Rev. 8:1, 2, 7a).

That seen when the first four seals of the seven-sealed scroll had been broken (6:1-8)—four horsemen sequentially riding forth on different colored horses, along with that occurring as each rode forth — covers, in *an overall capsulated manner, the complete seven years of the Tribulation, along with events immediately following, at the time of Christ's return.*

Then, the breaking of the next two seals (6:9-17) adds to the picture by presenting a summary view of that *ultimately occurring* because of that depicted by the four horsemen riding forth. The breaking of the fifth seal presents the matter from *a heavenly perspective* (Tribulation martyrs in heaven crying out), and the breaking of the sixth seal presents the matter from *an earthly perspective* (the ultimate and utter collapse of world government, along with its interrelated trade and commerce).

Then, the breaking of the seventh and last seal of the scroll (8:1), revealing the seven trumpet judgments, and ultimately the seven vial judgments, simply *provides details and forms commentary* for that previously seen (seen first *in an overall capsulated manner*

[through the breaking of the first four seals]; then seen *in additional summary information* relating to the end result of that previously depicted by the four horsemen riding forth [through the breaking of the fifth and sixth seals]). In this respect, that which occurs when the seven trumpets are sounded and the corresponding seven vials of wrath are poured out *do not depict judgments occurring in addition to that previously seen* (that dealt with when the first six seals were broken). Rather, that which occurs when the seven trumpets are sounded and the corresponding seven vials of wrath are poured out provides information on *judgments occurring within that previously seen* (detailed information concerning that previously dealt with when the first six seals of the scroll were broken).

(The preceding manner of viewing that which occurs when the seven seals of the scroll have sequentially been broken has been dealt with different places in previous parts of this book, particularly in parts covering Revelation chapters five and six [*ref.* Chapters VIII-XV]).

The relationship of that seen when the four horsemen ride forth [the breaking of the first four seals] to that seen in the remaining judgments [the breaking of the last three seals] could be likened to the relationship of Gen. 1:1-2:3 to the remainder of Scripture. In both instances the overall scope of the matter is presented first, in a skeletal form. Then subsequent Scripture *provides details and forms commentary, supplying the sinews, flesh, and skin to cover the skeletal framework* [*cf.* Ezek. 37:1-10].

In the Book of Revelation, judgments revealed by the seven-sealed scroll are arranged in *three sets of seven — seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials*. “Three” is the number of *Divine perfection*, and “seven” is *God’s number*, a number which He uses to show *the completion of that which is in view*. Three sets of seven, in relation to “judgment,” show *Divine perfection [three] within a complete judgment emanating from God [seven]*.

However, as previously seen, *all judgment* is actually contained within the seven-sealed scroll, with the breaking of the first four seals showing *the whole of the matter*, and the breaking of the last three seals *providing details and forming commentary*. “Four” is a number having to do with *the earth* [*e.g.*, four points of the compass, four corners of the earth]; and, again, the remaining “three” would be associated with *Divine perfection*. Thus, the two numbers show *Divine perfection in relation to judgment having to do with the earth, with those dwelling on the earth.*)

Contextual Setting for the Breaking of the Seventh Seal

The breaking of the seventh seal of the seven-sealed scroll, resulting in all of the remaining judgments connected with the scroll being revealed and brought to pass (those seen through the sounding of the seven trumpets and the pouring out of the seven vials of wrath), *completes the redemption of the inheritance*.

The breaking of the seventh seal (ch. 8) is separated from the breaking of the first six (ch. 6) by an aside (ch. 7), providing further revelation relating to the souls under the altar, *seen in heaven*, when the fifth seal was broken. And the breaking of the seventh seal itself provides further revelation relating to the complete collapse of world government, with its interrelated trade and commerce, *seen on earth*, when the sixth seal was broken. And the whole of the matter relates back to events within the scope of that seen as the four horsemen rode forth when the first four seals were broken.

Then the judgments revealed after the seventh seal had been broken — the seven trumpet judgments, and ultimately the seven vial judgments — are also separated by interrelated asides (chs. 11a, 12-14), which provide further light on the things seen in these judgments. And these asides have to do with both *heavenly* and *earthly* scenes, as set forth when the fifth and sixth seals were broken.

One thing above all else must be kept in mind when viewing the judgments revealed when the seventh seal is broken. These judgments have been recorded after the same fashion as the judgments seen when the first six seals were broken. They have been recorded in keeping with *the manner in which the book is structured* ("signified" [Rev. 1:1]), and the fact that *metaphors are used extensively throughout the book* (ref. Chapters I, XV in this book).

When the seventh seal is broken, there is *silence in heaven* for "the space of half an hour."

The reason for this silence is not given, though it appears evident. *The various judgments* which God has deemed necessary to complete the redemption of the inheritance are now seen — judgments which will bring Israel to the place of repentance, along with reducing Gentile world power to naught.

And apparently there is *such awe* over the whole of the matter when this last seal is broken — not only because of the severity of the judgments but because of the things which will resultingly be brought to pass — that no one utters a word for “half an hour.” Whether or not this is a literal half an hour is immaterial. The point is made, and matters continue from there (v. 1).

Seven angels are then seen standing before God, and they are each given a trumpet (v. 2).

Then, prior to the sounding of the trumpets, another angel with a golden censer offers incense, in connection with the prayers of saints, on the golden altar before God’s throne. This is followed by the angel taking the censer, filling it with fire from the altar, and casting it upon the earth. Then there were “voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake [‘a shaking’]” (vv. 3-5).

“Lightnings, and thunderings, and voices” were also seen in connection with God’s throne back in chapter four (v. 5), immediately before the introduction of the seven-sealed scroll in chapter five. Then “lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake [‘a shaking’], and great hail” are also seen in connection with both the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and the pouring out of the seventh vial (16:17-21). And, as will be shown, these latter two are actually the same scene, with the pouring out of the seventh vial providing additional information.

All is in connection with *God’s throne and judgments which ensue when the seals of the seven-sealed scroll are broken*. This is the way matters are presented in chapter five when the scroll is introduced in the book, this is the way matters continue when the seventh seal of the scroll has been broken in chapter eight, and this is the way matters conclude when judgments under the seventh seal have been brought to pass in chapters ten, eleven, and sixteen.

Seven Trumpets, Seven Vials

The sounding of the seven trumpets in chapters eight through eleven and the pouring out of the seven vials in chapters fifteen and sixteen — completing all of the judgments revealed in the seven-sealed scroll — *parallel one another in every respect*. As pre-

viously noted, “lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake [‘a shaking’], and great hail,” seen at the conclusion of both the sounding of the trumpets and the pouring out of the vials of wrath, refer to the same scene, occurring at the same time. The latter provides additional details and commentary.

And not only is this true concerning the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet and the pouring out of the seventh and last vial, but it is also true concerning the sounding of all the other six trumpets and the pouring out of all the other six vials as well. *All of the trumpet and vial judgments parallel one another, with each providing different facets of information concerning the same thing* (the first trumpet judgment parallels the first vial judgment, the second trumpet judgment parallels the second vial judgment, etc.). That stated concerning the seven vial judgments simply form *further descriptions or depictions* of that stated concerning the seven trumpet judgments.

The sounding of the first trumpet and the pouring out of the first vial, for example, point to *one series of events described two different ways*. Comparing that revealed by the sounding of the trumpets with that revealed by the pouring out of the vials is much like comparing two Old Testament types dealing with the same thing. One will provide details that the other doesn’t provide, adding to the complete word picture which all of the types on the subject, together, would set forth. And so it is with the sounding of the trumpets and the pouring out of the vials.

And not only is the preceding true, but, as previously noted, that seen when the seventh seal is broken (the trumpet judgments, and ultimately the vial judgments) provides details and forms commentary for that previously revealed when the first six seals were broken. All of these judgments together present a complete word picture in relation to the seven-sealed scroll itself, with corresponding Scripture providing numerous other details which can be added to the word picture.

1) *Paralleling the Trumpet and Vial Judgments*

The trumpet and vial judgments can be seen having to do with the same thing by noting certain key parts in each. For example,

the first trumpet and first vial judgment have to do with *the earth*, the second with *the sea*, the third with *the rivers and fountains of water*, the fourth with *heavenly bodies*, the fifth with *darkness throughout the kingdom of the Beast*, the sixth with *the great river Euphrates*, and the seventh with *the thought that everything has been completed*.

And the seventh, in each instance, would show *conclusively* that the trumpet and vial judgments *have to be understood in this manner by each showing a completion relating to all of the judgments*.

It is evident from Rev. 10:5-7; 11:15-19, with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, that *everything* has been completed in this respect. And exactly the same thing is shown when the seventh vial is poured out (Rev. 16:17). Thus, the trumpet judgments and vial judgments *cannot possibly form separate judgments*. They can only be seen as *the same judgments*, with the latter (the vial judgments) simply providing additional information for the former (the trumpet judgments).

The different vial judgments, referring to the same judgments seen in the previous trumpet judgments, at times appear to carry the matter to a *greater degree of completion*. And all of the vial judgments appear to carry matters surrounding the judgments in view to a *terminal point, with the same full end of all the judgments in the seven-sealed scroll seen at the completion of both the trumpet and vial judgments*.

a) *First Trumpet, First Vial (8:7; 16:2)*: Both have to do with *the earth*.

When the first angel sounded his trumpet, "hail and fire mingled with blood...were cast upon *the earth*"; and "a third part" of *the earth and trees* was burned up, and "all" *green grass* was burned up.

An angel poured the first vial out upon *the earth*. And, as a result, "there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image."

b) *Second Trumpet, Second Vial (8:8, 9; 16:3)*: Both have to do with *the sea*.

When the second angel sounded his trumpet, "a great mountain burning with fire was cast into *the sea*." A third part of the

sea *became blood*, a third part of the living creatures in the sea *died*, and a third part of the ships *were destroyed*.

An angel poured the second vial out on *the sea*. And the sea “became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.”

c) *Third Trumpet, Third Vial (8:10, 11; 16:4-7)*: Both have to do with *the rivers and fountains of waters*.

When the third angel sounded his trumpet, “a great star” fell from heaven. And the star “fell upon *the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters*,” resulting in the waters becoming bitter and causing the death of numerous individuals.

An angel poured out the third vial upon *the rivers and fountains of waters*; “and they became blood.” Then the angel calls attention to the righteous judgments of the Lord. Those on the earth “have shed the blood of saints and prophets,” and these same individuals have been given “blood to drink; for they are worthy.”

d) *Fourth Trumpet, Fourth Vial (8:12, 13; 16:8, 9)*: Both have to do with *heavenly bodies*.

When the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, *a third part of the sun, moon, and stars were smitten*; and this resulted in darkness for “a third part” of both the day and the night. Then an angel is seen flying through the midst of heaven proclaiming with a loud voice to those on the earth, “Woe, woe, woe.” And this proclamation of *Woe* is echoed because of the three angels which are yet to sound (which would include the angels pouring out the last three vials as well).

An angel poured out the fourth vial on *the sun*. And power was given to the sun “to scorch men with fire.” And those being scorched blasphemed the One having power over these plagues, repenting not (*i.e.*, not changing their minds).

e) *Fifth Trumpet, Fifth Vial (9:1-12; 16:10, 11)*: Both have to do with *darkness throughout the kingdom of the Beast*.

When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, a star fell “from heaven unto the earth.” And the key to “the bottomless pit [*lit.*, ‘the shaft of the underworld,’ *i.e.* a shaft going down into the underworld]” was given to this star (an angel). This angel opened the shaft, smoke arose

from the shaft as the smoke of a furnace, and this smoke was so thick that it blotted out the sun, resulting in *darkness across the land*.

Then locusts came out of the smoke, which had tails like scorpions; and these locusts were given power over those having received the mark of the Beast, "to hurt men five months." And, conditions will be such in those days that men will "seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

An angel poured out the fifth vial "upon the seat ['throne'] of the beast; and *his kingdom was full of darkness*." Those in the kingdom of the Beast in that day will gnaw their tongues for pain, blaspheme "the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores," but repent not of their deeds.

f) *Sixth Trumpet, Sixth Vial (9:13-21; 16:12-16)*: Both have to do with *the great river Euphrates*.

When the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, the command went out, "Loose the four angels which are bound in *the great river Euphrates*." These four angels are said to have been "prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men."

Then the four angels are seen in connection with an army of two hundred million, with this army seen as the entity actually responsible for slaying "the third part of men."

An angel poured out the sixth vial upon *the great River Euphrates*. And the water of the Euphrates "was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Then three unclean spirits — demonic spirits which originate from Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet — go forth to gather "the kings of the earth and of the whole world...to the battle of that great day of God Almighty," to "Armageddon [meaning, 'the Mount of Megiddo']."

g) *Seventh Trumpet, Seventh Vial (10:1-11; 11:15-19; 16:17-21)*: Both have to do with *a full and complete end*.

When the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, *time in relation to Man's Day* had run its course, *the mystery of God* was brought to completion, *the kingdom of this world* became that "of our Lord, and of his Christ," and there were "lightnings, and voices, and

thunderings, and an earthquake [‘a shaking’], and great hail.”

An angel poured out the seventh vial “into the air.” And a great voice came out of the temple in heaven, from God’s throne, saying, “It is done [a perfect tense in the Greek text indicating that everything had been finished in past time, with matters existing during present time in a finished state].” Then the same “voices, and thunderings, and lightnings” are seen, along with “a great earthquake [‘a great shaking’]” and “great hail.”

2) A Counterpart in Old Testament History

Ten plagues fell upon the kingdom of the Assyrian in Egypt during Moses’ Day. This occurred immediately prior to Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, with a view to their realizing an inheritance in another land as God’s firstborn son.

Five of these ten plagues which fell upon the kingdom of the Assyrian in history are very similar to four of the seven plagues depicted by the trumpet and vial judgments which will fall upon the kingdom of the Assyrian yet future. And these plagues falling upon the kingdom of the Assyrian yet future will occur immediately prior to the One greater than Moses leading the Israelites out from a worldwide dispersion, with a view to their realizing an inheritance in another land as God’s firstborn son.

The first, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth plagues during Moses’ day noticeably parallel the first, third, fifth, and seventh trumpet and vial judgments yet future, though not in that corresponding order.

a) *First Plague in Egypt (Ex. 7:19-21); Third Trumpet and Vial Judgment (8:10, 11; 16:4-7):*

The first plague in Egypt resulted in “all the waters that were in the river [the Nile, the longest river in the world and the primary river of Egypt]” becoming “blood.”

The third trumpet and vial judgment resulted in *the rivers and fountains of waters* becoming “blood.”

b) *Sixth Plague in Egypt (Ex. 9:8-12); First Trumpet and Vial Judgment (8:7; 16:2):*

The sixth plague in Egypt resulted in “a boil breaking forth with

blains [an inflammation] upon man, and upon beast," throughout all the land of Egypt, throughout the kingdom of the Assyrian.

The first trumpet and vial judgment resulted in "a noisome and grievous sore" befalling those who had received the mark of the Beast, the mark of the future Assyrian.

c) *Seventh Plague in Egypt (Ex. 9:22-26); Seventh Trumpet and Vial Judgment (10:1-11; 11:15-19; 16:17-21):*

The seventh plague in Egypt resulted in "thunder and hail," *fire mingled with the hail, and fire running along the ground.* The hail in Egypt was so severe that it "smote both man and beast... every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field."

The seventh trumpet and vial judgment resulted in "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings...a great earthquake ['a great shaking']," and "great hail."

d) *Eighth and Ninth Plagues in Egypt (Ex. 10:12-15, 21-23); Fifth Trumpet and Vial Judgment (9:1-12; 16:10, 11):*

The eighth and ninth plagues in Egypt resulted in "locusts," carried throughout all the land by an east wind (eighth plague), and "darkness" (eighth and ninth plagues) covering the land.

The fifth trumpet and vial judgment resulted in "locusts" coming out of smoke from the shaft going down into the underworld, and "darkness" covering the earth.

The plagues in Egypt ultimately brought the kingdom of the Assyrian to its knees. The Passover was the final and tenth plague. This plague decreed that death would befall the firstborn throughout the land of Egypt, in the camp of the Israelites and the Egyptians alike.

No distinction was made between the Israelites and the Egyptians in this respect. But, though death had been decreed upon the firstborn throughout the land, a distinction was made in the camp of Israel concerning *how the firstborn could die.*

An Israelite family could take a lamb from the sheep or the goats, slay that lamb, catch the blood in a basin, and apply the blood according to the Lord's instructions (with hyssop, on the two side posts and lintel of the door to the home [Ex. 12:22]). The

Lord would then recognize a *vicarious death* of the firstborn. *The firstborn would have died via a substitute.*

When the Lord passed through the land of Egypt at midnight He looked for *one thing*. He looked for *blood from a slain lamb, properly applied*. If He saw the blood, He knew that the firstborn in that home *had already died*, and He passed over that home. If He didn't see the blood, He knew the firstborn in that home had not yet died. And the firstborn then had to suffer death himself.

This death of the firstborn occurred throughout the entire land of Egypt, with only Israel possessing a means whereby the firstborn could die vicariously. And it was after this that the Assyrian let the Israelites go.

After the Israelites had begun their journey, the Assyrian changed his mind and pursued after the Israelites with his armed forces. But God *delivered* Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea and *destroyed* the Assyrian and his armed forces in the Sea.

These things form a type of that future day when the Israelites will have their national Passover (receive the Paschal Lamb Whom the nation slew 2,000 years ago, properly applying the blood) while still scattered worldwide. Then they will *be delivered* from their worldwide dispersion. And the Assyrian of that day, with his armed forces — seeking to destroy Israel, exactly as his counterpart tried in history — will himself, with his armed forces, *be destroyed*.

Gentile world power will be brought to an end (Rev. 19:11-21), with a view to the cleansed harlot (Israel [Rev. 17-19a]) taking the sceptre and realizing the position of God's firstborn son in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ezek. 36:24-38; 37:21-28; 39:21-29).

(The trumpet and vial judgments are continued in the next two chapters of this book.)

