

**"Seventh Seal"**

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- . Biblical text at the end of sermon.
- . Previous sermons in this series available on the website
- . See: [www.jewsforjesus.org.au/sermons.html](http://www.jewsforjesus.org.au/sermons.html)
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**Introduction**

Today's lesson from the book of the Revelation is filled with bloodshed and darkness. It's not a chapter with songs and merriment. This is a descriptive section only. It's not one with much narrative or conversation between leading characters. So, if you are given to skipping these kinds of parts in novels you read or movies you watch and thus fast forward through, I apologize. Only one thing is said and it is at the end. And the statement is a declaration of troubles to come. So it won't necessarily grab you.

My job as a preacher and teacher is thus made more difficult. But let's see what we can learn about ourselves and our world and our loving God by reading through this passage and seeing his sure judgments on the earth. What is he doing and what is he not doing? And what are we supposed to do as a result?

Let me say from the top, God is going to judge this earth. And he's going to judge the earth for the evil that is done and the pain and evil that characterizes much of human interrelationships.

Some see woes in the world as a time to complain. I won't agree with them, but let me chronicle some who enjoy to complain. Actually they see any time is good for that.

**Q:** What did the waiter ask the group of dining Jewish mothers?

**A:** "Is *anything* all right?"

Or how about the complaints/non complaints of the typical Jewish mother.

A man calls his mother and asks, "How are you?"

"Not too good," she says. "I'm feeling very weak." the son says, "Why are you so weak?"

She says, "Because I haven't eaten in 23 days."

The man says "That's terrible. Why haven't you eaten in 23 days?"

The mother answers, "because I didn't want my mouth should be filled with food if you should ever call!"

One guy says to another guy, "Mandelbaum and Rosen were talking one day..." Right away, his friend interrupts him,

"Always with the *Jewish* jokes! Give it a rest! Why do they always have to be about Jews? Just change the names to another ethnic group for once!"

So, he starts again, "Hashimoto and Suzuki were talking one day at their nephew's Bar Mitzvah..."

OK, so calling and talking aside, maybe silence may be found more clearly in the following story.

The rowing team from the Yeshiva was scheduled to enter the race against the other teams. Every year they had lost. Every year they tried their best, but to no avail. The Yeshiva captain went along to watch their opponent in practice and came back with a news flash.

"Listen everyone," he told them as if by revelation. "Here's how everyone else does it. On their teams, only one person shouts and everyone else rows."

Silence is not a very important part of the Jewish household. At least not in mine as I grew up. But here we see as the chapter begins a time of 30 minutes or so of silence.

Silence is golden, so the song said. Do you know that eerie feeling or non-sound before the big blast of a storm from the ocean. Silence. Before a tornado, after the winds have brought the shocking cooling off after a very hot day, and the winds have been blowing, then all of a sudden, everything stops. The sky turns green, and nothing moves. It's still. As I read this chapter, that's the picture I got. Maybe you get another.

### **Silence and prayers (.1-5)**

The silence lasted in heaven for that 30 minutes or so in verse one I'm not sure what it fully means, but it's clear that a silence fills the moments in John's dream/vision.

And the half hour is probably the length that John really did experience it in his earthly time-clock. I see nothing to 'read into' this account. And I see it in direct contrast to the dramatic and powerful louder-than-a-rock concert praise meeting of the last episode.

The seventh seal is loosed. Silence in heaven! This silence is striking; some have seen it as "breathing space," or, as the angels being quiet so the prayers of the saints can be heard (perhaps the cry of the martyrs of 6:9-11). More likely, this quiet demonstrates a sober, awestruck silence at the judgments to come, now that the seals are off and the scroll can be opened. A half-hour silence is not long; but things seem long or short in their context. If a preacher were to stop his sermon and remain silent for ten minutes, it would seem like an eternity.

The prayers are found in the censer, the golden jar near the Altar of Incense, that was found in the Jewish Tabernacle in the wilderness. (Ex. 25-40). The book of Hebrews in the Newer Testament talks about the heavenly tabernacle, but friends, I'm sure there is none. This we learn from Revelation later on (21) where there is no Temple, but only the Lamb to be our place of worship and refuge. So this symbolism of the tabernacle and prayers as incense is just that, symbolic.

Nevertheless, we can and should be motivated by the prayers mentioned. No one of us prays enough. None of us is filling heaven with our voices, and certainly few cause heaven to stop in anticipation of our next word. May we be motivated by the full heaven and the fullness of the censer.

A comment on the angels. John says there are seven. (cf. Isa. 63.9, Luke 1.19, Ezek. 9.2) Apocryphal writings like Tobit (12.15) and 1 Enoch (20) give the names and functions of the seven holy angels. (Uriel, Rafael, Raguel, Michael, Sarakael, Gavriel, Remiel). They watch, and they minister to us. One day we will speak about angels at length. But not today.

### **Angelic trumpets (.6-13)**

The trumpets now blow. And each one brings catastrophe. Each one ruins a bit of nature. Albeit a lot, still only one third. Always limited is judgment so that men might repent.

Each of these judgments sounds like a reflection from the book of Exodus and the plagues that befell the Egyptians. I don't doubt that John had these clearly in mind as he watched the scene from his heavenly portal.

The trumpeted earth pangs include fires and hail storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. It could include tsunamis if John would have known the term.

Jeremiah 9.7-16 (please read aloud)

Jer. 9.7 ¶ Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, I will refine them and assay them; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people?”

Jer. 9.8 “Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him.

Jer. 9.9 “Shall I not punish them for these things?” declares the LORD. “On a nation such as this Shall I not avenge Myself?”

Jer. 9.10 ¶ “For the mountains I will take up a weeping and wailing, And for the pastures of the wilderness a dirge, Because they are laid waste, so that no one passes through, And the lowing of the cattle is not heard; Both the birds of the sky and the beasts have fled; they are gone.

Jer. 9.11 “And I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, A haunt of jackals; And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.”

Jer. 9.12 ¶ Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a desert, so that no one passes through?

Jer. 9.13 And the LORD said, “Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it,

Jer. 9.14 but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,”

Jer. 9.15 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.

Jer. 9.16 “And I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them.”

Wormwood has a clear identification with judgment and drinking bitter waters affects the drinkers. We use the expression today, “Wake up and smell the coffee.” John would have said something like, “If the water is bitter, wake up and repent.”

Back to Revelation:

Aster is the Greek word for "star" (8:10). Our word asteroid is derived from this. In modern times, the "Tunguska Event" of June, 1908 in central Siberia in Russia, is the closest thing to a "great star from Heaven" falling to the Earth. Scientists theorized that a comet fragment-- dust and ice weighing between 100,000 and 1,000,000 tons-- collided with the upper atmosphere of the Earth at 62,000 miles per hour. An aerial explosion occurred, creating a fireball that was visible 500 miles away. The energy of the shock wave from the aerial explosion was estimated to be equivalent to 10 to 15 megatons. It shook buildings and flattened 500,000 acres of trees, but it left no crater or cometary fragments. Abnormally bright night time skies resulted in Europe and Siberia for some time after the event, from the gases of the vaporized object.

Of course, the Greek word for Wormwood is unknown to us in English. (Ἄψιθος). But strangely the Russian word for Wormwood is well known. It is Chernobyl.

In the early morning, April 26, 1986, a Soviet reactor crew carelessly turned off the safety systems of the Chernobyl Unit 4 nuclear reactor to perform an unauthorized safety test.

Within 36 seconds the reactor surged out of control, and a steam explosion pierced the roof. Deprived of coolant, 150 tons of uranium fuel melted into lava that oozed into the basement of the reactor.

A second, hydrogen explosion ignited blocks of graphite, rocketing a hot plume of radioactive particles a mile into the sky. The explosion was so powerful that it blew the 1 million kilogram concrete lid of the reactor into the air. For three weeks the fire spread out of control, sprinkling iodine-131 and other nuclides as far as Scandinavia, Italy, and the UK.

In a 29 kilometre radius around the reactor, Geiger counters found extraordinarily high-level "gamma fields" where the fire's plume brushed the ground. Authorities evacuated 170,000 people, threw up barbed wire, and declared the area a permanent "exclusion zone."

So was this Chernobyl, the fulfilment of the biblical wormwood in our days?

Another commentator on the Book of the Revelation says of wormwood the following:

"The Greek word for wormwood is *absinthe*. It is well known in chemistry that *absinthe* is the poisonous element in intoxicants. Hence, this prophecy reveals Satan's invention of whisky, which took place in the Dark Ages, and has flooded the world with crime and misery, and populated hell with countless millions." (Rev. W. B. Godbey on Revelation)

In other words, we don't know what John might have meant for us in our day(s), but we know what he would have tried to share with his brothers and sisters in the seven regions near his exilic home of Patmos. He would be saying, "Yes, it's bad out there, and yes, it might get worse, but hold on, God is still Lord and Jesus is still returning, and it's going to be better." Listen just when you think it's as bad as it can get, verse 13 tells us it just might be even worse yet. Flying in midheaven (which would tell me at least there are three heavens [using the number 1/3 throughout the text of chapter 8 for consistency]) is another voice, saying, "Buckle your seat belt. It's going to get bad for people, not just the planet."

Look, everyone has their idea of what to do in times of troubles.

The story is told of the man in the hospital. Her husband has been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet his faithful wife stayed by his bedside every single day. When he came to, he motioned for her to come nearer. As she sat by him, he said, "You know what? You have been with me all through the bad times.

"When I got fired, you were there to support me.

When my business failed, you were there.

When I got shot, you were by my side.

When we lost the house, you gave me support.

When my health started failing, you were still by my side.

"You know what?"

"What dear?" she asked gently.

"I think you're bad luck."

At the beginning of today's sermon I asked three questions.

What is he doing and what is he not doing? And what are we supposed to do as a result?

But here in the Revelation, the Lord is faithful and will be by our side. He is bringing havoc to the unbelieving world, the world racked by sin and ruined by man's

identification with the Opponent of God.

What is he not doing? He is not judging the earth just yet eternally. He is still calling people to repent and to walk with him.

And what are we supposed to do? We should repent and walk in his ways. We should believe in the Saviour and repent of our sins. Through thick and thin, Y'shua, the Seal breaker and Lion of the Tribe of Judah will be with us. Is there any greater comfort to be had?

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. - Ralph Waldo Emerson.

### **Summary**

So: What should you learn/hear today as a result of reading this text? Or what lessons do we learn from today's teaching?

- 1) Be blessed by reading this book regularly
- 2) Every judgment on the earth, although grand to most, is still limited by God's hand
- 3) Evil will surely bring judgment
- 4) God is not mocked, He will judge the earth
- 5) The believers who pray and sing of God's love will experience life in a different way, with gratitude and humility, with patience and anticipation of a greater triumph.

### **Invitation**

We want to give a choice to you. Maybe you have been an opponent of the Messiah. Maybe you have worshipped wrong. Maybe you have rejected what God said, but today you want to turn and agree with God about Y'shua knowing that judgment is surely coming. If you would like to be delivered from your sin by the blood of Y'shua, then pray this prayer and receive His love and grace. Father, forgive me in the name of Y'shua for all my sins. He was the Saviour and the fulfilment of all prophecies about Messiah. He is the one and the only one who can save me from my selfishness, from my sin. I acknowledge Y'shua as that one who wants to free me, and who alone can free me. I repent of my sin and accept Y'shua as my deliverer. By faith I am now born again by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, please talk to me after the service is over, [\[or email me if you are reading this online\]](#) so we can talk about growing in this knowledge and this relationship with God.

### **Actual text**

Rev. 8.1 ¶ And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Rev. 8.2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them.

Rev. 8.3 ¶ And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Rev. 8.4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Rev. 8.5 And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Rev. 8.6 ¶ And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

Rev. 8.7 ¶ And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Rev. 8.8 ¶ And the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood;

Rev. 8.9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Rev. 8.10 ¶ And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters;

Rev. 8.11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

Rev. 8.12 ¶ And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

Rev. 8.13 ¶ And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

#### **Bibliography for Revelation studies:**

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Other Notes:

## ***Impact of the Chernobyl Disaster***

The explosion in Chernobyl's reactor released an immense cloud of radiation north of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. The Chernobyl meltdown released 10 times the amount of radioactive substances as was released by the bombing of Hiroshima in World War II!

An estimated 125,000 people in Ukraine died because of the Chernobyl disaster, and two million were infected. Disease rates in some regions are three times higher for children than before the accident, and four to five times higher for pregnant women. One million extra cases of cancer are predicted worldwide within 70 years, Ukrainian scientists estimate. Over 200 million people have experienced excess exposure to radiation because of Chernobyl.

Dr. Alexander Rykhlya, director of the department of international scientific and technical cooperation, gave this opinion: "My view is that as time passed the medical aftermath will become worse. The peak death rate has not yet been reached. It will be reached after one or two generations."

Most severely affected was the Gomel region, hit first by the radiation: the thyroid cancer rate there is now about 80 times the world average. "The only reasonable explanation," write the Belarus officials, "is that it is a direct consequence of the accident at Chernobyl."

In the most badly affected areas, such as the Gomel area in the south, just over the border from Chernobyl, the cesium-137 surface contamination is more than 1,480 kilobecquerels per square meter, 1,000 times the norm. The normal level of radiation in the soil before the disaster was 1.48 kBq.

In these areas the forest looks as though it has been struck by lightning. Efforts are being made to bury radioactive trees, but the financial burden is too great. Only the animals remain. "There are large numbers of wild deer, elk and boar because it is a closed area," said Professor Alexander Stozharov, director of the Research Institute of Radiation Medicine. "Some are shot by the guards because they can transmit radiation to the clean zones."

More than 3 million acres of farmland—an area about the size of Connecticut—is considered lost for a century.

More than nine years after what everybody calls "the tragedy", Pripjat, the city near Chernobyl, is still dead and deadly. No one can live here—at least for long.

Weeds stand shoulder high along the wide avenues, a Ferris wheel is rusting behind the cinema. The dozens of tall apartment buildings where 49,000 people once lived still look new, but their windows are open, broken, blank. Trucks spray chemicals on decaying streets so their contaminated dust won't be spread by the breezes that rustle dead leaves of dead trees.

"This is the one place where you could understand how the world would be after a nuclear war," says Sergei Akulinin, who lived only 7 minutes from the Chernobyl power plant where he worked.

All animals and other foodstuffs that were contaminated by the radiation had to be destroyed. Several tens of thousands of rabbits raised for meat had to be destroyed. Nearly 100,000 reindeer being raised in Europe had to be killed and buried.

Cesium-137 has a half-life of 30 years. As a result when food containing radiation is eaten, it gets in the muscles and stays for a very long time. It eventually causes cancer.

## ***Testimonies From Chernobyl***

Oleg Genrikh and Anatoly Kurguz were two of the workers on duty at Chernobyl at the time of the accident. Kruguz sat at his desk and made entries in his log. Three open doors stood between him and the reactor hall. When the nuclear reactor blew up, highly radioactive steam with nuclear fuel surged into the room where Kurguz had been sitting. He dashed through the door. Closing it, he shouted to Genrikh, "Fire! Everything's on fire!"

Genrikh leaped up from his cot where he had been taking a nap, and dashed to open his door. He opened it a little, but beyond it was such an unbearable smell of burning that he gave up trying, and instinctively lay down on the linoleum, where it was a little cooler. He shouted to Kurguz, "Tolya! Lie down! It's cooler on the floor!"

Kurguz went in the Genrikh, and both of them lay down on the floor. "There at least we were able to breathe. I had a funny burning sensation in my lungs," Genrikh later recalled.

They waited about 3 minutes, by which time the heat had abated somewhat-as it should, since there was now no roof over their heads. Then they went out into the corridor along axes 50-52 of the building. The severely blistered skin on Kurguz's bleeding face and arms was hanging off in strips.

On the way to the control room, Genrikh and Kurguz were joined by two operators from the gas circuit, Simekonov and Simoninko. By now, Kurguz was in very poor shape: he was bleeding, and the skin under his clothes was covered with blisters. No one could do much to help him, as the slightest contact caused him intense pain. One wonders how he managed to walk the rest of the way to the medical center. Genrikh's burns were less serious, as he had been protected by the windowless room. Both of them, however, had received a dose of 600 roentgens.

Similar experiences were later recounted by most of the operators that were on duty that fateful April 26th morning. Most of the Chernobyl personnel that were working during the meltdown died extremely painful deaths within the next few weeks or months from radiation exposure.

**Jewish jokes on the website:**

<http://www.harryc.com/j-jokes901.htm>