***The Opening of the Seventh Seal

RV137-01***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 8:1-5, as we begin a new session on the seven trumpeters.

There are two great events in the future which interest us as Christians in a very big way.

**The Rapture**

One of them is the rapture of the church. We're all very much interested in that event somewhere on the horizon of our lives. We are also interested in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. The rapture is referred to in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 in this way: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So, we shall ever be with the Lord."

This "catching up" event (or "rapture," which is what the word "rapture" means – catching up) will be the next thing that takes place in God's prophetic program. Those Christians who have died and gone on ahead of us will rise from the grave or wherever they are. Their bodies will be put back together. Then we who are alive at the time will have our sin nature wiped out with one blow, and we will be transformed into the image of Christ. So, the complete body of Christ then, all transformed into the image of price, will simply go floating off this earth; they will meet the Lord Jesus in the air; and, then they will fulfill that promise in John 14 of going to the dwelling places in heaven that He has prepared for us. He does not come to the earth at that time. We meet him in the air. All of us who are students of the Word of God are very much interested in that event in our immediate future.

**The Second Coming of Christ**

The other event that we are concerned with, and that we have a great deal of interest in, is the Second Coming of Christ. That's referred to in Revelation 19:11-14 in this way: "And I saw heaven open, and behold a white horse. And He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness, He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. And He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name was called the Word of God" (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ.) And the armies that were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Here is a regenerated group of people, including ourselves, having risen previously in the rapture, now coming back at the Second Coming. And at this time, He does come down to the earth itself.

**The Tribulation**

These two events hold such interest to us as Christians. And between these two events fall all of the judgments that are under the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls which are revealed in the book of the Revelation. That's what we're studying. Between the rapture of the church and the Second Coming of Christ, everything that we're studying now in the book of the Revelation will take place. These judgments run successively, and increase in severity as the end of the tribulation is approached. That is, when the seventh seal is opened, there come seven trumpets; and, when the seven trumpet is sounded, there come seven bowls of judgment. So, it is increasing detail. And as we shall see, as we study these events, there is increasing intensity of divine judgment being hammered away on the human race.

**The Middle of the Tribulation**

Revelation 7, which we have just concluded, has interrupted the flow of the breaking of the seals on the scroll, which Jesus Christ holds. This scroll bears the details about God's plan during the tribulation era for mankind. Before the breaking of the seventh seal, there is a description in Revelation 7 of some things that are taking place on the earth during the tribulation period – at about the middle of the tribulation era.

**The 144,000**

You remember that there were 144,000 Jewish evangelists raised up by God. They cannot be killed by the antichrist. They're preaching the gospel of the kingdom – not the specific gospel that we preach today. They are preaching the gospel with the emphasis on the coming king in the immediate future at that point. They're preaching this to Jews and gentiles, and many of them are being saved. These converts, however, experience martyrdom at the hands of the antichrist, and we have seen them in heaven, calling out to God for justice upon their blood which was shed at the hands of the brutality of the antichrist and his world.

**Martyrs in Heaven**

However, the tribulation martyrs worship God in heaven, and God promises that they will not suffer anymore, nor will they ever want for anything again. Thus, God's grace will be extensively in evidence, even while His terrible judgments are desolating the earth. In the midst of all that, people are going to be born again.

**The Seventh Seal**

The scene in John's vision now shifts back, with chapter 8, to the scroll which is in the hands of Jesus Christ, who now proceeds to break the seventh and final seal. So, we read in Revelation 8:1: "And when He had opened the seventh seal." The word "when" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "hotan." This is a conjunction. It indicates an indefinite point of time in the future. Whenever this event finally comes about, this is what's going to happen. The event that he's referring to is the opening of the seal. That's the word we've had before: "anoigo." The word "anoigo" really means here "to break." At some point in time, Jesus Christ himself is going to break the last seal: the "sphragis." The "sphragis" was the wax retainer on the scroll which would not permit it to be unrolled beyond that point. We have broken our way through six of these, and now there is one more, and then the whole scroll will be revealed. This is the seventh seal. This is the last seal on the scroll containing God's plan for the tribulation world.

**Daniel**

When this seal is broken, everything that Daniel was told to seal up will now become public knowledge. In Daniel 12:4, we have reference to that sealing: "But you, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Daniel was told to seal up the contents of this book. Now the time has arrived when the details about God's plan are going to be fully revealed.

**Silence**

So, it says, "When He had open seal number seven, there was silence in the heavens. The word "was" is actually the Greek word "ginomai." That word means "to become." Something came into being at this point in time. Something occurred in heaven which was not previously so there. What happened was what the Greek calls a "sige." This is the word for "silence," and this silence was taking place in the heaven. The Greek word is "ouranos," and that's the word for "the heaven," specifically here where God dwells. You remember that previous to the breaking of the seventh seal, heaven was ringing with sounds of all kinds. There were the voices of the redeemed as they were praising God for their salvation. There were the voices of the angels who were praising God for His character – what He is. There were the voices of the tribulation martyrs who had been brutally slaughtered, and they were crying out to God for justice on their persecutors. So, heaven was alive with all kinds of sounds.

Now, this seventh seal is broken, and suddenly, there bursts on the heavenly scene a total silence – a silence which can only be viewed as an ominous sign of what is coming. It is as we would refer to "the calm before the storm." We know that something bad is coming. Something serious is about to hit, but things have now quieted down.

This sudden silence in the heaven awes John, and he stands by waiting to see what God is about to do next, now that the final seal is broken. This intense silence is a dramatic pause, indicating that God is about to bring a dramatic development on the human race.

So, the silence in heaven, that John observes, is strange because of the activity of sound that was there previously. And he tells us that this silence lasts about half an hour. It is, in fact, a final moment of the grace of God – a final moment for those who are upon the earth who are rebelling against Him, to change their minds.

2 Peter 3:9 points out this characteristic of God to give people a chance: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises (God is going to keep His Word to bring judgment), as some men count slackness, but He is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And because God has this attitude, that He'd like all of the human race to make it into His glory land, we have, as it were, a pause before the judgments and the suffering is stepped up against the human race.

**Seven Angels**

Following this, in verse 2, John says, "And I saw the seven angels who stood before God." The words "saw" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "horao." It is a word that refers to "seeing" in terms of an overview – a panoramic view. What John's eyes actually see are seven angels ("aggelos"). This refers to the spirit beings which God created to serve Him. John sees seven of these angels. These are the loyal angels. These are not demon angels. The Greek has *the* seven angels, indicating that they form a specific body appointed to a specific task. We have the picture of these angels standing at attention, waiting for God to direct them in what He wants them to do.

The Greek word for "standing" is "histemi." That is the position on their feet. This is in the Greek perfect tense, so it tells us that sometime previously, God put this special body (this special detail) of angels together (these seven), and He told them to stand by. And they have been standing there before God, awaiting His direction.

Now the time has come when they, who are standing there before God (in the very presence of God) are going to be called upon to perform a very specific function. The elect angels are there in readiness for service, and the elect angels, as you know, are characterized by, above all things, unquestioning obedience to their Commander-in-Chief, the God who made them.

In Psalm 103:20, this quality about angels is pointed out: "Bless the Lord, you, His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. The angels have great strength. They have much greater power than human beings do. They do the commandments of God. They listen to the Word of God, and they are obedient.

Hebrews 1:14 stresses the same characteristic about angels in their readiness to obey God: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

So, these angels are standing before God. They are characterized by a readiness to obey that which He wants them to do. And now, God the Father proceeds to indicate what it is that He has designed for them – why this detail was put together.

**Seven Trumpets**

We're told that to these angels were given seven trumpets; that is, to each of them was given a trumpet. This is the Greek word "salpigx." This is the word for the musical instrument that we know as the trumpet. And these trumpets are going to break this awesome, ominous, heavenly silence that has suddenly taken place in the throne room of God.

**Trumpets**

Trumpets were very prominent in Israel's national life. Again, I point out to you that in the book of the Revelation, we have symbols, and we have references that you can only understand if you know something about the rest of the Bible. So, to understand the significance of trumpets, you have to know a little bit about the use of trumpets in the life of the Jewish People.

In Numbers 10:1-3, we're told that trumpets were used to call the nation of Israel to times of assembly for one reason or another. As a matter of fact, Numbers 10:2 points out that God specifically told Moses to make two silver trumpets: "Make two trumpets of silver. Of a whole piece you shall make them, that you may use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps."

Leviticus 23:24 and Leviticus 25:9-10 tell us that the trumpets were also used to proclaim special days in the life of Israel.

In Numbers 10:9, we're told that the trumpets were used to direct soldiers in battle. That has been a use down through the centuries.

In Numbers 10:5-6, we're told that these silver trumpets were used to direct the tribes of Israel in their wilderness travel. Certain sounds would tell certain contingents to move out as they moved through the wilderness, out of their encampments.

1 Kings 1:34-39 tell us that trumpets were used upon the occasion of the coronation of the kings.

In Numbers 10:10, the trumpets were used when worshiping God with certain sacrifices.

In Joel 2:1-2, we have a particular use of the trumpet that is of interest to us in the particular context of Revelation 2:1-2: "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My Holy Mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord Comes, for it is near at hand." Remember that the Day of the Lord begins with the tribulation, and it includes the 1,000-year millennial period. The Day of the Lord has a black dark side, and the Day of the Lord has a bright, happy side. So, he's sounding the trumpet that the day of the Lord is about to begin, which means the dark side. The suffering side is imminent: "A day of darkness and of gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness, like the morning spread upon the mountains, a great people and a strong. There have not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

So, Joel here is very specifically referring to the use of trumpets to announce divine judgment. We also have the same thing in the book of Zephaniah 1:14-16: "The great Day of the Lord is near. It is near, and hastens greatly, even the voice of the Day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities, and against the high towers."

So, here again, Zephaniah is connecting divine judgment being announced with the blowing of the trumpet. That's exactly what's happening here in the book of the Revelation. When you know this about the use of trumpets in Israel's history – that God has used them to announce when He is going to bring severe judgment, you can see how, again, this exactly fits in with His pattern of working. He gives these angels these trumpets, because, as we shall see, each trumpet carries with it another devastating judgment of God upon the human race in the period of the last three-and-a-half years of the tribulation.

**Another Angel**

In verses 3 and 4, we come to an angel who is another angel – one apart from these seven, who is performing, and called to perform, another significant ministry. Verse 3 says, "And another angel came and stood at the altar." The word "another" is the Greek word "allos." This Greek word tells us that this angel, while being a different angel from the seven, is "like" those angels. The Greek word "allos" tells us that he's the same kind of angel; that is, he's one of the elect angels, and one of the loyal angels. He is not a demon. He is an "aggelos:" "He came," and the word "came" here means that he suddenly arrives here on the scene, and he again is in a position where he is standing on his feet before God. He is there, like the others, standing by.

**Standing at an Altar**

However, we are specifically told that he is standing at an altar. The Greek word looks like this: "thuslasterion" – the place of sacrifice. This is what this word means. It means a place of sacrifice. "Thuslasterion" is a place where you worship God. It is used in the Bible of the altar for burnt offerings. In Matthew 5:23-24 this word is used, referring to the altar where they burnt the animal sacrifices. But it is also used of another altar – the altar that we call "the golden altar of incense."

**The Tabernacle and the Temple Layout**

Here's how things looked in the tabernacle, and later in the temple set up. There was an outer perimeter, and it had curtains that enclosed the outer area of the tabernacle. Later it was a building with the solid walls of the temple. There was a gate which was the entrance through which the ministering priests and the worshipers entered.

**The Brazen Altar of Sacrifice**

The first thing that they ran into was this brazen altar, or this thing that we refer to as the altar of sacrifice. On this altar, the animal sacrifices were burned after being killed.

**The Laver**

Then as you moved forward, the next thing you came to was this large container called the laver. This was filled with water, and it was used for the priest to wash their hands and their feet as they proceeded now to the main part of the tabernacle, which was itself divided into two parts. This was the place where the work of ministry was actually carried on. The reason that they washed their hands and their feet before they walked into this place was to symbolize what we know under the Scripture of 1 John 1:9. These were people for whom the sacrifice, representing the death of Christ, had completely taken care of their sin. God cannot do anything more to cover your sin than what He's already done.

These animals represented that once that animal was killed; its blood was poured out at the foot of the altar; and, burned upon that altar, that animal represented the total payment for sin. But as you go through this life, because you have a sin nature, you do that which is evil. You break fellowship with the Father. So, you need to wash yourself in the matter of confession of sin in order to restore fellowship. That was symbolized by washing their hands and their feet. They didn't take a bath again. The priest *was* given a bath when he was inducted into his priesthood. That only happened once. From then on, it was just the hands and feet. You and I are totally washed when we come into the body of Christ, and then it is simply the washing of the contamination that we pick up from the world.

**The Holy Place**

The first part of this was called the Holy Place. The second part was called the Holy of Holies. There were certain items of furniture in the Holy Place.

**The Table of Shewbread**

There was the table of shewbread against a wall, on which there were 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, and which, you can obviously see, represented Jesus Christ as the bread of life. Everything that was taking place here in the Tabernacle, in one way or another, represented the person or the ministry of Jesus Christ.

**A Lamp Stand**

Then there was a lamp stand that had seven branches. It had a certain, special refined oil that was used, and this was the only light that was to be found in here.

**The Altar of Incense**

Then there was a three-foot high by one-and-a-half foot square altar. It was like a little platform. Actually it was probably the highest thing in that part of the tabernacle. It was called the altar of incense. This is what we are interested in right now. The altar of incense was made of wood, representing in the Bible the humanity of Jesus Christ. It was covered over with pure gold, which in the Scripture represents the deity of Jesus Christ. So, this represented the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ.

**A Curtain**

Right here was this terrible, heavy, thick curtain which divided these two compartments.

**The Holy of Holies**

Nobody ever went into the Holy of Holies, except the high priest, and he only went there once a year on the Day of Atonement.

**The Ark of the Covenant**

In there was what was known as the Ark of the Covenant. In that box were certain things commemorative of Israel sin: the broken tables of the Law; the pot of manna (Jesus Christ, the bread of life again); and, the stick (Aaron's rod) that had butted an almond bud (the dead stick had come alive, representing the resurrection of Jesus Christ).

**The Mercy Seat**

The mercy seat was really just a cover over this box.

**Cherubim Angels**

Over the mercy seat, there were these two terrible angels with their wings outstretched, looking down upon the mercy seat. It was not dark in there, even though there was no artificial light, because here is where Almighty God resided when He resided among His people. The people, during the day, could see the presence of God with a cloud above the Holy Place. During the night, there was a glowing pillar of fire above it. And this was the place where God communed directly with His people.

It's important that you have this picture in mind, because here, in Revelation 8, we're going to make references to this temple, but we're going to make references to this temple in terms of its heavenly original. Everything that took place in this temple, and everything that was in this temple, had its original in heaven. That's why, when God told Moses how to put this all together, he said, "I want to make it very clear to you, Moses, that you must do it precisely as I've told you. I'm going to give you the exact details, and I don't want you to start expanding with your artistic temperament, and adding things of your own. You do it just the way I tell you. You take My measurements and you put it together in the pattern, and in the order, and in the layout that I've given you." Why? "Because I'm giving you an exact replica of what is up in heaven – the real and the true temple."

So verse 3 says, "Another angel (an elect, loyal angel) comes, and he stands at the altar." He's standing right at this golden altar. And in his hand, we are told that he has a golden censer; that is, it is made of gold. The sensor is the "libanotos." A "libanotos" was a little shallow cup which had an extended handle on it. Or it was also sometimes shovel-shaped, and it had a handle upon it. These were items which God specifically described for them to manufacture when they were putting the tabernacle, and later the temple, together. These censers were used to remove ashes from the brazen altar where the animals were burned, and also from the ashes on this golden altar on which incense was burned.

**Incense**

Along with these items, we're told that this angel received from God much incense – a lot of incense. The word for "incense: is "thumiama." This refers to a fragrant material which was burnt on this golden altar. In the Old Testament, in Exodus 30:34-38, Moses was given explicit directions of how to mix this incense. It wasn't just any kind of incense. It was certain materials which were used that had a purity and symbolic significance. These were put together, and they formed a special compound which formed the incense which was used here in the Holy of Holies. This particular combination of materials for creating this incense was forbidden for private use. You would come under divine judgment if you mixed this stuff at home, and used it on your own. It was a fragrant material.

**Prayers**

This incense was given to this angel. He was given this sizable amount of incense: "that." The word "that" is the conjunction "hina," which indicates to us the reason (the purpose). And the purpose is: "that he should offer" ("didomi"). The word "didomi" means "to give." Actually, here it is the idea that he is going to add something to another thing. He is going to give something. This is in the future tense. Whenever this angel ministry at this particular altar, he himself is going to give something. He is going to take this incense so that he can offer it upon this altar along with something else. And that is the "prayers" ("proseuche"). This is addressing the words which are addressed to deity. In the New Testament, this particular word for prayer is only use a prayer to the true God.

**The Saints**

He is going to use this (to mix this incense) with the prayers of: "all the saints." The word "saints" is the word "hagios." This is an adjective, but it is used here as a noun to indicate a certain category of human beings. In the Bible, the word "saint" is used in a different way from that in which it is used in the religious world in which we live. John is told that this angel is given incense which he is going to offer up with all the prayers of a special group of people. These prayers will rise up to God from a special group of people whom he calls "the saints."

The word "saints" does not refer to somebody who is a super good Christian. The word "saint" does not refer to somebody who has a super record of service to God. The Roman Catholic Church has degenerated the word "saint" to mean that, but that is not its meaning in the Bible. In the Bible, the word "saint" refers to all born-again people. If you are here right now as a born again person, you are a saint of the living God. The word "hagios" here actually is translated as "holy." The word "holy," in terms of God's character, refers to His absolute righteousness and His perfect justice. The word "holy" connotes being separated from evil, and consecrated to God and to divine good. So, all Christians are saints for this reason. All of us, from the point of our salvation, have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ. Therefore, since we are in Christ, we are separated from hell with Satan, and we have been separated unto heaven with God. Sainthood, therefore, is not something that you attained by human works, but it is a state into which God brings you by His grace when you believe the gospel.

Therefor, 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." We receive this salvation by God's calling, not by something we have, but by something that He has given us. So, every Christian is a saint with God. That's true even if you are not living a godly life, and even if you are living in great personal carnality.

One of the outstanding places that this is demonstrated in the Bible is in the book of 1 Corinthians, at the very opening of that book, in chapter 1. Paul is writing to this church in the ancient world, which was a very carnal church. As you read through the book of 1 Corinthians, you very quickly become aware of the fact that there was a lot of bad stuff going on in this church. It was very immoral – sexually; and, in other ways. So, it was a church that grieved the Holy Spirit in a great way. But notice what 1 Corinthians 1:2 says. Paul says, "Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth (the geographical location), to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours."

So, here he says that these people in Corinth, to whom he is writing, are called saints. Christians are called upon, of course, by God, through the Word, and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to live a life of godliness which is compatible to their position of sainthood. We are not saying that as a saint, you don't have to worry about living a godly life. We're not saying that as a Christian, this is not a matter of concern.

1 Peter 1 puts it this way: "But He who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of life." That's the principal. A holy God has called you, and He expects you to pattern your life after Himself.

**When Christians Sin**

I need not point out to you that the unsaved world delights in ridiculing the Lord Jesus Christ because of the evil conduct of His born-again followers. The people of the world, and the people in the entertainment world, can perform a terrible sin all the time, and they don't give a second thought to it. But if a Christian does that, all the news media will jump on it, and they'll see that you have front-page coverage, because the world system hates Jesus Christ, and they love to be able to point to a Christian who is not acting (not living) in a way that is befitting his call as a saint.

People in our society; people in our community; and, people in the circle of my acquaintance have many times in the past come to me with indignation to tell me about something that a Berean church member is doing that is out of line with the Word of God in terms of moral conduct; in terms of personal integrity; in terms of honesty; and, in terms of all the things that should characterize the Christian. And it is not in the distant past that I have had people who come to me and point out things to me about people who sit in this auditorium Sunday by Sunday, and who are guilty of anything but saintliness.

Who do you think you're kidding? It is ridiculous to pretend that there's a God out there who is some kind of a stumblebum that doesn't know what's going on. And the appalling hypocrisy among Christians is very hard to believe. Satan loves to lead Christians into the ugly lifestyle of the world's culture. If you are not careful, you will find yourself acclimated to all of the ugly things that constitute the world's lifestyle.

**The World**

1 John 2:15-17 point out the nature of that world culture. John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." When we talk about "the world," we're talking about that which the Bible refers to as the "kosmos." This word "kosmos" is used in the Bible in terms of the world as a system of life. Sometimes we say "lifestyle," but it's talking about it as a system of life, where it has certain organizations that Satan has put together in society. It has certain media of communication. It has certain educational institutions; religious institutions; business institutions; and, certainly entertainment institutions. All of these are put together. They're the system of life that Satan has put together, and that's what the word "kosmos" is referring to.

When he says, "Don't love the world," he's talking about that system that Satan has put together in which every society and every nation lives: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You cannot be in love with this system, and love elements of it, and still say, "Yes, I love Jesus Christ." That's where some people are getting in trouble. They love things in the world that are evil and wrong, and then they act in an evil and wrong way, and people come and point it out to me and other Christians, and they want to rub our noses in it.

Verse 16 says, "For all that is in the world (and here's what it is – that the world has to offer), the lusts of the flesh (that is, the lust of the sin nature), the less of the eyes (a deep covetousness), and the pride of life (a personal, unmitigated arrogance)." He says, "None of that comes from God the Father. It comes from the world system of Satan." So, Satan loves to lead people into this kind of a style of living.

Verse 17 points out, the foolishness (the shortsightedness) of this, because it says that this world system, no matter how glamorous, and how impressive, and how powerful it is now, it's all going to pass away. And all of these lusts (all of these evil, counter-to-the-Word-of-God things) are going to pass away with it. But those of you who do the will of God, you are going to abide forever, and your blessing is going to abide forever.

Therefore, Satan's world is constantly competing with God for our love; for our loyalty; and, for our moral purity. The world is constantly competing with God for those things. God is excluded from the world's values and its goals. God is excluded from the institutions of the world. God is excluded from the sources of opinions that are imposed on our society. And certainly, God is excluded from the entertainment world, all of which promote anti-biblical attitudes.

I find it hard to understand the kinds of entertainment that some of you Christians constantly participate in; the kinds of things you go to; and, the kinds of things you see. There's nothing in some areas of the entertainment world, from the television in your home to the movie theaters, and to the stage, and to all the other means that people put out there to entertain, except that which is just filthy; dirty; insulting to Jesus Christ; and, it's degrading to you. It is fantastic how Christians think that they can be in the presence of that, and themselves not be contaminated. They can attend things like that is if they just cannot live without it. They just have to go do those things, as if they themselves aren't going to come out a little filthier than when they walked in. The world system promotes the lusts of the sin nature. It promotes covetousness. And do you remember what the Bible says covetousness is like in God's eyes? It is like witchcraft, and witchcraft is a sin of death.

**Covetousness**

Covetousness is not just a little thing. It is the one sin in the code of the Ten Commandments that is clearly up in the head. All the other things are outside and physical, but when it comes to this commandment, it demonstrates that the worst things that a person can do are the sins of the mind. Paul uses covetousness as the example of when he discovered that he wasn't all that great when he thought he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and one of the outstanding leaders of God. All of the glamor of Satan's world is going to dissipate into nothing, while godly living in the will of God is going to secure eternal rewards.

It is appalling how Christians will live in hypocrisy, moving in the circle of association with God and with church, and then acting in a way that is not compatible with their calling as believers, and what the Bible holds up to us as the holy path that we should follow. Christians who break the moral code of God: in sex; in morality; cheating; lying; and, using foul language, immerse themselves in the world's evil influences. They practice the mindless and filthy habits of the world that injure the body. They reek with mental attitude sins expressed as meanness; arrogance; hatred; selfishness; violence; and, brutality. Nowhere in the human race are these qualities to be found in a more loathsome way than among the Christian community. They're the ones who know how to be mean. They're the ones who know how to be arrogant. They're the ones who know how to hate and to be selfish. They're the ones who know how to just be downright brutal.

I get the picture all the time, and I cannot believe that people who had a long time of instruction and orientation to the Word of God can be a hypocritical disgrace to the person of Jesus Christ. Saints? Yes. Living up to that honored position? Far from it.

One of the saddest things about this undermining of our sainthood is that when Christians are corrected about their evil, or when they get stung by the consequences of their own doing, as the old phrase says, "Hoisted on their own petard," what do they do? They strike out at the person who's pointing out the evil. They're striking out at the agency that was responsible for cutting them down and stopping them in their evil. They don't say, "Yes, that was wrong. Yes, that was terrible. Yes, I was out of line. I should not have done that, and I'm going to correct it." Instead, they want to hit the divine viewpoint source.

A saint has to be well taught in the Word of God. Then he has the capacity, with the Spirit of God, to live according to those principles.

So, there is today little difference, very often, we must admit, between the carnal Christian, who is a saint, and the unbelieving world of Satan, who are doomed to the lake of fire.

This angel is given this incense, that he should offer it, he says, "With the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar." This is the altar of incense that we looked at already. This altar is standing before the throne of God. So, we have this picture in heaven that here, out before the throne of God, where all of this has been taking place (all that we have been observing), here in the throne of God (God's great mighty throne), there is in front of him the very reproduction of that which existed in the temple on earth. And part of what there is in that temple is the altar of incense.

**Prayer**

The thing that interests us is what goes on in heaven that was reflected by that earthly altar. What is the significance of standing here at this altar with the prayers of saints being caught up in this fragrant incense, which is an aroma that pleases God, and all of this rising up to the living God? You may have already suspected that this gives us an enormously important insight concerning prayer. Nobody opens his mouth in prayer without the incense in the heavenly altar catching up that prayer, and carrying it up before God Himself, and not the least of which are the prayers that are being offered by Jesus Christ the all-time great intercessor.

So, next time, we're going to look at the reflection in heaven, and the activity in heaven, of this, which was the replica here on earth of the reality of these things in heaven, and how the temple in heaven functions here with the activity that we Christians are engaged in. There's a great significance to this angel stepping up before this altar of incense in order to carry these prayers up to the living God. He's a God who hears, and He's a God who does not forget.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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