

Worship Guide - Lake Mary
WORSHIP SERVICE -
10.17.2021

THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: Prayer makes a difference because God has ordained that the prayers of his children make a difference.

Revelation 8:1-5

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. **2** Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. **3** And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, **4** and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. **5** Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

II. THE SEVENTH SEAL

Revelation 8:1-2 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. **2** Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

1. SILENCE IN HEAVEN

- GK Beale, in his commentary on Revelation, observes that there are a couple of main things silence conveys in Scripture.
- **a. Silence is an indication of imminent divine judgment.** (Hab. 2:20-3:15; Zech. 2:13-3:2)
- **Hab. 2:20** But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.
- **Zech. 2:13** Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.
- As the pronouncement of judgment is going forth, the earth is commanded to be silent before the Lord.
- **Zeph. 1:7** Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near;

- **b. Silence is sometimes used as an indication that God has heard the prayers of the saints.**
- There is a parallel and allusion to the OT temple with the altar of incense and the prayers of God's people.

- Beale notes that in Jewish writing, silence is associated not only with divine judgment but also with the fact that the prayers of the faithful for that judgment are being heard.
- God silences heaven to hear the prayers of his saints!
- The picture that emerges is that God is hearing the prayers of his saints and he is going to answer their prayers.
- **Rev. 6:9-11** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.
- In John’s gospel, the hour was always a reference to Jesus’s suffering and subsequent glory.
- Frequently we find Jesus saying that his hour had not yet come; referring to the purpose for which he had come, to give his life as a ransom for many.
- **John 12:27** “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.
- He told his disciples that their hour would come also.
- **John 16:1-2** “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.
- Their path would be the same as their Lord’s—suffering, then glory.
- The hour of suffering for the people of God is the focus of Revelation.
- The point then is God’s people will experience a brief time of suffering.
- The seventh seal being opened means the whole scroll is fully opened.
- Everything contained therein is visible to heaven.
- Silence is the only appropriate response to the magnitude of all that is unveiled.
- All of heaven is waiting with anticipation for the Lord to speak and act.

2. SEVEN ANGELS SEVEN TRUMPETS

Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

- What John sees next is a transitioning to the next parallel cycles of visions.
- This second verse seems awkwardly placed because v3-5 are connected to the vision of the scroll and the seals and concludes the description of final judgment that began in 6:12-17 and 8:1.
- John is using this parenthesis to conclude the vision of the scroll and the seals and introduce the trumpets which picks up again in v6.
- The sixth and seventh seal are both concerning final judgment.

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

Revelation 8:3-5 And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, 4 and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. 5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth,

and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

- Some commentators think this is the 'angel of his presence' mentioned in Isaiah 63:9.
- Some believe this angel represents Christ himself as in other visions in Revelation where He is seen as a mighty angel (10:1), and as one like the son of man (14:14).
- The angel has in his hand a golden censer.
- We saw this first in 5:8, the 24 elders, in response to the Lamb taking the scroll, fell down before the Lamb, holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which we are told represent the prayers of the saints.

1. The purpose of prayer

- If God's plan is already determined, then the question we must consider is this, Why bother praying?
- At the opening of the seventh seal, we see as part of God's eternal decree, the prayers of the saints presented and God responding to those prayers!
- The Prayers of the saints are included in and are part of, the eternal decrees of God!

- Here's why prayer matters—because God has purposed that the prayers of the saints are part of the means by which the divine decrees happen.
- God has bound himself in the outworking of his divine will and plan to the prayers of his children.
- God ordained the end and the means to the end of HOW and WHEN his plan unfolds in human history—and prayer is an important means to that end.
- If you could see that your prayer is somehow bound up with what is going on in the world today, how would that change your prayer life?

- Nothing happens without prayer, God has ordained it to be that way.
- When God's people pray, heaven responds, because God has ordained it to be that way.

- Does praying make a difference? Prayer makes a difference because God has ordained that the prayers of his children make a difference.
- V5 is the divine answer to the petition of the saints in 6:10.
- Their prayer made a difference.

2. The Pleasing Aroma of Prayer

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, 4 and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

- Can we have confidence that our prayers are being heard by God?
- Yes, we can have confidence that our prayers are heard and answered by God!
- The reason we can have this confidence is that the prayers of the saints are offered on the golden altar of God, which is Jesus Christ.
- The only reason we are heard by our heavenly Father is because of the merits of Christ's bloody atonement.
- The temple imagery is an allusion to the temple and the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)
- Without the incense, Aaron as the High Priest, would not have his prayers on behalf of the people sanctified or accepted.

- The Day of Atonement pointed to Christ who is our Great High Priest and Mediator.
- **Hebrews 7:25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.
- **James 4:3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
- Notice that the angel was given much incense.
- This is a remarkable picture of Jesus, our Great High Priest, who has more than enough incense to mask the flaws and faults of our sin-tainted, selfish prayers.
- Our prayers are acceptable to God because the sweet, pleasing aroma of Christ's intercession is rising up with our prayers.
- When we present our prayer requests in the name of Christ, trusting in his merits alone as our Great High Priest, our weak prayers are assured to reach heaven and rest on the altar of God.

- **1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
- **Hebrews 4:14-16** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- **How can I know that my prayers are in accordance with the will of God?**

- We have another support in taking our weak prayers and making them presentable to God—the Holy Spirit.
- **Romans 8:26-27** Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
- **1 John 5:14** And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
- Your prayers are heard because they are presented together with the intercession of Christ and the Spirit!
- Christ and the Spirit of grace, take our prayers, correct them, improve them, conform them, and present them to the Father who is eager to answer every prayer made in accordance to his will.

3. The Power of Prayer

- What we can see from Revelation is that God has an enormous multitude of angels who stand at the ready to carry out the plans of God and the answers to our prayers.

5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

- Myriads of angels surround the throne and wait on the Lord to carry out his orders.
- Though we cannot see it, the spiritual reality is that these heavenly creatures serve the people of God.
- **Hebrews 1:14** Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

- When we pray, God's answers often entail these divine messengers and servants of God attending to the needs of the saints.
- What a comfort knowing a battalion of angels are ready to be deployed in response to the prayers of the saints.

CONCLUSION

- **Example of John Knox of Scotland.**
- God gives more notice and attention to the prayers of his saints than he does any ruler or government.
- This should give us courage to pray bold prayers!
- **Robert Murray M'Cheyne**, *"If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me."*

- Let us pray with boldness, confidence, assurance, knowing that prayer makes a difference because God has ordained that the prayers of his children make a difference.
- Let's pray for earth shattering answers to prayers that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Let us pray for the mighty advance of the gospel in our city and in our world.
- Let us pray for the powers of darkness that are blinding the minds of unbelievers to be removed so they may see the glorious light of the glory of Christ.
- And let us pray for the church to be strengthened and emboldened in this hour of testing.