

Week of December 30-January 5

CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 8

**“When he opened the seventh seal,
there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”**

From the time he was taken up to heaven until the opening verse above in chapter 8, the apostle John had been inundated with the sights and sounds of heaven. The Lord on the throne surrounded by an emerald rainbow. The sea of glass. The four living creatures. The twenty-four elders. The myriads of angels. The Lamb. The flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. The four living creatures day and night saying: *"Holy, holy, holy"* The twenty-four elders falling down before the throne and laying their crowns before the Lord singing: *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."* The angels crying out: *"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"* All of creation chiming in: *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"* And that's just chapters 4-5! The sights and sounds continue in chapters 6-7 with seals being opened by the Lamb and judgment being executed on earth. 144,000 are sealed. Praise erupts in heaven from an innumerable crowd of people from every tribe, nation, people, and language.

And then...**SILENCE!** No more praising or worship. Only silence. Not just for a few seconds to catch one's breath or even for a few minutes to quiet one's thoughts. Silence so intense that it can almost be felt. A thirty-minute calm before the storm.

Silence, however, doesn't imply inactivity. The silent interlude allows for seven angels to be given seven trumpets. It also allows for the prayers of the saints to be raised before God along with incense. Amazingly, praise ceases so that the cries of the martyrs in Revelation 5 can be offered up to God and heard by all. Their cries for justice are no longer delayed. In response to the prayers of the saints, an angel places fire from the altar in the golden censer and hurls it down to the earth. Silence is broken as peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake immediately follow. God judges justly and unleashes his storms of judgment on a rebellious world as the seven angels blow the seven trumpets in succession.

As we noted in our devotional on Revelation chapter 6, there are times in our lives when we wonder if God hears our prayers and cries for relief, times when we struggle with God's silence as wicked people afflict us. But, know this, saint of God, he hears and will respond! His silence is often just the calm before the storm. Judgment will come and God will right every wrong. You can trust him.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read Psalm 46:10 and Habakkuk 2:20 in light of today's devotional. Commit to him those situations that seem so unfair in your life. Wait quietly in the Lord's presence until you know that he is God of the situation.

Take-a-way: *God's silence is not his absence; it's sometimes just the calm before the storm.*