

“And when he opened the Seventh Seal, silence ensued in the heaven about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels, who stood in the sight of the Deity, and seven trumpets had been given to them. And another angel came and stood by the altar having a golden censer, and there was given to him many odours, that he might cast for the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar in the sight of the throne. And the smoke of the perfumes for the prayers of the saints ascended from the hand of the angel in the presence of the Deity. And the angel took the censer, and filled it from the altar, and cast into the earth, and there were voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake.”

The sections to read in Eureka covering these verses are found in volume 2A

Blue pages 344 – 381. Red pages 2- 34 Silence in heaven - There was an earthquake.

The passage moves on beyond the vision of future glory back towards a consideration of the unsealing of the continuous historic development. Having established this was being done by the Lamb who alone of all creation has earned the right to do so. Chapter 5v5 and 6v1 highlights this point. The “he” then of verse 1 is the Lamb who opened the seventh seal. This seal introduces a new phase in the drama, as the seventh seal contains seven trumpets, this is a set of sevens within a set of seven.

The seal phase is ordinal, that is the numbers are in order, first second third etc. The seven seals in order have taken up the divine judgments against the Pagan Roman Empire. The empire that not only crucified Jesus Christ but also destroyed the temple and scattered the Jewish people into other countries both within and without their allotted territories, amongst all peoples. The last judgment against the pagan Empire was its destruction and conversion. The souls under the altar brought down the wrath of God upon the fourth beast of Daniel. That prophecy predicted that it would “*devour brake in pieces and stamp the residue with the feet of it*” which equates with the scattering of the residue of Daniel’s people, then it would develop, because it says that “*there came up among them (the horns) another little horn*”. The next phase then would concern the arising of the little horn power. Only by being rigorous in harmonising these prophecies together in the correct order of development does this construction work. Only those who read not just this prophecy, but all prophecies will be able to put together these pieces. God has sown these seeds in His Word thousands of years ago, hundreds of years before the Revelation was written. They now come to fruition.

Going back to an overview of the historical context, the sixth seal was identified with the division of Rome into four parts, as it became obvious that the expansion of the Empire had grown the size of the state beyond what one ruler could effectively rule in the mortal dominion. No mere man was able to successfully hold the reins of power over such a vast estate. The Emperor Diocletian had realised this and set in motion the division of the Empire into administrative areas of a more manageable size, four unequal zones with two larger than the other two, so two senior and two junior rulers. This was designed to avoid power struggles between the separate parties but ultimately it failed to prevent civil war from bursting out throughout all the realm. Heaven is not here the dwelling place of God but the political or ecclesiastical heights of that era.

In his booklet *Help to the memory of history* Robert Roberts has a good summary page on the fourth century which covers this period of silence in heaven for half an hour.

Looking at the Roman emperors in the line of Constantine, we have him ruling from 306-337, then his son Constantine II 337-340, then another son Constans from 337-350, another son Constantius II from 337-361, Julian the Apostate from 361-363 being a cousin of Constantius II and his heir. There were other rulers and the line is not singular as the empire waxed and waned into several competing areas at different times each with a separate ruler. However these rulers were not part of the blood line of the first great Christian emperor Constantine I.

How long is the half an hour in prophetic time? If it is to be understood literally then all saints are to look for a period of 30 minutes when there was no political agitation present! To believe this is logical nonsense. Not only is the book of Revelation a book of sign and symbol, 1v1, but the observance of a 30-minute period of silence is not only very common but practically impossible for the saints to achieve as they are forbidden to engage in politics which such an observation would require. There were no new Daniels set by God into gentile courts.

Instead the idea is that the half an hour equates to half an hour of the day-cycle of 360 days. Taking this as twelve hours and reckoning on the day for a year prophetic scheme, gives us 15 years, 360 years divided by 12 divided by two. This calculation makes more logical sense than suggesting 15 days, as even such a two-week period is not sufficiently remarkable as to be noteworthy as a great prophetic sign. However a "silence in heaven" with clearly identifiable noise both before and after going on for long periods would stick out as being noteworthy. This is what then occurred. After the subjugation of his enemies in heaven, Constantine ushered in a time of political peace unknown for decades either side of its occurrence. Before this silence Diocletian and then he also, were waging either wars or persecutions "in heaven" on a grand scale. After his death his sons were not as successful in stilling the brewing rage within the empire and other events indeed they themselves brought noise in their competition. Only during the reign of one sole Emperor Constantine the Great from his last battle to his death, **about 15 years (nearer 14) fits this timeline. 324 – 337 AD.**

The political controversies are matched or even exceeded by the ecclesiastical controversies of the period. This is the time of Arius and Athanasius, of Eusebius and then afterwards others like Augustine Jerome and Chrysostom. Men the catholic church venerates as their saints with the exception of Arius who is branded an heretic. At first very few in the time of Constantine had any time for the notions of Athanasius which subsequently became the only acceptable way to define Jesus within their theology. The standard doctrine of the trinity was framed at about this time. There were many church conferences, but as the emperor presided over some, it was said what part have emperors in church councils or Bishops in places of political power. This became an issue going forward and is addressed differently in different countries and at different times. There is no one person able to fulfil the Melchizedekian role of being both King and Priest as Jesus will be. The Nicean creed was framed at this time in Nicea near Constantinople the new Roman Capital in the east. This has Jesus as accepted as "very God of very God" and "begotten but not made". However most early Christian emperors were Arians not followers of Athanasius.

This period is noted as a time when “the prayers of all saints” are regarded in the absolute heaven. The anxieties and concerns of the faithful were answered in a way that brought down divine judgment upon the unbelievers. These were nominal Christians and the detail of this outworking will be traced in subsequent classes as we proceed, God willing, through the rest of the chapter and the new era of trumpet blasts. IN response to this the censer was cast into (upon is better) the earth. The earth, the common people were to be inflicted by “*voices and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake.*” Whilst these were heard in heaven the main effects were to be upon the earth who paid the price for the new noise which emerged upon the scene. These did not emanate from the throne as in 4v5 but as a consequence of the actions of the additional angel (another angel) of verse 3. This is not one of the seven trumpet sounding angels, but an eighth. This was before the sounding of his seven fellows. There was then a period of disturbance, after the silence but before the first trumpet during which these rumblings were experienced. Period covered **337 – 393 AD** some 56 years.

Voices are representative of political decrees or the passing of laws.

Thunderings are representative of longer-term political consequences. Thunder follows the lightning.

Lightnings are representative of shorter-term actions of political violence or action. The lightning forms the subsequent thunder.

An earthquake is representative of wider civil war not just trouble in the heavenlies.

During the next 56 years various events took place which reflect this new noise, after the welcome silence. Constantine II was killed in battle with his brother in 340. The Persians regain Armenia from Rome in 350. Picts and Scots cross Hadrian's wall in 360 which despite being pushed back by Theodosius leads to the evacuation of Britain by the Roman Legions in 383. Books began replacing scrolls in about 360. The Huns invade Europe in 360 (about 100 years before Attila, more on that in later classes).

After the **great** earthquake of Constantine and the intense civil war that took place in **312 – 324**, with a series of battles and victories between pagans and Christian sympathisers, another lesser earthquake took place during the reign of Julian. He was related to the royal line not an outsider, but he wished to roll back the advancement of the Christian sympathisers. To disprove the God of the Bible he challenged the prophecy regarding the Jewish temple that it would not be rebuilt except by the Messiah, by ordering it to be rebuilt by himself. This project was only stopped by his untimely death after a very short reign. He was a young man when he came to the throne.

This open challenge demonstrated the folly of standing out against the dictates of heaven. Many today pour scorn on the faith of Abraham but the scriptures are clear “*whoso blesseth thee I will bless, and whoso cureth thee I will curse*”, and so it continues to be in these modern times. Taking a stance against what the God of the Bible has revealed will not end well.