

Revelation — Lesson 11

Chapter Seven

Chapter 7 is an interlude between the sixth seal and the seventh seal. This chapter is intended to provide comfort and to reinforce the message of this book, which is victory in Jesus! In doing so, Chapter 7 answers the question that appeared at the end of Chapter 6: Who can stand before the wrath of God? We will find that Chapter 7 is modeled after Ezekiel 9, which describes a judgment that was to come against Judah from Babylon.

We should pause here to note that in the Bible, as in life, the innocent often suffer with the guilty. And when the innocent suffer due to a punishment of the guilty, it does not mean that the innocent are likewise being punished. While it may look the same from a human perspective, it does not look the same at all from God's perspective. For example, children suffered and died in the flood but those children were not being punished by the flood. Ezekiel 18:20 forbids the idea that God punishes one person for another person's guilt, but it does not forbid the idea that one person suffers due to another person's guilt, and in fact, that happens all the time.

Similarly, one may be exempt from a judgment yet still suffer during that judgment. Again, while it may look the same from a human perspective, it does not look the same from God's perspective. In Ezekiel 9, God's people are marked so that they would be untouched when judgment came, yet in Ezekiel 21:3–4 we see that the righteous died as well as the guilty when that judgment came. Their exemption was not a promise that they would be spared suffering but rather a promise that they would not be among the ones for whom that suffering was a judgment and a punishment.

There is a vast difference between suffering *with* the guilty and suffering *because* you are guilty even though admittedly at the time there

may not appear to be much of a difference. But the difference is real, and the difference is clear from God's perspective, which is the perspective revealed to us in this book.

Each time I read, study, and teach this book I discover new things. (Psalm 119:162 — "I rejoice at your word as one who finds great treasure.") As I prepared these notes, I was struck by the parallels between Revelation and Job. In each, Satan plays a key role as an accuser of God's people. In each, God's people suffer at the hands of Satan, but that suffering is not punishment and is not permanent. In each, God allows that suffering to continue for a little time. In each, a key theme is the sovereignty of God. In each, a key theme is that things are not always what they seem. In each, there is a happy ending for the people of God.

7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

The number four is mentioned four times in these verses, and as we have seen, the number four often denotes the created world — the four elements, the four directions, the four seasons. In 5:12 when *heaven* praises Christ, it is with a *seven*-fold blessing. Later in 5:13, when the *earth* praises Christ, it is with a *four*-fold blessing. Thus, the focus here is on the created world.

What does it mean in verse 1 to hold back the four winds? A wind, being both powerful and invisible, is often used to denote the activity of God. By holding back the four winds they were holding back God's judgments against his creation for a moment. Compare —

- **Isaiah 57:13** When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The **wind** will carry them off, a breath will take them away.
- **Jeremiah 18:17** Like the east **wind** I will scatter them before the enemy. I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity.
- **Psalms 104:4** Who makest the **winds** thy messengers, fire and flame thy ministers.
- **Hebrews 1:7** Of the angels he says, “Who makes his angels **winds**, and his servants flames of fire.”
- **Psalms 18:10** He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the **wind**.

This wind depicts a judgment that is about to come from God, and this judgment will come when the angels let loose the wind. How soon will it occur? Well, how long can the wind be held back? The image denotes something that will occur soon.

Another angel appears in verse 2 on an errand of mercy, and this angel comes from the rising of the sun. The sun is sometimes used to represent the goodness of God. Compare —

- **Psalms 84:11** For the LORD God is a **sun** and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
- **Malachi 4:2** But unto you that fear my name shall the **Sun** of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

This is a book of revelation, and nothing reveals like the sun. Evil hides in darkness, whereas sunlight dispels darkness and dread. This angel arriving from the rising sun is bringing good news from God!

In verse 3, a call for delay is given until the righteous are marked or sealed. Compare Ezekiel 9:4–6 —

And the LORD said to him, “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon

the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.” 5 And to the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; 6 slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were before the house.

We have already seen several key themes in this book — (1) We must see things as God sees them. (2) The power of prayer. (3) Victory in Jesus. Here we see a fourth: (4) God knows!

God knows those who remain faithful, and he is assuring them of that. Some of those suffering persecution were wondering if God had forgotten about them, and Revelation was written to reassure them that he had not. This interlude is intended to provide comfort and assurance to the church.

What is the seal in verses 2-3? Is it the Holy Spirit? Some say yes, and point to Ephesians 1:13 —

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

But I don't think that seal is the one we see here in Revelation. These people were sealed *because* they were righteous and hence they already had the gift of the Holy Spirit that was promised in Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32. They had already received the seal of Ephesians 1:13.

What then is the seal here in verses 2-3? This seal is simply God's way of marking his possessions just like he did in Ezekiel 9. You put your name or your seal on something when that thing is yours and you want others to know that it is yours. God is marking his people to reassure them that he knows who they are and that they belong to him. Not one will be misplaced or stolen.

How many of God's people were sealed? Before we answer that question, what would we *expect* the answer to be? What would the initial readers, seeking comfort, expect the answer to be?

How much comfort would there be if we take 144,000 literally, as many do today? Can we really imagine God turning to the poor, persecuted Christian wearing the number 144,001 on his chest and saying "Sorry, but you are out of luck. You're a day late, and a dollar short! Better luck next time ... if there were going to be a next time!" How ridiculous!

We would expect the answer to be that *all* of God's people would be sealed. We would expect to hear that not one of God's children would be left out. We would expect to hear that he was marking *all* of his possessions. And that is exactly what we are told here! The number 144,000 is a beautiful symbol for *all* of God's people.

The number 144,000 = $12 \times 12 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$ is God's way of emphasizing that *all* of his people are under his care and protection — which is just what we would expect him to say!

The 144,000 are mentioned again in 14:1–5, where they are described as virgins and said to be those redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. Does this description from Chapter 14 help us here with the 144,000 in Chapter 7? Yes. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul said he wanted to present the Corinthian church as a chaste virgin to Christ. James 1:18 says that we are "a kind of first fruits of his creatures." The church is comprised of those who have been redeemed from mankind. The church is sealed with the name of God and the Lamb. (Recall Revelation 3:12.)

The descriptions of the 144,000 in Chapter 7 and Chapter 14 confirm that the number 144,000 denotes the church.

But why are they called Israelites? Israel is an established name for God's people. The name literally means "he who prevailed with God." Could there be a better description for these Christians. As we discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the church is the true Israel. The church is the new Jerusalem.

Although Jacob had 12 sons, only 11 sons received a tribal inheritance. The tribe of Levi received 48 cities that were scattered among the other tribes. The tribe of Joseph was split into two tribes named for his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus, when the tribes are listed in the Bible the list generally omits Levi and Joseph and includes Ephraim and Manasseh instead. But this is *not* the case here.

In fact, the list is unusual in several respects. First, Judah rather than Reuben (the oldest son) heads the list. Why? Because Christ belonged to the tribe of Judah.

Second, Manasseh and Joseph are both included even though Manasseh was Joseph's son. And Levi is included on the list, while Joseph's other son, Ephraim, and Dan are not included.

Why was Dan left out? Dan was very early connected with idolatry —

- **Judges 18:30** And the Danites set up the graven image for themselves.
- **1 Kings 12:28-29** So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.
- **Genesis 49:17** Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward.

Rome was full of idolatry and so was Dan. Hence Dan was not used in the description of the church. Dan was the classic example of a tribe that compromised with the world! The theme of the letters to the seven churches was a warning not to compromise with the world!

And why was Ephraim left out? For the same reason —

- **Hosea 4:17** E'phraim is joined to idols, let him alone.
- **Hosea 12:1** E'phraim herds the wind, and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence;

they make a bargain with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

Ephraim had forsaken God and was busy trying to make deals with the world. They made a covenant with Assyria, but at the same time were making deals with Egypt. Again, Ephraim was guilty of compromise!

Why are the tribes listed by name? The names are listed so that God can give us a lesson about compromise with the world by the omission of Dan and Ephraim.

Note here the careful use of symbolism in the omission of Dan and Ephraim because of their compromise with the world and in the inclusion of Manasseh and Joseph to keep the total number at 12. This book is truly a work of art! The painting itself is beautiful beyond compare, as are the individual brushstrokes.

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."

These verses are modeled after the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles or Booths. We read about that feast in Leviticus 23:39-43 —

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. 40 And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. 41 You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, 43 that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

In John 7:37 this feast is simply referred to as “The Feast.” The Rabbis said that “he who has not seen Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles does not know what rejoicing means.”

The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the exodus from Egypt when the Israelites dwelt in tents and tabernacles. The people would build booths or tabernacles with walls made of branches and thatched roofs and then dwell in them for seven days. The Feast of Tabernacles occurred four days after the Great Day of Atonement in which the national guilt was removed by innocent blood.

One of the most important rituals during the feast was the pouring of water in the temple. A specially appointed priest was sent to the Pool of Siloam with a golden pitcher to bring water from the pool. This water was then poured by the High Priest into a basin at the foot of the altar amidst the blasting of trumpets and the singing of the Hallel (Psalm 113–118). It reminds us of Isaiah 12:3 — “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

It was at the end of such a celebration that Jesus announced that he was the real source of living water. Recall John 7:37-38 —

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Jesus stood up and said that *he* was the answer to their prayers! His Messianic claim was so clear in making that statement that it caused a division among the people.

Revelation 7:9-12 is modeled after this feast. The group pictured here is also full of joy. The original feast looked forward to the Messiah. Here in Revelation we see the joy of those who are looking *at* the Messiah!

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” 14 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

In verse 13, one of the elders asks, “Who are these?” He then tells us that they are survivors of and victors of the great tribulation. They

have come out of it. And how do they feel? Are they depressed and in despair? No, they are rejoicing!

What is the great tribulation in verse 14? Let's first determine what it is *not*. There are some misconceptions about the great tribulation.

First, it is a misconception to believe that there is only one great tribulation in the Bible. God's enemies always undergo a great tribulation at one time or another, and the Bible is filled with enemies of God. Accordingly, the Bible is also filled with great tribulations experienced by the enemies of God's people.

The Old Testament tells us about many great tribulations against the enemies of God's people. Here is a list of some of the foreign nations and cities that are judged by God in the Old Testament: Sodom, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre, Media, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Damascus, Ethiopia, Phoenicia, and Arabia.

Jerusalem underwent a great tribulation in A.D. 70 when it was judged by God using the hands of the Romans. That great tribulation was prophesied in Matthew 24:21 —

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

That great tribulation was fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, as Matthew 24:34 makes clear.

Some people read Matthew 24:21 and conclude that it must be speaking about the end of the world. After all, it says that there has never been and will never be another tribulation like that one. First, we *know* from verse 34 that the events in verse 21 happened in the first century. (Remember one of interpretive principles — we should use easy to understand verses to help us understand the difficult verses.) Second, the language in Matthew 24 is apocalyptic, and thus we should expect vivid, frightening images, which is what we find in verse 21. Third, we have seen similar hyperbolic language from the Old Testament, where it was also *not* describing the end of the world.

Another great tribulation will happen on the last day, when the ungodly are judged and the world is destroyed. Recall Romans 2:5-10 —

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on **the day of wrath** when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be **tribulation** and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

If we are correct that the villain in this book is Rome rather than Jerusalem, then this judgment against Rome must be yet another great tribulation. And, if you started reading the Bible in Genesis and read all the way to Revelation, wouldn't you *expect* there to be a great tribulation in Rome's future? Hasn't that always been God's way of dealing with the enemies of his people?

Chapter 6 told us that a great tribulation was coming for Rome. Recall Revelation 6:12-17 —

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; 14 the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and

rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"

The saints were sealed earlier in Chapter 7 in anticipation of this great tribulation or this great day of wrath. Thus, Chapter 7 has already told us they were about to go through it, and now we see them after they have come out of it!

Here is the image that God is painting: Rome is persecuting the church. The church cries out for vindication. God says that Rome will experience his wrath. The church is sealed by God before the tribulation. After the tribulation, the church is pictured rejoicing in heaven.

Does the past tense in verse 14 mean that the judgment had already happened by the time the book was written? No. What it means is that the outcome of God's battle with Rome is never in doubt. The outcome is so certain that God can speak of it in past tense before it even happens.

Was the church literally in heaven at this time? No, but as we have previously discussed, God depicts them in this book as already being there. By contrast, the phrase "those that dwell upon the earth" always refers to the ungodly in this book.

Who are "those before the throne" in verse 15? Those before the throne are the 144,000 (*all* of God's people) looked at from a different perspective. These are the people who were marked.

Many things in Revelation are symbolized by different symbols at different points in the book. Jesus is seen as a Lamb and as a rider on a white horse. Rome is seen as a beast from the earth, as a beast from the sea, and as a harlot. It all depends on the throne's perspective. Remember that dissimilarity of speech does not imply distinctness of subjects. Different images can be used to depict the same object.

But how do we know that these two groups are the same? The 144,000 were sealed to preserve them through the great tribulation, and this group consists of those who came out of the great tribulation.

Both groups are before the throne (7:15 and 14:3). Both groups are led by the Lamb and redeemed from the earth (7:17 and 14:3).

We have already determined that 144,000 depicts the church. Is there any evidence that the group pictured here also depicts the church? As always, let's begin by looking at the evidence. Here is what we are told about his group: "They before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

After reading that description, I think we would all agree that this group can be none other than the church. Who else can stand before the throne of God? Who else serves God as priests? Who else does God shelter? Who else has the Lamb in their midst? Who else receives springs of living water (as we also saw earlier in John 7:37-38).

The real question for us is not *who* is this group, but rather is *when* is this group. Is this the church at the time of Rome, or is this the church after the end of all time?

We see some symbols here that we very commonly apply to our future home in heaven — no hunger, no thirst, no tears. And yet, once again we have symbols that are used elsewhere in the Bible to refer, not to the end of the world, but to the state of God's people under his care and protection.

Think about Psalm 23, for example. We generally do not think of that Psalm as something reserved for only the future, and yet what do we find there? "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." No hunger? No thirst? The picture is that of a well cared for and well guided flock. Recall Psalm 121:5-6 —

The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.

In short, although these blessings will be enjoyed in the future, they can also be enjoyed here and now! We are a flock with Jesus as our shepherd! "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

The promise of no hunger and no thirst is a promise to those saved by Jesus Christ. Recall Isaiah 49:8-10 —

Thus says the LORD: "**In a time of favor I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you;** I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, 'Come forth,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways, on all bare heights shall be their pasture; **they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall smite them,** for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them."

When was that promise fulfilled? Paul tells us in Second Corinthians 6:1-2 —

Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "**At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.**" Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Paul tells us that the prophecy from Isaiah 49 pointed to the salvation that came through Jesus. That is a promise for the here and the now!

Did Jesus' followers in the first century *literally* cease to feel hunger and thirst. No, but they did experience an end to spiritual hunger and thirst. Recall John 7:37 —

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink."

We see similar symbols used elsewhere to describe God's victorious people. Israel, which was being persecuted by Assyria at the time, was told in Isaiah 25 and Isaiah 30 that a time would come when they would weep no more.

- **Isaiah 25:8** He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will **wipe away tears from all faces**, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.
- **Isaiah 30:19** Yea, O people in Zion who dwell at Jerusalem; **you shall weep no more**. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you.

The church here is told the same thing while they are being persecuted, not by Assyria, but by Rome. What does this language mean in the Old Testament? It meant that God would deliver them. What does it mean in the New Testament? It means the same thing!

What is the message to the church in a nutshell? Rome is going to be judged, but good things are going to happen to you! You are going to be victorious! Rome will weep, but you will not. Rome will be burned by fire, but you will not. Rome will face hunger and thirst, but not you. Jesus loves and cares for his church!

Was this a physical deliverance? No. All those who profess the name of Christ will face persecution, and that was especially true for these Christians. Our deliverance is a spiritual deliverance. We must see things as God sees them, and his view is from all eternity. By his view, our lives on this earth are just vapors that appear for a short while and then vanish away.

The church overcame mighty Rome? How? By following the example of Christ who overcame the world through his perfect sacrifice. Listen as John tells us in 12:10 how the church overcame Rome: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." We are not

looking at a *physical* deliverance here — but we are looking at a deliverance.

But does this group depict the entire church, or does it just depict those Christians who have already been killed by Rome? I believe we are seeing *all* the church, as emphasized by the symbolic meaning of 144,000. No one is left out.

In this book, God's people are pictured as being in Heaven even while they still live on earth. In fact, the phrase "those that dwell on the earth" is used in Revelation to depict the ungodly. John paints a beautiful picture here. God has taken his church out of harm's way. He has marked them so that they will not face the judgment against Rome. These Christians are those who have come out of the great tribulation without compromising with the world.

So far we have seen Jesus' power and worthiness to judge, we have heard a demand for judgment from the martyrs, we have had a taste of the terror of an approaching judgment, and we have seen that God's people will be exempt from this judgment.

The next scenes will be ones of tremendous action, but Chapter 8 begins with a short period of awed and breathless silence and anticipation.

Chapter Eight

1 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.

After much anticipation, we finally reach the opening of the seventh seal. The removal of this final seal reveals seven trumpets that warn of impending judgment. But, as we saw with the first six seals, these

trumpets are not yet final judgments. They strike fractions rather than the whole of their targets.

The trumpets serve the same purpose that the plagues did against Egypt. The ungodly may yet be able to heed the trumpets' warnings and repent. But Rome will almost certainly not repent. Instead, Rome will harden its heart against God just as Pharaoh did.

Verse 1 tells us that when this final seal is opened there is silence in Heaven for one half hour. This period of silence dramatically heightens the anticipation of what is about to happen. The time for talking is over; the time for judgment has begun. The scene reminds us of Habakkuk 2:20 — "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

Our modern world hates silence. We do everything we can to fill the silence with blaring TV's, blasting iPods, or unending chatter. Modern man hates silence because with silence comes reflection, and that is something modern man cannot tolerate. Remember what C.S. Lewis' Screwtape told the demon Wormwood in *The Screwtape Letters* — "Your business is to fix [man's] attention on the stream [of immediate sense experiences]. Teach him to call it 'real life' and don't let him ask what he means by 'real.' ... Keep everything hazy in his mind now, and you will have all eternity wherein to amuse yourself by producing in him the peculiar kind of clarity which Hell affords." Satan *loves* a noisy, confusing world!

Why half an hour? An "hour" is often used to indicate a time of critical importance or activity.

- **John 12:23** The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified.
- **John 12:27** And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.
- **I John 2:18** It is the last hour.

Many thus surmise that a half hour indicates a delay just before a period of critical importance. The crisis is near but has not yet come.

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Finally, in verse 2, we meet seven angels with seven trumpets. Each of these trumpets will soon sound, just as each of the seven seals we saw earlier was uncovered, and just as each of the seven bowls we will see later will be poured out. This book comes in waves of seven!