

Rev. 7:1-3. Pent-Up Judgment

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the concept of pent-up judgment, where God's wrath is restrained, and the importance of sealing and ingathering, highlighting God's care for His own and His yearning for humanity to repent.

Scripture: Revelation 7:1

Topics: "Grace", "Judgment", "Salvation"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the theme of pent-up judgment in Revelation 7:1-3, illustrating how God's grace temporarily restrains judgment while righteousness demands it. He describes the slow, silent, sure, and terrible nature of this judgment, warning that while it may be delayed, it will ultimately come. Bonar also highlights the sealing of God's servants, indicating divine protection during times of trouble, and the ingathering of souls as a call to repentance and salvation. He urges listeners to recognize the urgency of their spiritual state and the need to turn to God before the impending judgment. The sermon serves as a reminder of God's patience and the importance of responding to His grace.

Transcript

After these things, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."--Revelation 7:1-3.

The scenes in the sixth chapter are scenes of judgment, ending with the great day of the wrath of the Lamb--no interval of blessedness between--no millennium before the great and dreadful day. The seventh chapter is in vision after the sixth, but not necessarily in fulfillment; for both in the Old Testament and New we find a vision running on to the Advent, and then the next coming back and going over the same period for another purpose--so that 'after these things' refers generally to the sequence of the vision, not of the fulfillment.

The seventh chapter, then, does not take up the events at the close of the sixth. 'After these things' refers simply to the order of vision, not of execution; that execution or fulfillment may go back over the whole events of the previous chapter. Without, however, attempting to determine this more minutely, we take the seventh chapter as describing a time (1) of pent-up judgment; (2) of sealing; (3) of ingathering.

I. Pent-up judgment. Righteousness produces judgment, and grace restrains it. Grace does not nullify or cancel judgment--it simply suspends it. The history of our earth is one of suspended judgment. In the case of every sin, righteousness calls for a sentence against it, and for the execution of that sentence. The sinner who accepts the Substitute obtains complete and immediate remission, by the transference of his guilt and sentence to the Sin-bearer. He who refuses the Substitute braves the sentence, and takes his risk of the vengeance. In his case the sentence is not immediately executed; the wrath is treasured up; the judgment is pent up; the cup is allowed to overflow. But sooner or later the vengeance comes. It may be long pent up, but it comes at last. Of this judgment, we may say that it is--

(1) SLOW. When it comes, it comes swiftly. But meanwhile it is slow of foot--not rash, nor precipitate. This slowness often deludes the sinner.

(2) SILENT. It makes no sign. The fermenting elements are noiseless. There are often no thunderclouds, but a calm, blue sky.

(3) SURE. It will not miss its mark, nor mistake its victim, nor forget its time. Its slowness and silence contribute to its certainty.

(4) TERRIBLE. The blow, when it comes, is overwhelming. The pent-up torrent, when it breaks its barrier, carries all before it. The lightning comes noiselessly--and irresistibly. So God's vengeance is infinitely dreadful. Who can stand before it?

The pent-up judgment for the earth, or for a kingdom, is like the above. The storm gathers, but the four angels hold it in, until it can be restrained no longer. Frequently it tries to break out, but is restrained by the 'four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth.' We hear of wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes in different places. These are the judgments breaking through their barriers, and then forced back again. The storm is pent up. It gets a little vent, as if one of the four angels had for a moment lost his hold; and then it is restrained, for the time is not yet come. We are living in a day of pent-up judgment--the fire ready to descend, the storm ready to burst forth. How solemn to all! How startling to the sinner! How rousing to the saint! The end of all things is at hand--be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

II. The sealing. In the chapter before us it is a Jewish multitude that is specially named as sealed; but as in verse third it is the 'servants of God' that are said to be sealed, we may infer that by that expression both Gentile and Jew are meant. The sealing seems (as in Ezekiel 4) to intimate exemption from the earthly judgments of a particular time. I do not dwell on this further than to point out God's care for His own in days of trouble--as in Noah's days, in Lot's days, in Ezekiel's days, in the time of Jerusalem's great siege. I would remind you of the 91st Psalm also, which is specially written for evil days. It is true that in general the good as well as the evil suffer in times of pestilence, or war, or trial; but still it will be found that there is oftentimes alleviation (sometimes an exemption) of the believers from the evils of the evil day.

In all cases and times, God's care for His own is abundantly manifest. He covers them with His feathers, and under His wings He bids them hide. He is their shield and shield. As He protected Israel in the day of the slaughter of Egypt's first-born, so does He still. In that day the blood was His seal set on Israel; and other such seals He has for every evil day. He sends His angels to seal His servants, that the evil may not come near them. Why are you so fearful, O you of little faith? Trust in the Lord forever. Sealed and safe! Is not this blessedness--whatever may be coming on the earth?

III. The ingathering. It is not simply for temporal protection that God stays His judgments--but for salvation. A time of pent-up judgment is a time of 'ingathering'. A time of judgment may also be so--but a time of 'suspended judgment' still more so. For at such a time God is in earnest--in earnest in His grace, in earnest in His righteousness. He is not slumbering nor sleeping. He is urging us to repent, saying, O that they would hearken to my commandments! Turn! Turn! Why will you die? He is yearning over us with his 'How shall I give you up?' He is weeping over us with His 'O that you had known!' His patience is salvation--and His patience is eternal life. He pities to the last. Fury is not in Him. Judgment is his 'strange' work.

As such a time the gospel comes with peculiar power. When we tell men that they are living under a fiery cloud of 'suspended wrath'; when we cry aloud to them of coming doom and 'stored-up vengeance'--we are approaching them with the strongest motive of fear. And when we tell them of infinite love, of divine long-suffering, of the patience and forbearance of that God who wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, we approach them with the strongest argument that can win a human heart. We entreat them to flee from the wrath to come. We point them to the cross, and ask them to look and be healed. We beseech them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; for now is the accepted time--the day of vengeance is at hand!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/horatius-bonar/rev-71-3-pent-up-judgment/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net