

## Discussion Questions February 18, 2018

### The Other Side of Silence (Revelation 8)

(Do you like praying if so why? If not why not?) (In what circumstances do you find yourself praying?)

In Revelation 8 we read about the prayers of God's people, they seem to somehow be out of space and time and they seem to play some sort of role in the unfolding of the rest of the chapter. Many places in Scripture point to the idea that all is determined by God, while others seem to point towards the idea that God is influenced by our requests.

- What do you think, does prayer influence God or His plans? Why or why not?
- What do you think the purpose of prayer is?
- Jesus encourages us to ask in His name. What do you think it means to ask in Jesus' name?

In Revelation 8 the Lamb opens the 7<sup>th</sup> seal and there is silence. That's not what we would expect at this moment: the final seal is opened.... the scroll is finally open... and silence...

- Why do you think there is silence?

Many commentators argue that all of Heaven is silent because the witnesses under the altar are silent because God has answered their prayers for vengeance by throwing fire on the earth in the form of lightning, thunder, and earthquakes . . .

But the lightning, thunder, and earthquakes don't happen until *after* the silence . . . They're not the reason for the silence. All that the witnesses would have seen, after their prayers for vengeance and before the great silence, would have been the opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal, which revealed some slaughtered Lamb.

And isn't it a weird idea that Jesus would answer their prayers for vengeance with *that* sort of vengeance, when over and over Scripture says that vengeance belongs to God, and Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us?

Avenge is the word *ekdikesis*, which means to make right.

And that's really...every prayer request—that God would make it right; we might not be sure what that means, but we want God to make it right—*ekdikesis*. —Peter Hiett

- Throughout your life how have you tried to make things right?
- Looking at Jesus' life and the entirety of Scripture, how does God make things right?
- What similarities and differences do you see between the way God "makes things right" and the way you try to "make things right"?

The witnesses in Revelation 6 cry, "How long oh Lord?" The witnesses are Old Testament saints like Jeremiah and Ezekiel (that have been slaughtered for the Word), and they're crying out, "How long until you make it all right?"

- Can you relate to that cry? "How long until you make it right"?

At the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished," as if all has been made right, and yet we experience so much that doesn't seem right yet—in this world.

- How do you make sense of that?
- Do you think things *have been* made right *already*?
- Do you think they are in process of being made right or will be made right only in the future?
- Maybe both?

The Lamb was slaughtered He cried out: "Father forgive." And then, there was an earthquake; the sky grew black and the earth shook. Maybe that was vengeance: "Father forgive"? Maybe it was vengeance, but not a vengeance of this world. Maybe their prayers were answered, but not in the way they would expect...The thing that moves the earth and shatters every wall of stone is forgiveness . . . —Peter Hiett

- In what areas have you seen forgiveness as a powerful force for shattering walls?
- How might trusting that it really already is finished, as Jesus said, change your prayer life?
- How might trusting that it really already is finished, as Jesus said, change your ideas about how justice might take place in this world?
- Is there anything you can do, here and now, to help bring about justice in this world?

*These questions were created by Kimberly Weynen.*