

AN ANGEL AND A LITTLE SCROLL

Revelation 10

Introduction:

We are approaching the midpoint of the book of Revelation. In our study we are also very near the midpoint of the 7-year Tribulation period. Many scholars would place our study a little way into the second half of the Tribulation.

The Tribulation begins very soon after the Rapture of the Church. The Apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, describes the catching away of the believers, both the living and the dead.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NKJV)

The Lord Jesus is coming to take us away before the time of judgment. He will not return to the earth at this point—rather, we will meet Him in the air. What a glorious day that will be.

But it will not be glorious for those who are left behind. What follows is referred to as the Great Tribulation, and for very good reason. It all begins in chapter 6 with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Things look wonderful at first as a new champion rides onto the scene promising peace, security and prosperity.

However, things spiral downhill quickly. As the seals on the scroll are broken and the events revealed, we soon see the reality of what lies in store for those who are not prepared for the Rapture. There is calamity and catastrophe of every imaginable sort – war, famine, pestilence and disease. Things become so horrific that the scripture says in 6:15-17, *“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the moun-*

tains 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, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”” (Revelation 6:15-17 ESV)

However, that is only the beginning. With the opening of the seventh seal, all the hosts of heaven are so horrified at what they see coming that they are rendered speechless. There is silence in heaven for a brief period before the next events begin to unfold. These outpourings of God’s wrath are signaled by seven trumpets sounded by seven angels.

Over the past couple of messages we have looked at the first six of the seven trumpet judgments. The first four trumpets brought great disaster upon the earth and the environment as grass and trees are burned up, significant portions of the sea and its creatures are destroyed, and much of the fresh water is contaminated, leading to the death of many people. Even the sun and moon, and day and night are affected. There is absolute chaos in the ecological systems of the world.

Then last week we looked at chapter 9 – the fifth and sixth trumpets. Now the disasters move from the environment to the people themselves. We are not told what exactly the torture is, but people will face torture and torment like the sting of a scorpion and in the sixth trumpet judgment a third of the population of the earth will die from the plagues that come upon them.

Well, we are going to have to wait a bit to see what happens when the seventh trumpet sounds, because chapter 10 and most of chapter 11 form another interlude in the unveiling of these end-time events. As David Levy points out in his commentary on the Revelation,

“These interludes (Rev. 7, and Rev. 10:1-11:14) do not advance the chronology of Revelation, but they do provide detailed information about other events taking place in relation to the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. Interludes also provide comfort to believers by showing God’s sovereign control over earthly events, His judgment of the wicked, and ultimate victory in His redemptive program for mankind and planet Earth.”

So chapter 10 is the beginning of an interlude that leads eventually to the seventh trumpet judgment. There are two elements to this vision.

The Angel

The first key element in this vision is the angel. The second is the scroll, and we will get to that shortly. But first the angel. Look for a moment at the description of this mighty angel coming down from heaven:

- ...wrapped in a cloud. "Clouds not only enhance the dignity and glorious appearance of angels, but are often associated with angels and the Lord when they come on a mission of judgment." (Levy)
- ...a rainbow over his head. "The rainbow symbolizes God's mercy, grace, and covenant promises in the midst of divine judgment."
- ...his face was like the sun. It is common for the angels to radiate glory when they appear. They have come from the presence of God and radiate his glory and majesty.
- ...his legs like pillars of fire. Throughout the book of Revelation fire signifies judgment. The mission of this angel is to announce God's coming judgment on the earth. We read that "...he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land..." This fact is mentioned three times, in vv. 2, 5, 8. Levy suggests that this emphasizes that God's judgment will not be limited to a specific area, but will be worldwide.

We have certainly seen a lot of angels so far in the book of Revelation. The most recent are the angels with the trumpets who are assigned to sound their trumpets to signal the approach of the seven judgments or catastrophes. We saw the first six of these in chapters 8-9. So who or what was this angel?

There are those who believe that this was not actually an angel, but a revelation of Jesus Christ himself. He is likened to what we refer to as a Christophany in the OT—Jesus Christ appearing in human form, often called "The Angel of the Lord." But such an idea is unsound for several reasons. I don't want to get bogged down on this, but I think it is important to note a few things.

1. Christ's appearances as the "angel of the Lord" are strictly an OT occurrence. He is never called such after he took on humanity.
2. He is described here as "another mighty angel." The term another is *allos*, meaning of the same kind, not *heteros* – different.

3. This angel is seen coming down from heaven. There is no indication that Jesus will return to the earth at any time prior to His Second Coming when he appears on the Mount of Olives to conquer and establish the Millennial Kingdom.

There are other things that could be mentioned, but suffice it to say that this appears to be an unnamed, but important angel assigned an important task in God's end-time timetable.

When he spoke, it was like the sound of a lion roaring. Certainly this would draw attention to his message, and emphasize the importance of what was about to be said. When he spoke, seven thunders sounded.

Here we have another "seven." Seven seals, seven trumpets, still to come seven bowls. And in between, seven thunders. Many people have tried to speculate the content of these seven thunders. But such speculation is an utter waste of time. As soon as John had seen and heard the message, as he was about to begin writing it down, a voice from heaven spoke, forbidding him to record this message – see v. 4.

Clearly this message was intended for the Apostle John and not for anyone else. Levy points out that "John received more revelation concerning the future than he was permitted to reveal. What he wrote is exactly what God wanted mankind to know about the future. The revelation given to John, which he was not to reveal, must have prepared the apostle in some way for what was to follow concerning God's future program."

However, we do know something of the message this angel had for the Apostle John. *Read vv. 5-7.* I found David Levy's explanation helpful:

The word delay is sometimes rendered time. This cannot be referring to the end of time and the beginning of eternity because the thousand-year reign of Christ has not been announced ... In other words, "it does not refer to time as a succession of chronological events. Rather, it means that time has run out; that is, there will be no further delay" in the unveiling and fulfillment of "the mystery of God" (v. 7). "The mystery of God" refers to hidden truth concerning God's program that is about to be divinely revealed through John. This hidden truth deals with the coming bowl judgments, which will be poured out with the blowing of the seventh trumpet, as well as all of the events yet to be revealed concerning the institution of the Millennial Kingdom and the new heaven and the new earth.

The Little Scroll

Well, we need to address the question of the scroll. What is this scroll and what does it contain. Again we are not really told the contents of the scroll and it would be dangerous to speculate too much. There are many theories, which I will not get into, but it cannot be the same scroll discussed in ch. 5. One key difference between the two is that this scroll is already open, where the previous scroll was sealed up. It would seem that this scroll must, in some way, relate to the mystery of God that is mentioned in v.7, and all of the bitter prophecies that it contains.

John is instructed by the voice of God to go and take the little scroll from the angel. This again is quite different from the scroll of chapter 5, when no one but the resurrected Christ was qualified to take the scroll and open the seals.

When Joh receives the scroll from the angel, he is given a rather strange instruction – *read v. 9-10*. Eating the scroll implies devouring and digesting the contents—the knowledge and understanding of what was in the scroll. Understanding the revelation that was in the scroll was sweet to John’s taste, but when its message was digested, it became bitter in his stomach.

In the OT both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had similar experiences. They were presented with a scroll and instructed to eat it. Upon doing so they wound the Word of God to be pleasant and sweet to the taste. That is the experience of John. Yet once the message is absorbed and understood, it can produce anguish and pain in the soul.

The Word of God and the promises regarding future events is a wonderful message of deliverance for us as believers, but it is a terrifying message of judgment and wrath for unbelievers.

Well, the final instruction given to John is in v. 11 – *read it*. John is given a commission to deliver the message contained in the scroll to the world. There are four groups mentioned. These are not the recipients of the message, but are the subject of the message. It is about many peoples, nations, languages and kings. These prophecies will affect the nations of the world, and those who rule over them.

Conclusion

Well, again we come to the question, so what? It is difficult to know what to say at this point. In view of the coming judgment that is described in such graphic detail in the Revelation, once again I ask, are you ready for Christ’s coming? Have you confessed your sin and cast yourself on God’s mercy? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ for salvation?

I would like to end with one more quote from David Levy. He has such a succinct way of bringing everything into focus. He says,

Like John, believers must devour and digest the contents of Revelation in order to send a warning to a lost world concerning future events. To those who reject the message in unbelief, it will be forever bitter, producing anguish and fear. To those who heed the message and put their faith in Christ, God’s Word will be forever sweet.