

11. The Angel and the Little Scroll (Revelation 10)

Chapters 10 and 11 and the first 14 verses of 12 receive treatment as interludes by many writers. A careful reading shows the entire passage to be an integral part of the second woe in chapter 9:13 at the sounding of the sixth trumpet where the armies of the dragon, 200 million strong, spread death throughout mankind. While this army wreaks havoc, the rest of mankind did not repent, continuing in devastating sins. The sounding of the sixth trumpet and the scene opened in chapter 9:13, ends incompletely, lacking either redemption or condemnation for those not repenting and those killed by the terrible army. Reinforcing this reading, chapter 11, verse 14 announces the end of the second woe: "The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon." Therefore, the second woe includes the army of death, injury, and plagues, the failure of the rest to repent, the angel and the scroll (chapter 10), and the two witnesses (chapter 11:1-14).

Chapter 10 begins with the implied but unasked question of what will happen to the rest who do not repent. Just as God allowed strong forces of evil to be unleashed at the sin of man and the fall of the devil, so also did he unleash His mighty forces of righteousness. Chapters 10 and 11 describe how God's mighty forces work in revealing His will and striking out against the army of evil. The weapon is the word of God. The righteous warriors are those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:14.

A Mighty Angel

10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

Still a part of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, John saw a mighty angel coming down out of heaven. Previous events under the sounding of this sixth trumpet include a voice from the golden altar commanding the angel to release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates in Revelation 9:13-16. These four angels, perhaps, were a part of the troops numbering 200 million. The army composed of these troops was one of death, injury, and plagues. This angel in chapter 10 is a mighty angel—not like the seven angels sounding the trumpets, not like the angels of the churches, and not like the angels bound at the river Euphrates.

The mighty angel (*messenger* by the use of the word in this passage) is the Lamb. An equivalent representation of the Lamb as an angel could be the priest angel offering the prayers of the saints, with incense, on the golden altar before the throne (See notes on chapter 8:3-5). In that case, the result of the angel's action on behalf of the saints was retribution. This *mighty angel* has the characteristics of the Lamb in chapter 1 and of the Lord in other passages.

He was robed in a cloud is the first descriptive phrase. In Revelation 1:7, John wrote in his doxology, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." The Lord spoke many times from a cloud in the Old Testament. For example, the Lord led the children of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day in Exodus 13:21: "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night." When Moses went upon the mountain, the Lord spoke from within a cloud. "The cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud." Exodus 24:16. A cloud or the clouds also clothed the divine presence in the New Testament. On the mount of transfiguration in Matthew 17:5, God spoke from a cloud, "5 While he was still speaking, a bright

cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" In Luke 21:27-28, Jesus said, "At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

With a rainbow above his head is similar to the description in Ezekiel 1:27-28 which refers to an appearance like unto a man: "Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. In Revelation 4:3, a rainbow encircles the throne of God, "A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne." All of this indicates that the mighty angel is the Lamb of God.

His face like the sun and his legs like fiery pillars are an almost direct representations of the description of the Lamb in Revelation 1:14-15: "And his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace." Again, the evidence seems overwhelming that the mighty angel is the Lamb of God.

The scroll that lies open in his hand is not necessarily a little scroll [see the notes on *biblion* in chapter 5]. The scroll, which lies in his hand, seems to be the same scroll of chapter 5—a scroll no one could open except the Lamb of God. In the chapters 6:1 through 8:1, he had opened the seven seals. What is in his hand is the revelation, not all of which has unfolded. The sounding of the seven trumpets concludes at the opening of the seventh seal. The narrative at this point is midway through the sounding of the sixth trumpet, which is the second woe.

The mighty angel planted his right foot on the sea and his left on the land. When he spoke, his voice was like a lion. The seven thunders spoke, John started to write, and the voice from heaven ordered John to seal up what the seven thunders said. The word, *thunders*, appears 13 times in the Bible. Each time the word refers to the Lord speaking. Joel speaks of the Lord thundering commands to his forces without number:

11 The LORD thunders
at the head of his army;
his forces are beyond number,
and mighty are those who obey his command.
The day of the LORD is great;
it is dreadful.
Who can endure it? Joel 2:11.

John had just witnessed the army of the devil, 200 million strong, and now he hears the seven thunders begin to illustrate the might of the almighty God and His forces beyond number. The seven thunders teach us that we are coming to the end of God's final revelation to man, but not the end of all there is to know. In fact, some of the things of heaven cannot be uttered. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8:26-27: "26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul said, "He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell."

The Mystery of God to Be Accomplished

5 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the

seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

Then the mighty angel swore by the Almighty God who lives forever and ever and who created all things. *There will be no more delay* is the subject of the oath. This does not refer to the end of the world and the coming of the Lamb, for we are now 1,900 years later, and that time that only God knows has not come upon us. The contrasting word, *but*, sets the time and the subject. *In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet* tells the *when* of this passage. Since we are able to read ahead, we know that this is coming later in the revelation, and John recorded it. *The mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets* is the *what* of this passage.

The big event is the final and complete revelation of God, revealed here and revealed at start of the book in Revelation 1:1: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place." The big accomplishment is God's revelation in His son.

God held his mystery throughout the ages, revealing it first and partially in the prophets of old:

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. 1 Peter 1:10-12

Not only did the Old Testament prophets seek the mystery but even the angels desired to look in on these things. Even the rulers did not know God's mystery:

6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him" —

10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

The consummation of God's mystery was in Christ. It was through Christ that God made his mystery known: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe." Hebrews 1:1-2. In Ephesians 3:2-6, Paul explained the role of the New Testament apostles and prophets:

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Now, without delay, God will complete the revelation of his mystery to John. The character and nature of the prophecies are important here, and important in understanding the two prophets of chapter 11. We must not think that the focal point of Revelation is the end of the world and the destruction of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, all those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, and Death and Hades. When the time comes, these are disposed of in little more than a verse each. The focal point is God's mystery fully revealed and spread by innumerable followers of the Lamb, throughout time.

The Army of the devil may have fire and sulfur coming out of their mouths and tails that bite like snakes, but the army of the Lord has the sword of the Spirit, the word of God (Ephesians 6:17) and that same sharp double-edged sword is coming out of the mouth of the Lamb. Revelation 1:16. In Isaiah 27:1, Isaiah forecast this same weapon in a struggle against the serpent:

27:1 In that day,
the LORD will punish with his sword,
his fierce, great and powerful sword,
Leviathan the gliding serpent,
Leviathan the coiling serpent;
he will slay the monster of the sea.

The Lord told of the impending use of the word of his mouth as a sword in Revelation 2:15-16: "Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." It is through the revelation that the sword becomes available to the servants of the Lord.

The Eating of the Book

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." 10 I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

The metaphor used in this passage is not the two-edged sword, but a metaphor of the eating of the book and of how it will taste. The voice told John to take the scroll (the mystery revealed) from the hand of the mighty Angel, and to eat it. In John's mouth, it was sweet as honey but in his stomach, it was bitter. The mystery of God is double-sided – to those who accept it, it is sweet, to those who reject it, it is bitter. To those who follow it, blessings beyond count but also trials and sufferings: "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." 2 Timothy 3:12-13.

This vision concluded with the voice telling John: "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." The revelation of God's mystery is not yet complete. John will continue to prophesy until the end of this book, orally, until he dies, and after that, through the inspired written word. Through the revelation of God do the unrepentant [See chapter 9, verse 21] have any hope. Peter clearly stated their condition in 2 Peter 2:9, "If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment." However, the Lord wishes all to follow His revelation and do His will: "8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:8-9