Revelation 10

The Angel and the Little Scroll

- The section of Revelation we now embark on (Revelation 10:1—11:13) is the second interlude passage of Revelation, the first being Revelation chapter 7. This interlude occurs before the final ***woe*** of the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

- This parenthetical section contains no reference to the judgment of the earth dwellers. Rather, this interlude reviews developments that lead up to the final trumpet blast, particularly those that are related to Jerusalem.

- Without the interlude of Rev 10:1-11:13, the progression of the book would be as follows: Rev 9:21 would end and join with Rev 11:14. The sixth trumpet is completed in Rev 9:21 and the declaration of the second woe as being completed is announced in Rev 11:14 with the announcement that the third woe (the seventh trumpet) is coming quickly.

An Announcement— Rev 10:1-7

Revelation 10:1— And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

- The term ***another*** (Gr. *allos*) means "another of the same kind," as we see in Rev. 5:2 (***And I saw a strong angel…***). Some scholars have suggested that this is the Lord Jesus, but it is not, for several reasons.

  1. This angel's description as being ***another*** **of the same kind** eliminates this possibility.

  2. The fact that this ***angel*** is seen ***coming down out of heaven*** eliminates the possibility because this event is neither the rapture nor the Lord's Second Coming . . . the only times the Lord comes to the earth.

  - Other than being ***another*** **of the same kind**, all that John says of this ***angel*** is that he is ***strong.***

- This angel is seen descending from heaven, making John's vantage point of this event being from the earth, meaning John's vantage point has moved from heaven (Rev 8:2, in which John is seeing the seven trumpet angels assembling) to earth in Rev 10:1.

- The phrase ***clothed with a cloud*** (Gr. *nephelē*) emphasizes his role as a messenger of God's coming judgment.

  - Of the other twenty references to "***cloud***" in the NT, nine are in connection with scenes of judgment (Mt 24:30, 26:24; Mk 13:26, 14:62; Lk 21:27; Rev 1:7, 14:14-16)

- The term ***rainbow*** (Gr. *iris*) is the same as in Rev 4:3 that encircles the throne in heaven.

- Unlike the "emerald" appearance of the rainbow in Rev 4:3, this one is a variegated color, like that which God revealed to Noah.

- The significance of the phrase ***and the rainbow was upon his head*** is that, going all the way back to Genesis 9:9-17, the multi-colored ***rainbow*** is a symbol of God's mercy in the midst of judgment. The rainbow around the head of this angel is an assurance of God's covenant mercy to His people even as He pours out His judgment on the world.

- The phrase ***his face was like the sun*** (Gr. *hēlios*) signifies glory and majesty.

- The ***feet*** (Gr. *pous*) includes the angel's legs with (Gr. *stulos pur*), ***pillars of fire.***

  - The phrase ***pillars of fire*** brings the recollection of the columns of fire that mercifully led the Israelites, under the leadership of Moses, while in darkness in the wilderness (Ex 13:21-22, 14:19,24). This adds reinforcement to the theme of judgment, suggested by the fire, tempered by mercy as seen in the rainbow.

Revelation 10:2— and he had in his hand a little book which was open. And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

- The term ***little scroll*** (Gr. *bibliaridion*) is a rare word in the NT, only occurring only here in Revelation chapter 10 (v. 2, 9, 10).

- There is much speculation regarding what this ***little scroll*** is. There is similarity here to the ***scroll*** described in Ezekiel 2:9-10 . . .

  Ezekiel 2:9-10—"Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When he spread it before me, it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations of mourning and woe."

- A compelling argument can be made that while this ***scroll*** is described as ***little***, it is, in fact, the ***scroll*** that the Lord Jesus took from the Father's hand and whose seven seals the Lord broke. Now ***open***, the ***scroll*** is about to be handed to John in v. 9.

- In v. 2 the ***strong angel*** is described as standing with ***his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land***. This is a symbolic position in which the ***sea*** and ***land*** are a comprehensive picture of the whole earth. This asserts that **this angel's message pertains to the whole world**.

Revelation 10:3— and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.

- Revelation 10:3 then describes that this ***strong angel cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars***. Then ***angel*** roars like God Himself because he, in fact, represents God. Specifically, he represents the Lord Jesus Christ. This language is similar to other Old Testament passages . . .

  Jeremiah 25:30: "The LORD will roar from on high and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold."

Hosea 11:10: "They will walk after the LORD, He will roar like a lion; indeed He will roar and His sons will come trembling from the west."

Joel 3:16: "The LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble."

- And the loud voice of the angel is then accompanied by the thundering voice of God, described in v. 3 as ***the seven peals of thunder.***

    - The definite article with the ***seven peals of thunder*** assumes that the thunders are well known to John's readers, but their identity is not known to us as present-day readers. But this description of the voice of God is affirmed in John 12:28-29 . . .

      John 12:28-29— "Father glorify Thy name. There came therefore, a voice out of heaven: "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

Revelation 10:4— And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them."

- The seven peals of thunder must have been understandable and not just a noise, because John states in v. 4 that ***when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write . . .***

    - But just as John is about to record the words he hears in ***the seven peals of thunder***, his effort to record the words is halted by the command of God . . . ***I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them."***

- The command to ***seal up*** (Gr. *sphragizō*) means "do not write." We see similar commands from God to ***seal up*** things which God has revealed to His prophets but does not want revealed. For example . . .

  Daniel 8:26: "The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true; but keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future."

  Daniel 12:4,9— 4 "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase." 9 "He said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.'"

  2 Corinthians 12:4— Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak."

- We are not told why John is commanded not to write the things he hears. We can only be satisfied that God has good reasons for what He does. This reminds us of what God reveals to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 29:29 . . .

Deuteronomy 29:29— The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Revelation 10:5— And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven."

- The angel then takes up a symbolic stance by lifting his right hand to heaven. This is the customary gesture of one taking a solemn oath. This goes back to vs 2- the little book must be in the left hand if he is taking the oath with his right hand.

The Oath

Revelation 10:6-7— 6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer, 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.

- Here in Revelation 10:6-7 the ***strong angel*** begins his oath by **first describing who it is he is swearing by . . . *by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it***.
    - Here the ***strong angel*** first affirms **God's eternality** . . . ***Him who lives forever and ever***
    - The angel then affirms **God's sovereignty and omnipotence as Creator** with the all-encompassing description . . . ***who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it***.
    - With this descriptive preamble the ***strong angel*** is affirming God's power and right to purpose all things according to His sovereign will. God, alone, has the right to order and dispose of His creation as He chooses.
- Then, in the phrase ***there shall be delay no longer***, the ***strong angel*** reveals the answer to the cries of the martyred saints under the altar in ***Revelation 6:10, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"***
    - The ***delay*** that is referred to here began with the **fifth seal** and will end with the sounding of the seventh trumpet; the rest of God's plans are coming to fruition with the sounding of the seventh trumpet.
    - The answer of how much longer will God delay His judgment upon the evil earth-dwellers is . . . ***there shall be delay no longer*** . . . justice and judgment are coming **now!**
- In Revelation 10:7 the ***strong angel*** reveals how this ***delay*** will end . . . what will mark the beginning of God's judgment upon the unbelieving world . . . ***in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished.***

- This phrase indicates that the judgment of the seventh trumpet is about to begin. Furthermore, as we will see in the coming chapters, the seventh trumpet is not a single event, but covers days, indicating a time period.

    - As we will see in chapter 17, the seventh trumpet includes the seven bowls, which culminates in the destruction of Babylon and the consummation of all things.

- Then, at that time, we are told in v. 7 that ***the mystery of God is finished.***

    - The term ***mystery*** (Gr. *musterion*) means "that which being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension; can be known only by divine revelation and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God and to those who are illumined by the Spirit."

        - This is best shown by Colossians 1:26 ***"...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but now has been manifested to His saints."***

    - Here in Revelation 10:7 we learn the answer to the cries of the saints under the altar. God previously told the saints to ***rest for a little while longer***. Now, in Revelation 10:7 we learn when ***a little while longer*** ends. **It ends with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. It ends now, as we see in Revelation 11:15 . . .**

      Revelation 11:15: "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.' And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God..."

    - The mystery, previously hidden, refers to all the unknown details that are revealed from this point to the end of Revelation when the new heavens and earth are created.

- In Revelation 10:6-7 ***the mystery of God*** is the consummation of God's plan in bringing in His glorious kingdom in Christ to fulfillment. It involves the salvation of the elect and their place in His glorious kingdom and all that goes with it. It includes the judgment of men and demons.

v. 7— . . . as He preached (the good news) to His servants the prophets.

- The ***strong angel*** then closes his oath with the phrase that declares that God had been slowly revealing the mystery of His plan for His creation since the very beginning as ***He preached to His servants the prophets.***

- This phrase makes the point that God had preached that mystery (the good news), without all the details, to His servants the prophets in the Old Testament and through Christ Jesus in the gospels.

- In Revelation 10:7, the "good news" covers the pronouncements concerning, "the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. 11:15). In context, the "good news" concerns the coming of the kingdom with the second coming of Christ in God bringing His kingdom to fruition.

- While the purpose has been hidden from the world and will be finally be fully realized at the second coming, the unfolding of the mystery was at least, partially revealed in the Old Testament descriptions of the establishment of the kingdom. But because it was not fully understood in earlier times, it is only in the latter days that God's plan would begin to come into focus in Revelation.

The Recommissioning of John— Revelation 10: 8-11

Revelation 10:8— And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

- Having heard the oath of the angel regarding the announcement of the coming of God's judgment upon the **earth-dwellers**, in Revelation 10:8 John receives a new command from God . . . ***"Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."***

Revelation 10:9— And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it, and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

- John complies with God's command and leaves his place as a spectator and is now an "actor" in the scene. He goes to the angel and requests the angel to give him the book.

- In response, the angel gives John the scroll and tells him what he is to do with it . . . ***"Take it, and eat it***.

  - Here the word ***eat*** (Greek: *katesthiō*) means "to consume or devour." Metaphorically it speaks of "**digesting the contents for the purpose of gaining knowledge and understanding."**

  - **Here the angel is telling John to "consume" God's word for the purpose of understanding its meaning.**

  - We see this same metaphorical usage in Ezekiel 3 and Jeremiah 15 as the Lord instructs His prophets . . .

  Ezekiel 3:1-3— 1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." 2 So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. 3 And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

  Jeremiah 15:16— Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

The Result

- Then, having given John his instruction regarding what he was to do with God's scroll, the angel tells John what will happen after he has "consumed" God's word . . . ***and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.***

Revelation 10:10— And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

- Having been forewarned, John does as instructed and ***ate it***. And, as the angel warned, it indeed produced the effects he was told to expect . . . ***and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter***.

- Every Christian can relate to the effects that God's word has on them.

    - When we are first given the ability by the Holy Spirit to discern the meaning of God's word and to believe it, we rejoice in the knowledge of our salvation . . . **it is sweet in our mouth as we first take it in, as it should be.**

    - But as we study and learn God's word we also come to several ***bitter*** realizations . . . the cost of our salvation was infinitely great. God did not simply give us salvation, He had to purchase our salvation with the most precious thing possible . . . His Son's life. And the knowledge that it was our sin that He suffered for makes our stomachs ***bitter***.

    - Furthermore, as we come to see sin as God sees sin, the knowledge of what sin is and what it has become in us and in the world makes us doubly ***bitter*** at heart. We begin to see the evil world as God sees it . . . and it is truly **"a bitter pill to swallow."**

- The term ***bitter*** (Gr. *pikrainō*) refers to anything sharp to the senses of sound, taste, or feeling

- The ***stomach*** (Gr. *koilia*) is where John will feel the bitter sensation. When John fully takes in this prophecy inwardly, he will sense the bitterness.

    - The bitterness is perhaps mentioned first, because as part of the prophetic commission, the first is a bitter prelude of national (Israel in view) and political predictions that John had to deliver. It is sadness over the news of persecutions, apostasies, and judgments yet to come.

- As Robert Thomas says, "the term ***sweet*** symbolizes the joy and satisfaction of knowing God's will for the future, yet it is tinged with the ***bitterness*** and sadness of what must take place in the fulfillment of God's word. It is truly 'bittersweet.'"

    Psalm 119:103— How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

Observation: Do we not experience the same? The joy and anticipation of the Rapture is sweet but it is mixed with the bitterness of knowing unbelieving family will be subjected to the terrible judgments, should the Lord return in our lifetime.

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John Recommissioned

Revelation 10:11— And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

- The tenth chapter of Revelation then closes with God's re-commissioning of John to record this revelation of Jesus Christ.

    - While the word ***again*** may seem like a new commissioning of John, it is actually a renewal of the original commissioning in Revelation 1:19 to ***"Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things***.

    - The phrase, ***you must prophecy again*** is God's instruction for John to **complete the book.**

- At the end of v. 11 John is told that his prophecy pertains to ***many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.***

    - Here John is told that the prophecies that are still to come in the book of Revelation concern world leaders and all the nations on this planet. And John was to write so that everyone everywhere would know God's plan when the time comes.

    - Robert Thomas states, "the prophecies of the remainder of the book are in contrast to those that have preceded in that they are more burdensome than anything prophesied up to now. The new command to prophesy puts John side by side with Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah."

- John MacArthur stated, "the four groups listed . . . ***peoples, nations, tongues and kings*** . . . are subject to the remaining prophecy which includes both believers and unbelievers. For believers, the remaining prophecies result in glory, and for unbelievers, in devastation. It is truly "hope tinged **with bitterness**."