

Revelation10: The Angel and the Little Scroll

Many writers treat chapters 10 and 11 and the first 14 verses of chapter 12 as interludes. A careful reading shows the entire passage to be an integral part of the second woe in chapter 9 verse 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 their devastating sins. The sounding of the sixth trumpet and the scene opened in chapter 9 verse 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 (Revelation 10), and the two witnesses (Revelation 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 of Revelation 7:14 who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” .

A Mighty Angel

Revelation 10:1-4

10 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; 2 and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; 3 and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders uttered (their voices), I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Still a part of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, John saw a strong angel [messenger] 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 strong 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 strong 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 *strong angel* has the characteristics of the Lamb in chapter 1 and of the Lord in other passages.

He was arrayed in a cloud is the first descriptive phrase. In Revelation 1:7, John wrote in his introduction:

7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

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 13:21-22:

21 And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night: 22 the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

When Moses went upon the mountain, the Lord spoke from within a cloud in Exodus 24:16-17:

And the glory of Jehovah abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 17 And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

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:

While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

In Luke 21:27-28, Jesus said:

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draws nigh.

With a rainbow above his head is similar to the description in Ezekiel 1:27-28 which refers to an appearance fire and a rainbow:

27 And I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. 28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

In Revelation 4:2-3, a rainbow encircles the throne of God:

2 Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; 3 and he that sat (was) to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and (there was) a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.

His face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire are an almost direct representations of the description of the Lamb in Revelation 1:14-15:

14 And his head and his hair were white as white wool, (white) as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.

Again, the evidence seems overwhelming that the strong 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 in the book 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 strong 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 in Joel 2:11 of the Lord uttering commands to his forces of great number:

11 And Jehovah uttered his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executes his word; for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

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 And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for (us) with groanings which cannot be uttered; 27 and he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to (the will of) God.

In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul said that a man "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

The Mystery of God to Be Accomplished

Revelation 10:5-7

5 And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, 6 and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, 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 is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

Then the strong angel swore by the Almighty God who lives forever and ever and who created all things. *There shall be delay no longer* 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. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound*, 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. *Then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared 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:

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John.

The good tidings is God's revelation in His son.

God held his mystery throughout the ages, revealing it first and partially in the prophets of old, according to 1 Peter 1:10-12:

10 Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that (should come) unto you: 11 searching what (time) or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. 12 To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.

Not only did the Old Testament prophets seek the mystery, but even the angels desired to look into these things. Even the rulers did not know God's mystery, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10:

6 We speak wisdom, however, among them that are full grown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to naught: 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, (even) the (wisdom) that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: 8 which none of the rulers of this world have known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: 9 but as it is written, "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And (which) entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him."

10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

The consummation of God's mystery was in Christ; and through Christ, God made his mystery known, according to the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 1:1-2:

1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, 2 has at the end of these days spoken unto us in (his) Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.

In Ephesians 3:2-5, Paul explained the role of the New Testament apostles and prophets:

2 if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; 3 how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, 4 whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; 5 which in other generation was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

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 in Revelation 1:16. In Isaiah 27:1, Isaiah forecast this same weapon in a struggle against the serpent:

27 In that day Jehovah with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea.

The Lord told of the impending use of the word of his mouth as a sword in Revelation 2: 16:

16 Repent therefore; or else I come to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The Eating of the Book

Revelation 10:8-10

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven, (I heard it) again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth." 9 And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he said unto me, "Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey."

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

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 strong 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, 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us: "Yes, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Eating is often associated with the word of truth (God's Mystery here). John 6:51 reads:

51 I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.

That the word is sweet is illustrated by the Psalmist in Psalms 119:103-104:

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! (Yea, sweeter) than honey to my mouth!

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Ezekiel also related the sweetness to eating in Ezekiel 3:3:

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause you belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give you. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

According to Ezekiel 2:10, the word of God, the bread of life, is not all sweetness:

10 And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Whether false teachers, miss-using the word or Christian turned away from God, the word may be used wickedly and against the Lord. Paul speaks of these enemies whose God is their belly. How more bitter can it be than in Philippians 3:18-19

18 For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, (that they are) the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is perdition, **whose god is the belly**, and (whose) glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Often these are brethren seeking to turn others from the Lord as in Romans 16:17-18:

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, **but their own belly**; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.

Often bitterness comes into the lives of the faithful, themselves, as those righteous who must endure persecution, or those, who in the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:34-36 must leave loved ones:

34 Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
35 For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: 36 and a man's foes (shall be) they of his own household.

One important note: We have a new Passover by the blood of Jesus, according to 1 Corinthians 5:7:

7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For our Passover also has been sacrificed, (even) Christ.

The old Passover include a bitter element also: Exodus 12:7-8 tells about bitter herbs:

7 And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. 8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; **with bitter herbs** they shall eat it.

John's Work Is Not Done

Revelation 10:11

11 And they say unto me, "You must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

This vision concluded with the voice telling John that he 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. Only 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:

9 the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the Day of Judgment;

However, the Lord wishes all to follow His revelation and do His will. 2 Peter 3:8-9 reads:

8 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.