

THE APOCALYPSE – A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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The Bitter Sweet Book!

(Rev 10:1-11:14)

Have we ever wondered what would happen to sinful men who have committed so many sins against God and God's people? They will receive their just reward for the first six trumpets is only the beginning.

Revelation 10 to 11:14 is the interlude before the seventh trumpet is blown which is also the third and final woe. Remember that before the seventh seal was opened there was the interlude of Revelation 7. It is the same here. It will be the same before the pouring out of the seventh vial judgement later on in Revelation 16.

These interludes seem to teach believers that before the end and start of the next judgement, God is still sovereign. Man is to contemplate and ponder over the horror of the judgement of God upon sinful men because of sin. He is to realize that no man will get away with his sin. They are all accountable to God according to God's time and will receive their just "rewards." **Proverbs 11:31**, "*Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.*" These interludes are for the comfort of the saints as well. God looks after His own very well. He never forgets them even in the midst of the darkest hour.

Revelation 10 reveals to Christians the answer to their many prayers for the judgement of God to be poured down upon wicked men. The time is now at hand.

• **The mighty angel (10:1)** – “*And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.*”

Who is this mighty angel? Some have identified him as the Lord Jesus Christ because like Christ who descends in the cloud in 1:7, this angel also came in a cloud.

But there are several facts which point to a different conclusion. Firstly the use of “another” [the Greek word “*allos*”] which means another of the same kind. This throws us back to the previous angel of Revelation 9, a reference to the “trumpet angels.” If it were a different angel from these trumpet angels then the Greek word used would have been “*heteros*” which means another of a different kind. Hence we know that this mighty angel would be an angel similar to the trumpet angels. Secondly in the books of Revelation Jesus Christ is always introduced with an unmistakable title like 1:5 (“*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*”); 1:17 (“*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*”); 1:18 (“*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*”); 2:18 (“*And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*”) etc. It is therefore reasonable to assume that if John had wanted to mention the Lord Jesus Christ he would most likely have given Him a title. Thirdly this mighty angel came down from heaven and clothed with a cloud not like Jesus who would “come with clouds.”

Fourthly it is not inconceivable to find that there are other mighty angels possessing the same splendour. A case in point would be that of Lucifer himself, before he fell from heaven. **Ezekiel 28:11-15**, “*Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*”

Daniel saw a vision of an angel with a similar description. **Daniel 10:5-6**, “*Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.*” Therefore the conclusion is that John saw a mighty angel and not the Lord Jesus Christ.

He comes down from heaven and clothed with a cloud. The drapery of the sky was on him. This perhaps symbolizes power, majesty, splendour and glory. This interpretation is due to the fact that he came with the express purpose of bringing judgement upon sinful men.

A rainbow was upon his head – The word for rainbow is “iris”. Iris was “the Greek goddess who personified the rainbow, and served as a messenger of the gods. In classical Greek, iris was used to describe any bright halo surrounding another object, such as the circle surrounding the eyes on a peacock’s tail, or the iris or an eye. [MacArthur, 280, taken from Marvin R. Vincent, **Word Studies in the New Testament**, reprint, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 2:477.]” The rainbow has been used in the Bible as the covenant mercy of God toward mankind that He will not judge sinful man by a global flood ever again. Just as the cloud symbolizes judgement, this rainbow represents the mercy of God. Perhaps this was to reassure believers that the judgement of God will be tempered with mercy and it will follow after His judgement. This is a very common theme in the whole Bible. **Malachi 3:16-4:2**, *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”*

His face was as it were the sun – This is the brilliant and radiant glory which of course surpasses that of Moses (cf. Exo. 34:29-35). This might even speak of purity and holiness. But this brightness pales into nothing when compared with the shekinah glory which God alone possesses. It was the kind that God had when he told Moses that no man can see Him and live (cf. Exo. 33:20)! And in **1 Timothy 6:15-16**, *“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”*

His feet as pillars of fire – This points to the unbending righteous and holy judgements when he stamps out the judgements of God upon the earth. Fire has been used as a medium for burning away dross even in the establishment of the works of saints. Fire is also used to consume the ungodly. In **Malachi 4:1**, *“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”*

- **In his hand he had a little book open (10:2)** – *“And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,”*

The Greek word used is “*biblaridion*” which literally means “a little book” (10:2, 8, 9, 10). This is different from the book mentioned in 5:1 for book (*biblion*). This little book has a significance in this chapter as John would be asked to eat it. Hence the size is mentioned. The fact that this little book was already opened tells us that once it is opened it remains opened and cannot be closed. This opened book contains the destruction and judgement that are yet to come!

This little book was in the hand of the mighty angel. The significance was the little book in the hand of this great angel

sent from God to John.

His right foot was upon the sea and his left foot was upon the earth – Both the feet of the mighty angel were set on the sea and the earth revealing to us that the judgement of God will be total and complete. The whole earth was divided into the seas and the earth from the beginning of Creation in genesis 1. This therefore literally includes every inch of the planet earth.

* **The mighty angel's mighty revelations (10:3-8)** – *“And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.”*

A series of actions are done by this mighty angel.

He cried with a loud voice like a lion's roar (10:3a) – His loud cry portrays the power and authority that lies behind the judgement. Hence a lion-like cry is used here. The OT connects a loud lion-like roaring voice with the judgement of God. **Jeremiah 25:30**, *"Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth."* Very often this is the same with us too when we scold our children or someone who has done a great wrong especially in the military. **Hosea 11:10**, *"They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west."* **Joel 3:16**, *"The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."*

Seven thunders uttered their voices (10:3b) – The number seven speaks of completeness. Thunder has often been used as a harbinger of judgement in the Bible (cf. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; 1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:14; Psalm 18:13; John 12:28-30). **Exodus 9:23**, *"And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt."* **1 Samuel 7:10**, *"And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel."* **Isaiah 29:6**, *"Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire."*

Whose voice would this be? It definitely could not be the voice of the mighty angel as this voice follows after his. This could very well be the voice of God. **Psalms 18:13**, *"The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire."* **1 Samuel 7:10**, *"And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the*

Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel."

John was told to seal up the things the seven thunders uttered and do not write them (10:4) – What was the content of this message we are not told. Any speculation on our part would be pointless. But one thing is for sure it is some kind of judgement. These words were to be sealed and kept from man. Why? Perhaps man was not ready to accept the contents of the message.

The mighty angel lifts hand to heaven (10:5) – The significance of this action is that of making an oath. One of his hands will be up raised heavenward as his other hand is holding the little book. Which hand was it that held the book: the left or the right? MacArthur said that it was the left hand that held the book (vol. 1, page 284). What do you think?

The mighty angel swore in the name of God that the time is up (10:6) – Making a solemn vow that what he had been asked to do, he will carry them out to the best of his ability. Truth is also a factor in vow making. What he is about to say is the truth and nothing but the truth. It was a vow made in the name of God Himself.

Would you say that what he did here is against what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount about not make oaths (cf Matthew 5:34-35)? The titles used by the mighty angel in his vow making refer the eternality and omnipotence of God over all of His creation. Powerful men come and powerful men go but God alone remains forever. Men are great pretenders of God when they think they really wield some real power. All of the kingdoms of mankind have come and have gone no matter how powerful they have appeared to be in the minds of man. But these powers of man are puny in the sight of God. These mighty men are like beasts in the eyes of God as they had obtained by deception and murder

The Mystery of God should be finished (10:7) -- Man's day of judgement has come. Man's existence on earth is about to come to a swift conclusion. This world of ours as we know it now will soon become a thing of the past. It will be become a memory and the new reality will be the new heaven and new earth created by our Heavenly Father.

It is also known as the mystery of God. Mystery is defined as that which was hidden by God and to be revealed in due time, God's time. Who are those in the OT who wrote about the last days? Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, Zechariah, and Malachi all wrote about the last days.

The voice of the seventh angel will usher in the end of all mankind as we know it. It will not be a third destruction but a total destruction this time.

The voice from Heaven told John to take the little book (10:8) – John was told to take the book from the hand of the mighty angel. How is John worthy to take this book? This account is different from Revelation 5. The former was a search for One who was worthy to open it. In the latter, this little book was already opened. John was asked to take this book not so much as to open it but to eat it. The significance of eating this book points to not so much as who was

worthy to eat but to John as one who represents all believers in the eating of this little book.

What is he suppose to do with this little book?

• **John and the little book (10:9-11)**—*“And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 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 as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”*

The graphic and very symbolic answer to the prayers of the saints of God concerning their prayers for the judgement of God that will come upon sinful men is about to be fulfilled. **Revelation 6:9-10**, *“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”*

The cry for justice is very commendable in our age and time where justice has been replaced by a warped sense of sentimentalism. Criminals are released and protected more than victims. Light sentences are dished out for heinous crimes or over punishment meted out for light crimes. The law courts all over the world are either an example of under punishment or over punishment. Justice by man that is not based upon the Word of God will not be fair and just. But not so the justice dished out by a sovereign and always just God. He never over or under punishes anyone. Every sin committed by man will be judged perfectly and equitably. No man can hide this evil motive and thought from the all knowing God.

John ate the little book (10:9a)— Now that John is told that the punishment of God will finally be poured down upon sinful man for the last and final time, John and all believers are taught by God to adopt the right attitude. This lesson was taught to John by means of an action. John was told to eat the little book which represents the book of Revelation vis a vis, the final and great judgements of God on sinful man. The cry of the saints will now be finally answer for ever. They can have their last laugh, or so it seems. The book that John ate was sweet as honey in his mouth. Honey was known at that time to be the sweetest thing that the Jews had in Palestine. This means that saints will be very pleased to see the judgement of God vindicating the saints for the great injustice they have to suffer for Jesus sake.

But when the book reaches the stomach, it became bitter. This indicates to the saints that even as they see the wrath of God poured down upon sinful man, it only brings bitterness to the believers' heart. There is no joy or should there ever be any glee when we see the sinners punish by God and then sent to the lake of Fire for eternity. This must bring bitterness or sorrow to our heart. There must never be a sense of pride or last laugh when sinners lived a life of error and deception, only sadness. This is the heart of God too. The Lord does not delight in sending any man to Hell, and neither must the believer. **2 Peter 3:9**, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

Uphold justice all the time but always temper justice with mercy. How to do that without compromising?

John must continue to prophesy (10:11) – Does this mean that John was to stop prophesying? No. All the more John must be about God's business and warn as many as would listen of the impending judgement that would fall upon sinful man when the Lord returns. He must continue to record and keep writing the rest of the book of Revelation for the whole world. This is seen in the use of the word "again."

John may be in Patmos but his message will reach millions. The judgement of God will involve the whole world. Our ministry involves the whole world. We must be involved in the affairs of the whole world when it comes to matters of Christianity. We cannot say that it is none of our business. The world's spiritual well-being or lack of it is our business!