

The Small Open Scroll in the Hand of a Strong Angel

Revelation 10

Revelation 10 - *"I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. ² He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ³ and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴ Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." ⁵ The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, ⁷ but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

⁸ Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."

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

¹⁰ Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. ¹¹ And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

Background Notes

In Revelation 5 the scroll sealed with seven seals was a book describing the coming judgments of the Tribulation period that will come upon this earth in the future. As each seal was opened, different judgments and conditions of the Tribulation Period were described in detail. It appears that these sealed judgments will take place in the beginning of the first half (first 3 ½ years) of the Tribulation. This period is known as "the beginning of sorrows," according to our Lord's Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:8.

In Revelation 8 we saw that the opening of the seventh seal revealed seven Trumpet Judgments. We believe the seven Trumpet Judgments will take place during the second half (last 3 ½ years) of the Tribulation Period. This time period is known as "The Great Tribulation." Six of these Trumpet Judgments are described in Revelation 8 and 9. In Revelation 11, the seventh Trumpet of judgment will sound, and in Revelation 16, we will see a further series of seven "Bowl Judgments."

Now some questions about Revelation 10:

Question #1: Who is the strong angel in verse 1? *“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven...”* Is this just another strong and mighty angel like the one we saw in Revelation 5:2 - *“Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”* Obviously, the strong angel in Revelation 5 is not the Lord Jesus, because the Lord is seen as the Lamb in that chapter. However, the strong angel in Revelation 10 may be the Lord Himself, appearing as an angel in John’s vision. Remember that the Lord appeared as an angel who was adding incense to the prayers of the saints on Revelation 8.

In view of the description given of the mighty angel in Revelation 10, there is a good possibility that the angel is the Lord Himself: *“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire... And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land... and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars.”* He had authority over the whole world: *“His right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.”* These majestic features support the possibility that the strong angel in Revelation 10 is the Lord Himself.

Question #2: Is the little scroll in Revelation 10 the same as the scroll mentioned in Revelation 5? Most commentators say that there are two different scrolls because there is an emphasis on the Revelation scroll being a “little scroll” in Revelation 10. However, other commentators see just one scroll. In Revelation 5 the scroll was sealed up, but in Revelation 10 John saw it as open. Our Lord opened the scroll in heaven, and now it is seen as open in His hand as He descends from heaven to this earth.

Remember that the scroll in Revelation 5 was written on both sides and it may be that the Trumpet Judgments were written on one side of the scroll. In Revelation 10 it appears that the reverse side of the open scroll will reveal the Bowl Judgments.

We can’t be dogmatic about the answers to these two questions about the strong angel and the little scroll, but there seems to be no question that the contents of this little scroll have to do with further judgments on this earth.

Doctrinal Points

1. The details of God’s future judgments are not fully revealed.

In verse 3, the strong and mighty angel (who may be the Lord Himself) spoke out with a loud voice, and seven peals of thunder were heard. John was about to record what the voices of thunder said, but a voice from heaven said, *“do not write them.”* Why? The answer to that question is that God has not revealed all the details of His future judgments. The prophet Daniel was told to conceal the details of the coming judgments and the stress of the Tribulation Period. Daniel 12:4 - *“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end...”*

God has not revealed everything in His Word. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”* In Revelation 10: 7 the apostle John was told: *“in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”*

The sounding of the seventh Trumpet of Judgment brings us close to the end of the Tribulation Period. Even though the Bowl Judgments will follow, they will be in rapid succession; in fact, they may even overlap with the Trumpet Judgments. So, when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the Tribulation period will shortly be coming to an end and the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth will soon begin. This is exactly what we read in Revelation 11:15 - *“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”*

The mystery of God here in Revelation 10:7 has to do with all the truth about God and His glorious kingdom on earth, with Christ as King. This truth was largely communicated to the prophets of the Old Testament, but they didn't completely comprehend all that they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As 1 Peter 1:10-12 makes clear, *“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us. They were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.”*

With the final judgments of the Tribulation and the setting up of Christ's kingdom on this earth, all prophetic details and concealed truth will be revealed. Right now, we don't know all the details. We have the big picture now, as Ephesians 1:9-10 makes clear: *“having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”* We have the big picture now, and the details will be fully revealed later. At the present time, details of God's judgment are not fully revealed.

2. The details of God's future judgments are sweet and bitter.

Verses 10-11: ¹⁰ *Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.* ¹¹ *And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”*

In verse 11, the fact that John was told that he must prophesy again, doesn't mean that he was to write another Book of Revelation! No, this verse is speaking of the remainder of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation.

At this point in the vision, John was told to eat the little book of judgment. It was sweet to the taste, but bitter in the stomach. When we study prophecy, particularly the judgments that will come in the future Tribulation Period, there is a

certain excitement and fascination. It's like a tasting something that's good when we read and see how God will be vindicated and evil will be judged! However, when we digest the details of the coming judgments and realize that many people will die and be lost forever, it is no longer a sweet truth – it's a bitter truth! This is not a contradiction. Some truth can be sweet to the initial taste, but bitter when digested and fully understood. The details of God's future judgments are both sweet and bitter.

Practical Application

Praise the Lord! There will be no evolutionists in the kingdom!

Verses 5-6: *"The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, ⁷ but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets."*

The King James translation of the last phrase of verse 6 "there should be time no longer" could be somewhat misleading. The idea of this verse is that "there should be no more delay" (as most translations have it). When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the Tribulation is just about over, and the kingdom of Christ on this earth is about to be set up. Then everyone in the kingdom will joyfully agree with the angel, who may be the Lord Himself. All will praise the Lord that God created the heaven and the things that are in it – the earth and the things that are in it – and the sea and the things that are in it. There will be no evolutionists in the kingdom!