

# The Little Scroll and the Great Commission

## “Mighty Jesus”

### Revelation 10:1-11:14

What sort of influence does the Church have upon society today?  
I would say: minimal.

How powerful is the witness of the Church today and every day?  
It is as powerful as needed to save all God's elect, those for whom Jesus has shed His blood to purchase.

**Romans 1:15-16** <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,

The Gospel is powerful!  
Why is the Gospel powerful?  
Because Jesus is Mighty! Jesus is strong! Jesus has absolute authority over the world in which we live!

The power of the Gospel is not dependent upon the opinions of the society around you. You can be mocked and ridiculed and Jesus will still work through you to save His people.

If many of the powerful forces in our own country had their wish, they would do away with the Church. To them the Church is a cancer. But the Church that belongs to Jesus Christ cannot be eliminated. Not even the gates of hell can stand against her.

Why?  
Because Jesus is Mighty! And Jesus has authority!

**Matthew 28:18-20** <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Church is called to make disciples.  
A person becomes a follower of Jesus when they hear the truth of the Gospel and are called to repentance and faith in Christ.  
These followers are to be gathered into the visible Church through receiving the covenant sign of baptism, the sign of God's seal of cleansing.  
And the Church is to regularly instruct Christ's disciples in the Word of God, so that they will know what it is that Jesus wants of them.

Preaching the Gospel.  
Calling people to Christ and into the Church.

Teaching the Word of God, including helping people to live their lives in submission to Christ.

That's it.

That is the essence of our task here on earth. And nothing in all the world can prevent the Church from fulfilling the commission given to her by the Lord Jesus.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus.”

“Jesus is with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The meaning of these two statements is the content of our passage today.

**Revelation 10 and 11 expound the truth proclaimed in the Great Commission. In this passage, Jesus encourages you to continue believing in the power of the Gospel working through the witness of the Church even in the midst of terrible suffering.**

Read Revelation 10:1-11:14.

Verse 11 makes clear that the proclamation of the Gospel is the action point of the passage. Jesus wants John, and the whole Church, to continue prophesying to peoples and nations and languages and kings.

It is probably true that we should see that the content of the message here focuses on the Judgment of God against the nations.

But the Good News of the Gospel has always been proclaimed in the context of the reality of God's judgment upon this world.

**John 3:16-18** <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John the Baptist warned his generation of the coming judgment.

So, while the Book of Revelation does emphasize the wrath of God, the application for John, and for every generation of the Church, is to continue proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

In chapter 10, there are three main points.

1. The authority of the Mighty Angel.
2. The content of the Little Scroll open in His hand.
3. And the importance of eating this scroll.

These same three points will be graphically demonstrated in chapter 11.

John sees a Mighty Angel. Some question whether Jesus can be referred to as an “angel”. But the description aligns with Jesus.

I believe that we should understand “angel” in the sense of “messenger”. In John 1, Jesus is called the “Word of God”. He not only speaks truth to us. He is that truth.

Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King. As a Mighty Angel, He functions as the Mighty Prophet. This is important because it is the Church’s prophetic role that Jesus is encouraging.

It is not insignificant that instead of John being lifted up into heaven, John sees the Mighty Angel “coming down from heaven.”

In the Incarnation, and in the Gospel, the Word of God is coming to a dying world.

It is good to see Jesus as Gentle Jesus. You must know that He will be gentle with you when you come to Him humbly.

Think of the Apostle John lying his head on the breast of Jesus during the Last Supper. But we must also see Jesus as Mighty Jesus.

John is seeing the “Mighty Jesus”.

Mighty Jesus is huge! In the vision He places one foot on the sea and the other foot on the land.

In Revelation 13, there will be two terrible beasts that will arise. One will rise from the sea and the other will rise from the earth.

The sea is a place of chaos that symbolizes evil and rebellion.

The earth is the also a place of evil, but it is a place that must be conquered by Jesus and made into a dwelling place for His people.

By Jesus placing one foot on the sea and one foot on the land, Jesus is staking His claim over the entirety of the Universe.

It is a symbolic way of saying “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus”.

Jesus is holding in his hand a “little scroll”. This scroll is open.

The importance of the scroll is demonstrated in that it is more important than the 7 Thunders. As soon as we read about these 7 Thunders, our curiosity gets the best of us. What were they about?

Jesus tells John that the Seven Thunders are not nearly as important as the message of the scroll. The only function that they serve in this passage is as a means of emphasizing the closeness of the Final Judgment.

Jesus says, "there is no more delay!"

We learn from the Thunders a sense of urgency. The message of the scroll must be proclaimed. Put in the words of John the Baptist, "The axe is already at the root of the tree."

The "little scroll" is the Church's testimony of the Gospel to a world lying under the judgment of God.

The scroll of chapter 5 included the entirety of Christ's control over all history, including the redemption of His people and the judgment of all mankind. This scroll very much relates to that scroll in that it is the commission of the Church to bear witness to Jesus as the Lord and Savior of the world.

The scroll is in the right hand of Jesus because in His death and resurrection, He has purchased men for God. Through the witness of the Church, Jesus will sovereignly redeem all His chosen people.

The scroll is open because the Church is called to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel to all the people.

But before John can proclaim this message, he is called to eat the scroll. We are not to think of John munching on parchment.

John is called to receive, embrace, and internalize its message. The image of eating God's Word is used at various places in the OT.

**Psalms 119:103** <sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

**Ezekiel 2:7 - 3:3** <sup>7</sup> And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>8</sup> "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." <sup>9</sup> And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. <sup>10</sup> And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. <sup>ESV</sup> **Ezekiel 3:1** And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." <sup>2</sup> So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

But even though the message of the Gospel is sweet in John's mouth, when it gets to his stomach it becomes bitter.

This effect parallels Ezekiel's experience. Shortly after he ate his scroll, he too was filled with bitterness.

**Ezekiel 3:14** <sup>14</sup> The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me.

In Ezekiel, the bitterness is the result of his message containing the destruction of Jerusalem and the refusal of his hearers to repent. It is also due to the fact that God will call Ezekiel to identify personally with the agony of God over this lack of repentance.

All these elements are present in Revelation, with the addition of God's prophet experiencing persecution for his witness. And this is precisely what John is enduring. He is suffering persecution on the Island of Patmos for his witness.

The Gospel is a glorious message, but it comes with persecution and suffering. Jesus said to His disciples, "The world will hate you because of me".

Chapter 11 vividly portrays this reality.

**The ministry of the two witnesses reflects the ministry of the entire Church throughout the entire period between Jesus' ascension into heaven and His return at the end of the age.**

Jesus ensures that His Church will be able to complete her mission of proclaiming the Gospel and redeeming all God's elect.

Even though the Church will suffer persecution in this life, and even death at the hands of her enemies, no one will be able to separate her from the salvation that is hers through faith in Christ. And no one will be able to silence her witness.

Jesus promises two things to His Church:

1. Spiritual protection
2. Effective witness

The first image that we are given is that of Jesus' protection of the salvation of His people. This is symbolized in His measuring the temple of God, the altar, and all who worship there.

By measuring we are to understand protecting. To be measured is basically the same as being sealed.

John is not measuring a physical temple. He is measuring the Church, who throughout the NT is called the Temple of God.

John is told not to measure the Outer Court.

Some take this to symbolize that portion of the Visible Church that Apostasizes. This is possible. But I think it is better to see this as the True Church that is called to suffer outwardly, even to the point of death.

While Jesus spiritually protects His Church from losing their eternal redemption, He does call them to endure physical suffering and persecution at the hands of the very people to whom they proclaim the Gospel.

I think of the ministry of Jim Elliot. He was killed by the very Auca Indians to whom he was proclaiming the Gospel. They killed his body, but they did not rob Jim of eternal life. And the witness of the Gospel would later bring many of these same Auca's to repentance and faith.

As the Church carries out her task, she can be harmed physically. Our bodies can be killed, but they cannot kill the soul.

The Holy City is the entirety of the Redeemed. In this present age, we are often trampled by the world. But we cannot ultimately be harmed. And when Jesus returns, the Church will be vindicated and honored.

**Revelation 21:2** <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

John defines the period of the Church's suffering persecution as 42 months.  
42 months is 3 ½ years.  
It is also 1260 days.

All three of these "time" designations symbolically refer to the entirety of the time between Jesus' ascension and His future Return.

When I first heard this, I remember thinking, "How can a period of 2,000 years be spoken of as 3 ½ years?"

Being convinced that it did take some time. So, if you have difficulty wrapping your mind around the idea. So did I.

The imagery comes from the OT.

42 months comes from the book of Numbers. In chapter 33, we are given the list of the different encampments of Israel during the period of their wilderness wanderings. Strangely enough, in Numbers 33, we are given the number of encampments from the time Israel came up out of Egypt, to their entrance into the Promised Land.

Any guess as to the number of encampments listed? 42!

The period of Israel's wandering in the Wilderness parallels the Church's experience from the Ascension of Christ and the Return of Christ. This is made clear in Revelation 12.

Revelation 12:5-6.

<sup>5</sup> She (the OT Church) gave birth to a male child (Jesus), one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, (Resurrection and Ascension) <sup>6</sup> and the woman (the NT Church) fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

We will explore this in more detail when we get to Revelation 12. But the truth remains that the period in which we are now living parallels Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Israel's entrance to the Promised parallels our entering the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ when He returns. When we are resurrected and the curse is removed from this creation, we will enjoy the bliss of our promised land.

Until that time, we are called to be a witness for Jesus Christ in this world.

The emphasis on the commission of the Church to be a witness until the end of the age is seen in the image of 3 ½ years.

3 ½ years is taken from the period of the ministry of Elijah. Listen to what James has to say:

**James 5:17-19** <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. <sup>19</sup> My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,

If you remember anything from the ministry of Elijah in I Kings, you understand that he ministered during the reign of King Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was an evil King who sought to kill Elijah. But throughout his ministry the LORD took care of Elijah. And eventually, Elijah is carried into glory on a chariot of fire.

The point of Elijah is that neither Ahab nor Jezebel were able to silence Elijah until the LORD was finished using him to call Israel to repentance and faith.

The reference to 3 ½ also comes from the book of Daniel. The period of tribulation in which God's Holy People (saints) will be worn out, by the nations is time (1), times (2), and half a time (1/2) = 3 ½ years.

**Daniel 7:25** <sup>25</sup> He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

**Daniel 12:7** <sup>7</sup> And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever (language repeated here in our passage) that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.

The book of Daniel has an expectation that the "power of the holy people" will come to an end. But this will not happen until the end of all things.

Until the Day of Christ's return, the Church will have "authority from Christ" to carry out her mission, which is to be a witness to a world lying under judgment.

This is precisely what we are told in Rev. 11:3.

3           And  
          I will grant authority  
              to my two witnesses,  
                  and they will prophesy  
                          for 1,260 days,  
                              clothed in sackcloth."

By means of biblical symbolism, the two witnesses portray the entirety of the Church during the entire period between Jesus' ascension and His return at the end of the age. Why is the whole Church portrayed as two witnesses?

There are several reasons.

First, OT law required two witnesses before anyone could be judged and condemned. The Church functions in this way. Just as our prayers are used in the Final Judgment, so are the countless ways in which the Church has witnessed to the world. The testimony of the Church will stand against unbelievers on the Day of Judgment.

The concept of two witnesses is seen in Jesus sending out the disciples "in twos". (Luke 10)

And the idea of two individuals representing the entirety of God's people over a huge period of time is also seen in the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus as he is transfigured. Why these two men? Because they represented the entirety of the OT (Moses – the Law and Elijah – the Prophets) in their consistent witness that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

This understanding of the Two Witnesses as the whole Church in her witness is further seen in verse 4.

4           These are  
              the two olive trees  
                  and  
              the two lampstands  
                  that stand before the Lord of the earth.

We have already seen that the entire Church is portrayed as lampstands in the first chapter of Revelation.

Lampstands exist for the purpose of shining light. They represent the light of God's presence living in the Church.

In addition to the lampstands, John makes mention of "two olive trees".

This is a reference to the book of Zechariah. In chapter 4, God wants to communicate to Zerubbabel, who leads the first band of Israelites back from Exile, that the building of

God's kingdom, and the effectiveness of Zechariah's prophetic ministry, only happens because of the power of God's Spirit.

The lampstands of the temple burned olive oil. Typically, it was the priests duty to continue filling the little cups of the lampstand with oil. But in the prophesy Zechariah sees two olive trees, one on each side of the lampstand. The idea is that the trees provided a perpetual source of oil to keep the lamps burning.

**Zechariah 4:3-6** <sup>3</sup> And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." <sup>4</sup> And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" <sup>5</sup> Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." <sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

The ability of Zerubbabel to fulfill his mission parallels the Church's ability to fulfill her mission – to make disciples of all nations.

Putting the pieces together:

God will give spiritual sanctuary to the true church which is continually being besieged by Satan and his forces of evil.

Satan will not be able to stop the Church from being a light to the world.

Satan will not be able to completely destroy the Church or impede her purpose of witnessing to the lost.

<sup>5</sup>                   And  
                  if anyone would harm them,  
                                fire pours from their mouth  
                                and  
                                consumes their foes.  
If anyone would harm them,  
                                this is how he is doomed to be killed.

The idea of fire coming from the mouths of the witnesses is not a literal fire. It refers to God's ultimate judgment of all who oppose the witness of the Church. It draws upon the ministry of Elijah when he called down fire that consumed the prophets of Baal. (2 Kings 1)

<sup>6</sup>                   They have the power to shut the sky,  
                                that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying,  
                                and  
                  they have power over the waters to turn them into blood  
                                and  
                  to strike the earth with every kind of plague,  
  as often as they desire.

In this verse we see the merging of the ministries of Elijah and Moses. Elijah prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain. Moses was used of God to pour out the plagues upon the Egyptians.

Here in revelation both witnesses are given both powers. This helps us to see that we should not expect a literal resurrection of these men, but rather they are OT examples of how God sovereignly protects His people so that they might fulfill their mission of being a witness.

7                   And  
                  when they have finished their testimony,  
                  the beast that rises from the bottomless pit  
                  will make war on them  
                  and  
                  conquer them  
                  and  
                  kill them,

Only after God is finished with the Church, will she be conquered.  
Only after her commission to take the Gospel of Christ to a dying world is complete, will she be conquered.

Those who are invincible are suddenly made vincible.

This is true at the end of the age. But it is equally true in every age and for every individual. We are invincible until the Lord is finished with us.

We already know that Christians in every age die for their faith. But we are told here in Revelation that they cannot be killed until they have fulfilled their purpose given to them by Jesus.

Before Jesus died, he spoke these words.

**John 10:17-18** <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

The authority of Jesus now extends over His Church. No one takes the life of a saint, or destroys the Church. Ultimately, Jesus calls His Church to fulfil her task and then to willingly lay her life down as a pleasing sacrifice to God.

The killing of the saints occurs in every generation. The saints are being treated in the same way that Jesus was treated.

Was it not true that Jesus was invincible throughout the entire time of his ministry? And then, when his earthly ministry was complete, the enemies of Jesus conquered the unconquerable one. Only we have already seen that Jesus was not truly conquered.

The same is true for every persecuted and mocked member of the Church. It may look like they have been conquered, but the mocking of the enemies will only last a short while.

8                   and

their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city  
that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt,  
where their Lord was crucified.

Of course, Jerusalem is the city where Jesus was crucified. But Jerusalem is only a symbol of every city of the world that would persecute and kill Christ's Church.

9 For three and a half days  
some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations  
will gaze at their dead bodies  
and  
refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,  
10 and  
those who dwell on the earth  
will rejoice over them  
and  
make merry  
and  
exchange presents,  
because these two prophets had been a torment  
to those who dwell on the earth.

The attitude of the unbelieving world when Christians are killed is vivid. They refuse to give dignity or honor to the Christian. They rejoice over the killed saints. They make merry and exchange presents like we do at Christmas. They are happy over the death of the Church.

And just as the Jewish leaders rejoiced over the killing of Jesus Christ and their rejoicing was cut short, so it will be with the enemies of the Church on the Day of the Resurrection.

11 But  
after the three and a half days  
a breath of life from God entered them,  
and  
they stood up on their feet,  
and  
great fear fell on those who saw them.

The mocking of Christians will turn to fear because they now realize that they will be judged for their mocking.

12 Then  
they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them,  
"Come up here!"  
And  
they went up to heaven in a cloud,  
and  
their enemies watched them.

I love the statement, "Come up here!"  
This is what Jesus will say to every true believer when He returns.

Instead of being crushed under God's wrath, we will be ushered into the very presence of Christ in heavenly glory. O what a day that will be!

13           And  
          at that hour  
                  there was a great earthquake,  
                  and  
                  a tenth of the city fell.  
                          Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake,  
                          and  
                          the rest were terrified  
                          and  
                          gave glory to the God of heaven.

14           The second woe has passed;  
          behold,  
          the third woe is soon to come.

The effect at the end of the age is foreshadowed at the crucifixion of Christ.

**Matthew 27:50-54** <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to

Make no mistake:

1. Mighty Jesus will not allow anyone to rob His people of their eternal life.
2. Mighty Jesus will make sure that the witness of the Church will be powerful to save all the elect.
3. Only after the witness of the Church is finished can she be outwardly destroyed, and only for a short time.
4. Mighty Jesus remains with His people in their being mocked and persecuted.
5. When Mighty Jesus returns, He will vindicate His people.
6. When Mighty Jesus returns, the entire world will acknowledge not only Jesus, but the Church.

Has the vision of Mighty Jesus sunk down into your bones?

Have you enjoyed the sweetness of the message of forgiveness and new life?

Have you accepted the bitterness of being rejected by many in this world?

Have you felt the sinking feeling of sharing the gospel with someone who thinks you are foolish?

Have you been treated as cancer by unbelievers?

Have you eaten the scroll?

It is more difficult than you think?

I want to be treated well now.

I want to be given honor now.

But we are called to wait for these things.  
We are called to live by faith that Mighty Jesus remains with us and is in us.  
We are called to not be ashamed of the Gospel... for it is the power of God.