

REVELATION – SERMON 42

THE MIGHTY ANGEL AND THE LITTLE BOOK

Revelation 10:1-11

INTRODUCTION

- There are many questions that mankind has struggled to answer over the millennia
 - ✓ How did we get here?
 - ✓ Why are we here?
 - ✓ What happens after death?
- When it comes to the most important questions of life, the philosophies of the world have no answers
- The Christian, however, who is guided by the word of God and indwelt by the Spirit of God, has been given an understanding of the truth relating to God, sin, salvation, and eternal life (1 John 2:20)
- Yet there remains to us many mysteries about the operations of divine providence in our lives and in the course of history in the world
- Why did God allow this to happen? Why does evil seem to triumph? Why hasn't God intervened in the world? Why hasn't God answered my prayers?
- “Now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- There is coming a day when those mysteries will be made plain to us; “the mystery of God shall be finished” (v.7)
- Chapter 9 ended with the sounding of the sixth trumpet and the army of horsemen killing one-third of humanity

- But before the seventh trumpet sounds in 11:15, there is a parenthetical interlude inserted from 10:1-11:14
- Between the sixth and seventh seals we were given a description of the 144,000 and the great multitude of tribulation saints (Chapter 7), while between the sixth and seventh trumpets we are given a description of the mighty angel with the little book (10:1-11) and the two witnesses (11:1-14)
- This interruption to the sequence of devastating judgments on the unbelieving inhabitants of the world brings a temporary change of focus, giving encouragement and consolation to believers
- Again we are reminded that God, in wrath, remembers mercy (Habakkuk 3:2)
- The mid-point of the tribulation has been reached, in which there are a number of significant events that take place:
 - ✓ The “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15) when antichrist breaks his covenant, halts the sacrifices in the temple and places his image there (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15)
 - ✓ The beast mortally wounded, before being healed (13:3)
 - ✓ The ministry of the two witnesses who will be slain by the beast before being raised from the dead and taken up into heaven (11:3-13)
 - ✓ War in heaven when Michael casts the dragon and his angels to the earth (12:7-12)
 - ✓ Israel flees from the dragon into the wilderness where she is protected by God (12:6,14-17)
- The repeated references to a definite time period of 3½ years shows that the midpoint of the tribulation marks a significant moment (11:2; 12:6,14; 13:5)

- The main figure in this chapter is the mighty angel who conveys God's message to the earth, and delivers to John the little book

I. THE CRY AND THUNDERINGS OF THE ANGEL (1-4)

A. The identity of the angel

1. One view is that this is the Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. Many of his characteristics correspond to those of Christ (see 1:7,15-16; 4:3; 5:5,8)
 - b. In the Old Testament, Christ appears as the "Angel of the Lord" (Genesis 48:16)
 - c. He appears to have divine authority over land and sea (v.5)
 - d. The angel appears to call the two prophets "*my witnesses*" (11:3), and endue them with power
2. It is better to understand him to be a high-ranking angel
 - a. The word for "another" means another of the same kind, which precludes Christ, who is distinct from the angels (see Hebrews 1)
 - b. The same description of "strong/mighty angel" is used of actual angels in 5:2 and 18:21
 - c. Christ is never called an angel post-incarnation
 - d. In every appearance of Christ in Revelation he is clearly identified
 - e. The angel swears by the God of heaven
 - f. The angel descended to earth, which Christ's second coming is yet future

B. The description of the angel

1. Clothed with a cloud

- a. This cloud is associated with the glory of God (Exodus 40:35; 1 Kings 8:11)

2. Rainbow upon his head (cf. 4:3)

- a. The rainbow (Greek: *iris*) is a sign of God's faithfulness to his promises (Genesis 9)
- b. It is also a reminder of God's judgment upon those who violate his covenant (Isaiah 24:5-6)

3. Face as the sun

- a. Light represents purity, righteousness and truth
- b. The angel delivers God's message which penetrates the darkness of this wicked world

4. Feet as pillars of fire

- a. This speaks of the burning judgment he pronounces upon earth
- b. His feet on both sea and earth indicate authority over the entire physical earth

5. A little book in his hand

- a. This little book (*biblaridion*) is distinct from the book (*biblion*) held by the Lamb Revelation 5
- b. This contains remaining prophetic messages which John must deliver
- c. The book is open and unsealed

C. The cry of the angel

1. As the roar of a lion – a powerful voice establishing authority, warning of vengeance, and representative of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who will shortly “roar from Zion” (Amos 1:2)
2. In response to his cry, seven thunders sound, perhaps proceeding from the throne of heaven (cf. 4:5)

D. The seven thunders

1. Psalm 29:3-9 describes sevenfold description of the thunderous voice of God in the context of Noah’s flood
2. These thunders utter intelligible words
3. John was not permitted to record what he heard (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:4)
 - a. God has not revealed to us all that we would like to know, but all that we need to know (Deuteronomy 29:29)

II. THE CONCLUSION OF TIME ANNOUNCED (5-7)

A. The angel’s oath

1. This oath stresses the verity and certainty of what he is about to declare
2. It closely resembles the oath made by the angel in Daniel 12:7
3. God’s eternal nature and creative power are described (cf. 4:11; 14:7)

B. “There should be time no longer”

1. This does not mean that time will cease to exist, seeing it is an essential dimension of the creation, and continues through the successive ages (Revelation 22:2)

2. It means that there will be no more delaying in the fulfilment of God's purposes concerning his judgments upon earth and the establishment of his kingdom
3. From the first messianic promise (Genesis 3:15) 6000 years ago, its fulfilment has been *delayed*
4. God's people throughout history have looked for and longed for "his kingdom to come", yet "died in faith, not having received the promises" (Hebrews 11:13)
5. The martyrs in 6:10 cried, "How long?" and here the angel answers, "no longer"
6. The scoffers see God's delay and sneer, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4)
7. The believer patiently waits for the coming of the Lord (James 5:7-8), knowing that "it will surely come" (Habakkuk 2:3), but only "in his times" (1 Timothy 6:14-15)

C. "The mystery of God should be finished"

1. A mystery is something which is unknowable by man unless revealed by God
2. The numerous New Testament mysteries refer to previously hidden truths that are now made known (Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 15:51; Ephesians 1:9; 6:19; Colossians 1:24-29; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Timothy 3:16)
3. This mystery was "declared to his servants the prophets" and encompasses all those prophecies concerning the day of the Lord, the consummation of history, defeat of Satan, judgment of sinners, glorification of the righteous, the removal of the curse and the reign of righteousness
4. The timing of this is linked to the sounding of the seventh trumpet which heralds the kingdom of Christ (11:15)

5. The “mystery” that we presently grapple with is why evil and unrighteousness is permitted to prevail for so long without divine intervention
6. In the future, there will be no more mystery, “for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9)

III. THE CONSUMING OF THE TOME BY THE APOSTLE (8-11)

A. The eating of the book

1. Jeremiah and Ezekiel also at God’s words (Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 3:1-3)
2. The eating is a figure for receiving, assimilating, meditating upon and deriving sustenance from God’s words
3. As food is to the body, the word of God is to the soul (Job 23:12; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2)

B. The effect of the book

1. Sweet to the mouth, but bitter to the belly
2. It seems that the book contained revelation that John was to record – the closing chapters of the book of Revelation
3. The sweetness came from the knowledge of the final victory of the Lamb and his coming kingdom (cf. Psalm 119:103)
4. The bitterness came from the knowledge of the sufferings that were to come upon the world, but particularly upon the Jews before their final deliverance

C. The apostle’s commission

1. John was to prophesy again to many peoples, nations, tongues and kings

2. The remainder of Revelation has an increasing focus on kings and nations (16:14; 17:10; 17:12)

CONCLUSION

1. This present age of grace is a delay of the coming judgment and kingdom
2. It is an act of God's mercy towards sinners in that he allows us time now to repent (2 Peter 3:9)
3. But very soon, there will be "time no longer" and the door of grace will shut, either by death or the coming of Christ
4. The final words of Queen Elizabeth I were, "All my possessions for a moment of time."
5. The "little book" in this chapter teaches us important truths about the word of God
 - It must be open
 - It must be willingly received
 - It must be absorbed and integrated into our lives
 - It contains bitter truths about our sin
 - It contains sweet promises of the gospel
 - It must be shared abroad with others