

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twelve

CHAPTER 10

Introduction:

Seven seals / seven trumpets: Remember that these visions are two different perspectives of the same events in the same time period spanning from the establishment of the church until the day the Lord finally returns. Following the opening of the sixth seal, we read a lengthy discussion concerning the sealing of the righteous. Now that the sixth trumpet has sounded, chapters 10 begins with the same lengthy discussion from a different angle, and just as before some commentators view it as an “interlude” between the sixth and seventh trumpets.

The righteous were sealed for a very important purpose: to protect them from harm as devastation was unleashed on the world at the sounding of the trumpets. Here in chapter 10, we again see this group shielded from harm. To some it appears to be a digression since we have been dealing exclusively with the fate of the unrighteous since the sounding of the first trumpet. But, there is a two-fold intention at work here: to again reassure the righteous that they all will be saved; and to provide yet another opportunity for the unrighteous to change their ways.

As chapter 9 ended, the unrighteous had not repented or turned from their lives of sin. Here in chapter 10, a “mighty angel” steps into the scene. He declares that since all previous warnings have gone unheeded, the last and final punishment must fall. But first, God provides two witnesses by which the unrighteous might still be induced to repent. This is accomplished in chapters 10 and 11, and we again see the “sealing of the faithful” before the end of the world. This time, however, the sealing comes with even greater insight.

Carefully read the text below and let the scene form in your mind.

the Angel and the Little Scroll – Revelation 10: 1 – 11:

*“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*

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feet as pillars of fire: 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, 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 spoke 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. 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.”

John records that he saw “*another mighty angel.*” As before, some view this angel to be Jesus, but I think not. Thus far in the book of Revelation, when Christ is referenced, it is very obvious and unmistakably Him. There is no indication here that we speak of the Lord. This angel, much like the “other angel” we saw in chapter 7:2, has been dispatched with a specific assignment. Notice that he is described as being “*clothed with a cloud.*” The word translated “cloud” here is the Greek word “*nephele*” which Strong defines as simply “a cloud”. Henry Thayer, on the other hand, defines it as a “special cloud”, corresponding to the one that led the

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Israelites in the wilderness. In situations like this, it is often helpful to consider how the word in question is used throughout scripture. The word “*nephele*,” (translated as “cloud”) occurs 25 other times in the New Testament. In 22 of them – once the context is considered – it is obvious they refer to a Deity, or a judgment of Deity. The other three simply refer to a cloudy day. I conclude, therefore, that Thayer is probably right – the cloud is symbolic of special raiment suitable for Deity, which also means that he is on a particular mission in regard to judgment.

Notice that John says he saw this strong angel “*coming down out of heaven...*” This implies that John must no longer be in the presence of God in the throne scene we saw earlier. It appears as though he is back on earth.

John describes him as wearing a “*rainbow upon his head*”. Could there be a hint of this angel’s mission in that description? Remember that the rainbow symbolizes “kept promises.” This angel’s mission is to carry out one or more promises! Furthermore, his “*face was as if it were the sun*,” a source of light. The unrighteous choose to live in darkness, so the introduction of “light” into this scene would provide a very clear contrast to their way of life. John adds that his feet were “*as pillars of fire*,” which is generally viewed as meaning that his appearance was glorious.

Back in chapter 5, John saw a book (scroll) sealed with seven seals and written on both sides. It contained ALL of God’s purposes and plans for mankind, and was sealed so that the only parts shown to us were the ones God wanted revealed. The angel John sees here has in his hand an open book, its aim to proclaim what is written to the world! Notice that this angel has his right foot upon the sea and his left foot on the earth. This symbolizes the “range” or area that will be receiving the message. With both the land and the sea depicted – this message is universal! What is written in the book affects the whole world and everyone in it.

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The angel *“cried with a loud voice,”* as when a lion roars. When the “king of the jungle” speaks, everyone listens. This mighty voice was heard throughout all creation! But there is more. When the angel cried out, *“seven thunders uttered their voices.”* There is something awesome yet somewhat terrifying about rolling thunder. Also, we hear it before the actual storm arrives, foretelling something powerful that is to come. Here it is **“seven thunders”** – seven, the symbol of perfect completeness – issuing the warning before the “perfect storm,” as it were.

The angel raises his hand to heaven and swears by The Creator that the end has come! The things that are on the earth and the things that are in the sea – and even time itself – should be no longer! As the seventh angel begins to sound his trumpet, this angel warns that the *“mystery of God should be finished, as He declared to His servants, the prophets.”* John is taking this all in and is about to write it down, when *“a voice from heaven”* stops him. *“Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not,”* he is told. There are some things that the inhabitants of the world are not meant to know. So, we don’t know what John was about to write. However, in light of what we do know, I think it’s possible to draw a reasonable conclusion as to what was contained in the voices of those “seven thunders”:

1. We know that we are dealing with the unrighteous.
2. We know that thunder signifies judgment and destruction.
3. We know that the “end” for the unrighteous is terrible, eternal torment and anguish.
4. And we know that this is the end (verse 6).

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that what the “seven voices” depicted was just how bad the destruction will be and how awful Gehenna really is! Why was John told not to record it? In Acts 1:7 we are told: *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons ...”* Even in the book of Daniel (12:4) after things concerning the end of time are described to him, Daniel is told to *“...shut up the words and seal up the book...”* Is that because the righteous really don’t need to know just how bad it is? We know enough already to understand the urgency in the job we are given to spread the Word. We know that there is a way to escape that terrible

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judgment. This brings us back to the little book in the angel's hand. I believe it is the New Testament. And just as before, I believe this "mighty angel" represents the Holy Spirit – the one who sealed all the righteous that we saw in chapter 7 saying, ***"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads!"***

"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." It is not AFTER the seventh trumpet sounds that it's too late ... but when it BEGINS to sound! My point is this: Even though we are repeatedly reminded that we don't know when that last trumpet will sound, there are some unsealed people living in the world today who have told me personally that they are waiting for a better time. These folks don't understand that the end will come like the thief – when you least expect him. Those who are waiting until the last minute, thinking there is still time, or who simply believe that "their God is too good to punish them" will find when they hear that last trumpet, it is too late! There won't be a final moment to desperately "make things right." At that point, ***"the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets"*** and the unrevealed will be made known! In regard to the "mystery of God" Spence writes, *"The mystery of God is all that man does not now understand in connection with God's dealings with man."* However, the angel adds ***"...which He declared to His servants and prophets"***.

Next, John hears that same voice from heaven telling him to go to the angel and take the open book from him; so John does as he was told. By the way, for John to do that he must be on the earth as well, because the angel is standing on the earth with one foot in the sea and one on dry ground. The angel then tells him to ***"Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey."*** Again, John does as he is told, afterwards agreeing that, sure enough, it was as the angel said.

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I suspect we can easily understand the symbolism of John's eating the book: "*Eating it up*" signifies a "digestion" or complete realization of the message contained in the book. I see this as an "aha!" moment, when all the information we've been given suddenly gels in our mind and we realize we are now seeing perfectly that which we only thought we understood before. Early in Christ's ministry, His disciples – even John and the rest of the twelve – struggled with misunderstanding what Jesus was teaching. At this point in time, as he experiences these visions, John fully understands and realizes what is about to take place. The phrase, "*in thy mouth sweet as honey,*" I believe, refers to the initial "sweetness" of the Gospel that is being offered to save us from our sins. This includes the knowledge that the obedient will not endure punishment with the ungodly, but will be guaranteed the reward of an eternity in Heaven with all the redeemed!

But then he is told, it "*shall make thy belly bitter.*" I think the full realization of the terrible judgment that is to befall the unrighteous causes the bitterness; perhaps even the thought that among those could be friends and family! We must always keep in mind our Lord's words, as recorded in Matthew 7:21: "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*" And, contrary to popular belief, even members of the church He established can fall into that first group.

Yet John's work is not finished – he must continue – he must write so that ALL know the truth.