

The Little Scroll

📖 Revelation 10:1-11

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As you can see from our study of Major Prophetic Passages from the OT and now in the NT, there is a progression of revelation in the prophetic arena that is becoming more and more detailed. The Book of Revelation adds tremendous detail and thereby lives up to its name as an unveiling of things to come.

The Revelation is broken into three parts according to Rev 1:19; the things which John had seen, the Resurrected Christ, Rev 1; the things which are, the Church, Rev 2-3; and the things which shall happen after, Rev 4-22, the Tribulation, the Kingdom and Eternal State. We're in the midst of the Tribulation. This is a detailed description of future history. Last time we worked with the sixth trumpet, which is the second woe, found in Rev 9:13-21. We want to review this judgment and then make a few additional comments. In 9:13 "the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." That voice seems to be that of an angel standing at the place of safety in the temple, the four horns of the golden altar, but what happens next is not safety. This angel said, in 9:14, "to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." The river Euphrates was the location from which the enemy always came. The four angels are four enemy demons who had fallen with Satan and were bound. 9:15 says, "the four angels...had been prepared for" that very moment in history, the purpose of which is "so that they would kill a third of mankind." And I suspect that demons would kill people all the time if God permitted them to. But God does not permit them to. Some call that the permissive will of God. It means God permits them to only go so far. Here He releases them for the purpose of killing one out of every three humans on earth. That is a staggering proportion of the human race. And that is not the beginning of it. Earlier under the fourth seal one out of every four humans was killed. These are astounding figures and I must admit that going through this book again, it is more horrifying than I once imagined. Now when you move from 9:15 to 9:16 there is a dramatic shift in the text. It's so dramatic that it sounds like a verse is left out. It moves from four angels in 9:15 to two hundred million in 9:16. My explanation for this was that the four demons transform into an army of 200 million strong cavalry. When I said that last week there was a kid from CO who, it was reported, said, "Cool!" And that's exactly the type of response apocalyptic literature is supposed to invoke. It's supposed to grab our attention. Several people pointed out that it sounds like a modern science fiction movie. I agree and I think that the technological

advances in the film industry have allowed Hollywood to do a good job preparing the world for something like this being accepted as reality. But the reality is it won't be "Cool" for those who are here at that time. 9:17 describes the cavalry, "And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire (red) and of hyacinth (blue) and of brimstone (yellow), and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone." In 9:18, "A third of mankind was killed by these plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths." These are going to be some mean, fire-breathing, sulfur spitting demons that wreak havoc on the world's population. The explanation is 9:19, "For the power of the horses is in their mouths, that's the most dangerous end, "and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents," something like snakes, and they "have heads, and with them they do harm," so you really don't want to be near that end either. And what's remarkable is that after all this, 9:20 reports that "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent..." They did not have a change of mind about the idols they were crafting to represent and worship these demons. Now I know a lot of people marveled at this. How can they not have a change of mind? Let me draw a parallel for you. They are like Pharaoh during the Exodus plagues, who each time a plague came hardened his heart against God. In fact, the Hebrew text indicates that he was strengthening his resolve against God plague by plague. That is exactly what these people are doing during the Tribulation. The Tribulation is patterned after the Exodus, and that's why the OT prophets viewed the Tribulation in terms of the Exodus. It even teaches us how to interpret the Tribulation. If there's a correspondence, then how are we to interpret these Tribulation judgments? In the same way that we interpret the Exodus plagues. In fact, they're both called plagues. So the reason we take these things literally, even though figurative language is used, is because we already interpreted the Exodus plagues literally. But I bring this up because you want to see that Pharaoh's hardening his heart in the Exodus plagues is a picture of these people hardening their hearts in the Tribulation.

Now as we go along we see a pattern unfolding. In Rev 6 the first six seals are laid out chronologically, then we found an interlude in Rev 7 before the seventh seal. Rev 8 picked back up with the seventh seal and out came seven trumpets. In Rev 8 and 9 the six trumpets are laid out chronologically and in Rev 10:1-11:14 we find another interlude before the seventh trumpet sounds in 11:15. So there is a pattern of judgments followed by an interlude between the sixth and seventh judgments of each series. What these interludes do is give us additional information. In the interlude of Rev 7 we learned about ministry during the Tribulation, carried out by 144,000 Jews to the nations. In the interlude of Rev 10:1-11:14 we are going to see an unveiling of three significant things; the little book, the Tribulation temple and the two witnesses. The little book is something new altogether, whereas the Tribulation temple is something that was mentioned in Dan 9:27 and referred to by Jesus in Matt 24:15. As for the two witnesses, there is nothing directly about them in the OT, but they may be connected to two OT figures; either Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Moses or Enoch and Elijah. And I think on that count God is asking us to put the pieces together. Of course, there are many pieces, and so it is no easy task, and

probably no one who has put them all together perfectly, so a good dose of humility would go a long way in protecting one from thinking they have it all figured out.

Today we come to Revelation 10 and here we find a mighty angel, a little book and a command for John to eat the little book. This is strange. I find this chapter to be difficult, at least in knowing why it is here. The narrative does not move us forward. And we don't learn a lot of new things. In fact, John is told to seal up what he saw so we can't learn what he learned. This may be the only chapter in Scripture where we're not really to learn anything that is spelled out for us. Instead, what we are supposed to do is try to understand why we aren't permitted to learn it. And I think the reason is to generate anticipation. Anticipation seems to be the point of Rev 10. There are so many unknowns that only perk our interest and our desire to know lesson that I can only draw the conclusion of anticipation as its theme.

The exposition begins in 10:1 with a description of an angel John saw. **I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.** Now the more important issue is the **little book**, but we do want to understand something of this angel. Some think this angel is Michael or Gabriel, the only two other angels named in Scripture. But he's not named and it's better not to speculate on his name since Michael and Gabriel are named elsewhere and John could have written that here. Now others think that the angel is no mere angel but the angel of the Lord, that is, Christ, and the reason they think that is because of the descriptions. The say, this angel was **clothed with a cloud** and when Jesus ascended He was clothed in a cloud. And this angel has **the rainbow upon his head** and around the throne of God is **a rainbow**. And this angel has a **face like the sun** and that sounds a lot like Jesus' description in the seven churches. And this angel cries out with a voice like a lion roar and Jesus is a lion. But I do find it difficult to accept that this is Jesus because John says in 10:1, **I saw another strong angel**. That means that John had already seen a strong angel and this is another of the same kind, because the Greek has two words for **another**; one is *ετερος* and means "another of a different kind" and the other is *αλλος* and means "another of the same kind." This is *αλλος*, "another of the same kind." That means John had seen another angel like this one. And since there is not another like Jesus then this can't be Jesus. So despite how strong the arguments may sound, they fall short. This must be simply a strong angel. Since it is another we look through the Revelation for a previous strong angel. And what do you know but we find one in Rev 5:2. This was the strong angel who asked, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" Now John sees another strong angel. This one **coming down out of heaven**, obviously to earth. He is **clothed with a cloud**, which signifies a storm coming, **and the rainbow upon his head**, which reminds us of the rainbow as the sign of the Noahic Covenant, the promise that God will never flood the earth again. So while there is a storm coming it's not the kind of storm that will destroy every living thing, there is also mercy. And **his face was like the sun**, signifying it cast light on everything it looked at so that nothing goes unnoticed. **And his**

feet like pillars of fire, signifying that he is going to bring judgment on the earth. So the symbols stand for judgment tempered by mercy.

But in 10:2 the strangest thing is what he had in his hand. **A little book which was open**. Now some think that this little scroll is the same as the scroll from Rev 5, the one that had seven seals. But there are several things that indicate it is a different scroll. First, the word used of the little scroll is *βιβλαριδιον*, while the word used of the scroll in Rev 5 was *βιβλιον*. *Βιβλαριδιον* is the diminutive form of *βιβλιον*. It means "little scroll" not simply "scroll." Comparatively speaking, this was a smaller scroll. Second, the scroll was sealed up but the little scroll was already open. Some say "Well, that's because all seven seals had already been broken." That makes some sense, but everything in that scroll had already been read. So third, the scroll with seven seals has already been read, its contents divulged. But the little scroll has yet to be read. It seems to me from these evidences that the scroll in Rev 5 and the little scroll in Rev 10 are not the same scroll.

So John saw the strong angel with this **little scroll...in his hand** and then the angel **placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land**. This signifies that the strong angel has power and authority over the whole earth. This angel has been given this authority to judge. Angels are major players in bringing the judgments on the earth during the Tribulation. The authority given this angel is that he might conquer both sea and land. Some take the sea to symbolize Gentile nations and the land to signify Israel. While those are valid symbolic identifications in some passages, there seems to be no evidence for them here. The **sea** is the literal **sea** and the **land** is the literal **land**. So this angel is given judgmental authority over sea and land, which is the whole earth.

In 10:3 the angel **cried out with a loud voice**. It's interesting that in Scripture power is often portrayed by how loudly one can make their **voice**. The **voice** of this angel is compared to **when a lion roars**. And if you've ever heard the deep throaty **roar** of a lion, you know it can be heard for several miles. The **lion** is a picture of strength. So the angel's voice is compared to a **lion's roar**. **And when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices**. So obviously some kind of communication took place between the strong angel and the **seven peals of thunder**. Now we don't know who **the seven peals of thunder are**. They're not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. Yet obviously they are thinking, speaking beings, and surely I think they are angels. And what we know is most certain is that while they are referred to as **peals of thunder**, which are loud, prolonged reverberating sounds, they actually spoke words because John heard what they said in verse 4 and was about to write it down. And the fact their words were **thunder** means they spoke words of judgment.

In 10:4 John heard what they said and so **When the seven peals of thunder had spoken**, he says, **I was about to write**. He was doing what he was commissioned to do in 1:19; to write the things which he had seen, the things which are and the things which shall take place after these things. So in accordance with his commission, he took up his pen to write. But as he **was about to write**, he says, **I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them."** Now we don't know who told John not to **write** but it was obviously a commanding voice and most likely it was either the Father or

the Son. The terminology **seal up the things** is very similar to what was told Daniel the prophet in Daniel 12:4 and 9 where it says, "conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time." Daniel saw and heard things that he was not permitted to reveal and now John saw and heard things he was not permitted to reveal. So what **the seven peals of thunder** spoke we don't know. Only John knows. This means there is some information that prophets received that only they received and no other human being received. Paul also received some special revelation when he was caught up to the third heaven and heard ineffable things. And the reason I think this was revealed to John and yet not permitted to be revealed to us is simply to heighten the anticipation of what is coming. For some reason God wants to build in us an anticipation. And since all of this is preliminary to the seventh trumpet it all seems to be heightening the anticipation of what is coming in the seventh trumpet, which in it is all that remains to destroy the kingdoms of this world and to establish the kingdom of our God and His Christ.

In 10:5 **Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven.** Since he **lifted up his right hand** it probably means he had the little scroll in his left hand. The angel is taking an oath and the taking of an oath is another evidence that the strong angel is not the angel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, but simply a created angel. And he is taking an oath because it is a solemn and important occasion. This must mean that whatever is coming in the seventh trumpet is very solemn and important. And I would say it is solemn and important because, on one hand, it is the destruction of all the kingdoms of the world, a very solemn occasion, and it is important because the kingdom of God will come to earth in their place.

In 10:6 the oath is taken. The angel **swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the thing in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished.** So the angel **swore by** God as creator. We're reminded that God is the creator, the one who created all the things in heaven, on earth and in the sea. Since He created them they all belong to Him. Nothing in heaven, on earth or in the sea really belongs to us. It all belongs to Him. So whatever He decides to do with them is His prerogative. He can destroy the heavens, the earth and the sea and we can't have anything to say about it. And if we have a problem with it then we have taken wrongful possession of it. We have presumed that it belongs to us when really it belongs to Him. So we are reminded that He created it and it belongs to Him so that when we see it destroyed we understand that He has full rights to do that and we should be in agreement with Him that it needs to be destroyed. And the oath he takes is **that** the destruction **will** no longer **be delayed**. The KJV says that "there will be no more time." But the word doesn't mean time will stop, but rather that there will no longer be a delay in the destructions necessary to eliminate the kingdoms of the world and establish His kingdom. Up to this time there have been delays that allow men time to repent. There will be no more delays. At this point we are almost at the mid-point of the Tribulation. I think the seventh trumpet in 11:15 will be blown at the mid-point. And the mid-point is a major marker in the Tribulation.

Now the explanation in 10:7 that there will no longer be delay now comes with a cryptic saying that increases the anticipation all the more. **But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished.** So whatever is contained in the **seventh trumpet** is also the completion of **the mystery of God**. And when we finally do get to the seventh trumpet in 11:15, we will find statements that confirm that in it is contained all the bowl judgments that bring about the completion of judgments that destroy the kingdoms of this world and the establishment the kingdom of God. So there will be no more delay, as there was a delay between the sixth and the seventh seal when there was silence in heaven for about thirty minutes, and in it there is also the completion of **the mystery of God**.

But what is **the mystery of God**? As we know a **mystery** is the Greek word *μυστηριον* and refers to something “previously unrevealed, now revealed.” But if this is something previously unrevealed how can the end of verse 7 say **as He preached to His servants the prophets**. In other words, how can this be something previously unrevealed if it has already been revealed? The good news preached to the prophets involved the suffering of the Messiah who would then reign in glory in the kingdom of God. The prophets looked forward to His ultimate victory over sin and death and reign in the kingdom. In this context everything is pointing to a conquering of the earth in order to bring about that kingdom; for example, the angels feet being placed one on the sea and the other on the land signified the whole earth will belong to Him. He will take control. So how then is this a mystery of God? Because while it was revealed to the prophets that the kingdom would be established through mighty judgments, what was not revealed was exactly how this would take place. So what is contained in the seventh trumpet is what exactly will take place. This is the mystery of God because in it is contained new revelation about God. There are things about God Himself that are going to be revealed through the seventh trumpet judgments. This means that everything about God is not yet revealed. There is still more to know about God. God’s great purpose in history is His own glory. This means to reveal Himself in every facet of His being. His works reveal His being. For example, His justice is revealed through the penalty on Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit. But His love is revealed through the penalty being paid by Jesus Christ. And all of history is a revelation of the various facets of who God is. But there is still more to be revealed. And until all the events of history take place, we have an incomplete revelation of who He is. So history will end when God has revealed all that He wants to reveal of Himself in this created order. All this amounts to is that when the seventh trumpet sounds in it are things about God previously unrevealed, now revealed. Then **the mystery of God** will be complete. He will have shown something about Himself that He plans to reveal at that time. It is part of His glory.

Now in 10:8 John is given a strange command, **Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.”** The voice is probably Jesus telling John to do this. Go and take the scroll out of his hand. **So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.”** This is an interesting scene but it’s not something that has never been seen before. Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll and go, speak to the house of

Israel, and he opened his mouth and was fed a scroll (Ezek 2:9-10; 3:1-4, 14). And Jeremiah ate God's words and they were a joy and delight to him (Jer 15:16-18). What we have here is a figure of speech being used for taking in the word of God and digesting it; it tastes sweet in the mouth but it is bitter in the stomach. I think that what is meant by this is that the word of God is at first a delight, but in the end there are many things in it that are very difficult to digest. Think about some of the delightful things; the word of God teaches us about salvation through Christ and the kingdom to come, and joy and righteousness; but as you read more you find that there is also judgment and destruction in order to get to that kingdom where there is joy and righteousness, and those things are very difficult to stomach. Some people can't stomach it. I've seen Christians walk out or say, "I don't want you to preach about the destruction of earth." That just means they have an attachment to the earth that is incongruous with God. They are caught in the snare of idolatry. They want to take in the delightful, nice, happy things in the word of God but they don't want to have anything to do with the judgment and destruction that is necessary to get to the kingdom where the world will have peace and joy and righteousness. Now the prophets were forced to take in and digest the judgments and destruction. That's what it means when they are told to take and eat. They need to take it all into their heart and listen very closely to what the Lord says, whether it's a wonderful delightful thing or a terrible horror. And I think for us we have to cultivate a delight in reading the word of God. In other words, we shouldn't pick and choose just the nice things in Scripture. We have to realize that the separation of good from evil is painful. We should read it all and take it in, even when it is bitterly distressing. That is the only way to have the right perspective on God, man and nature. Otherwise our perspective will be skewed and that's idolatry. So John was told to **take and eat** this little scroll, which is to take in the revelation that it contains written on it; and that **it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey**. So what remains is delightful because it results in the kingdom of God being established, but it is horror to get there because the judgments that precede the kingdom almost totally eliminate the earth's population.

In 10:10 John obeyed, saying, **I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey**. Those are all the things of the kingdom to come, all the joy and righteousness that will come in the kingdom. But when he **had eaten it** he says, **my stomach was made bitter**. The reason is because the destruction the world has to go through to get to the kingdom is terrifying. And John was not allowed to skip by the terrifying things that remained. He was made to see their bitterness and to digest it and think about it.

In 10:11 he is re-commissioned to prophesy of it. And **they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings**. He must prophesy of the horrors that must come to pass, global events that involve every people on earth, every nation on earth, every language on earth and every king on earth. And this he will do beginning with the seventh trumpet. In it is contained the completion of the mystery of God. And because he wrote it we will also taste its sweetness but it will be bitter in our stomachs.

Why I think this was written, so many mysterious things, like the sealing up of what the seven peals of thunder spoke and the mystery of God and the eating of the little scroll, is so that our sense of anticipation of what is coming in the seventh trumpet is heightened. And that we will be impressed with both the solemnity and importance of the destruction that is coming in order for the delights of the kingdom to come. And this should encourage us to proclaim the gospel to people, to warn them of the wrath to come, and that the only way to avoid the wrath is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, that is, raptured, at the conclusion of the Church before all these things come upon the earth...So go and do it.