

## **Revelation Ch. 10: The Little Book**

Jeff Randolph  
January 2008

Here is an interlude that sets up the seventh trumpet by declaring that it would usher in the completion of the mystery of God (10:7), in which we see His wrath fully poured out on Babylon the Great (16:17). This break may correspond to an actual break in the war, when Vespasian went to Rome to claim the throne (Josephus, Wars 4.9.2; 4.11.5).

### **Verse 1**

**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.**

This angel has similar characteristics to God and the Lamb. The cloud might symbolize the storm cloud over Israel (cf. 1:7). The rainbow likely represents the mercy of God on those whom he was protecting (4:3; 7:1-3), the sun symbolizes the glory of God (1:16; 4:3; 21:23; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3), and the feet the strength (1:15) and wrath of God (6:17; 8:8; 9:17).

This angel is simply a representative of Christ, sent to do His will.

### **Verses 2-3**

**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, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.**

What is this little book? It is probably the New Testament, which would be completed when John finished writing, and contains information concerning the unveiled mystery (cf. 10:7), giving substance to the things foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Col. 2:14-17; Heb. 10:1).

The angel's position (right foot on the sea and left foot on the land) and loud voice (cf. Joel 3:16) signify that the book is applicable to the whole world (Matt. 28:18-20), and should be given its proper attention (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:19). The gospel was to be preached to the whole world prior to Jerusalem's fall (Matt. 24:14), and we know that this happened (Col. 1:23).

### **Verse 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."**

One cannot speculate what the thunders said (Deut. 29:29), but they are likely mentioned to show that God's word contains all that we need to know (2 Pet. 1:3), but not everything there is to know.

### **Verses 5-7**

**The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven 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, that there should be delay no longer, 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 gospel has been preached. Everyone has had an opportunity to have their sins forgiven, and all who would obey God had done so (cf. 6:9-11). The wicked could not say that they were not warned

(9:20). It was about time to sound the seventh trumpet, and pour out the complete wrath of God.

The angel is stating this in connection with the open book because the information is coming from it. The words of Jesus given in the New Testament tell exactly when Jerusalem's fall would occur (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21).

The angel was able to swear by God (with God as his witness) because these events were certain to happen (1:1; Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:17-19; Jas. 1:17-18). Only because these were under God's direction could such an oath be made. Men are cautioned against making promises they cannot keep (cf. Jas. 5:12).

This passage is nearly identical to what Daniel writes (Dan. 12:7), that “when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.” This is an obvious reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 12:11; Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14). It was at this point in history that the mystery of God would be complete (Lk. 21:22; cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:1-12). Everything that had been hidden in the Old Testament has now been revealed (Lk. 8:17).

Since everything is now revealed, this not only refers to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, but also the completion of the New Testament, the little book (10:2), in which these fulfillments are recorded (see notes on 15:8).

#### **Verses 8-10**

**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.” 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.” 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.**

Ezekiel was told to eat a book, on which was written “lamentations, mourning, and woe” (Ezek. 2:8-10). Like John, the book was sweet as honey (Ezek. 3:3), but caused him to be bitter (Ezek. 3:14) because he was told to tell the house of Israel the message of warning (Ezek. 2:3-7; 3:10-11; 15-27).

With this in view, it is obvious that the eating of the book represents absorbing its contents and consuming its message (cf. Matt. 4:4; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2). John was to consume God's word, and make it a part of his being, so that he would be fully prepared to teach and preach it (v. 11).

The fact that the book was sweet alludes to the good news and blessings contained therein to those who abide in it (cf. Ps. 119:103; Ps. 19:10). The fact that it caused bitterness may refer to the persecution that results from preaching, or the actual preaching of the bad news for those who reject God (cf. 1:16). Certainly, the prospect of eternal life is sweet, yet the persecution by the wicked, and consequences of disobedience would make one bitter (cf. Rom. 11:22).

For John, this had a very relevant application to the present, in that the destruction of Jerusalem was bittersweet. It was good to know that God was avenging His people (18:20), yet sad to see the beloved city laid waste (cf. Josephus, Wars 6.10.1).

Some only want to hear sweet words (Isa. 30:10; 2 Tim. 4:3), but it is the duty of all God's servants to

preach the whole truth (Acts 20:27).

**Verse 11**

**And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”**

John is assured that he would live past these events, and give a similar message concerning other nations. Perhaps this refers to further preaching, and the general message that any nation or person who rejects God will ultimately fall (Pr. 14:34; Rom. 13:1; Matt. 10:33; Jn. 12:48; Heb. 2:2, 3).

\*All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved.