**THE MIGHTY ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE SCROLL**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 10**

As we enter Chapter 10 we’re somewhere in the Tribulation period. Whether it’s a literal 7-year period or longer can be debated. I believe that it is a 7-year period of time (based on my own study of Revelation and Daniel). Another thing – whether you think the events in Revelation happen chronologically (as I do) or that there is some overlapping of events (seal, trumpet and bowl judgments covering the same time frame) can also be debated. What we can all agree on is that this is a terrible time. Thus far in our study we’ve noted that, since the Tribulation began, about half of the earth’s population has been wiped out. Billions – not millions, but billions of people have died. Literally we have observed all hell breaking loose upon the earth. Let me make this point – we have not seen anything like this in human history – nothing that had such a worldwide devastating effect.

As you will recall between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals in Chapter 7 there was a brief interlude of peace. It proved to be a time of great revival. Hundreds of thousands were saved. Eventually the seventh seal was broken and seven trumpet judgments were introduced. Six trumpets have been sounded so far, each one announcing yet another of God’s judgments on the earth. Now, between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, we observe yet another interlude. God once again provides a period of peace before the seventh trumpet will be sounded and the judgments of God resume. It’s possible that this is the same interlude we saw back in Chapter 7 between the sixth and seventh seals. We don’t know for sure. Let’s pick up the action, Ch 10 beginning in v 1…

1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.

2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

Who is this “mighty angel”? Bible scholars are split as to whether this is Jesus or one of God’s chief angels, like Michael or Gabriel. His physical description alone might lead you to believe that this is the Lord Jesus Himself. However, the way John interacts with him leads you to believe that this is only an angel. We really don’t know for sure. What’s important to realize is that this individual, whoever he is, comes down from heaven as God’s messenger to announce God’s final judgments upon the earth.

The mighty angel, as he is called, holds in his hand a little scroll that has already been opened. More than likely this is the same scroll from Chapter 5. If so, then I believe it is the title deed to the earth and contains the judgments of the Great Tribulation. If you will notice, the scroll is opened. This would make sense because by this time all seven seals have been broken and most of God’s judgments have been displayed.

The scroll is described as “little,” signifying that there is not much time left in the Great Tribulation. As I read Revelation, right after the seventh trumpet is sounded (Ch 11), there will be the rise of the antichrist to world domination. That will be followed by the bowl judgments and, finally, the Lord’s return to earth to set up His millennial kingdom. One of the mighty angel’s feet is on the land and one is in the sea. This shows that God is preparing to take back what is rightfully His, that is, the entire earth, both land and sea.

3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

Very interesting! J. Vernon McGee states in his commentary that the seven thunders are God’s “Amen” to the angel’s claim that only a short time remains until the end when the Lord will take back possession of all of His creation. Job 37:5 tells us, “God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend.”

Whatever it was that the voice of God uttered, John was not permitted to write it down. Why not? Because it was not for any of us to know. The Book of Revelation reveals a lot about what will happen in the future, but certain details have purposely been kept from us. Jesus once told His disciples, “Heaven and earth will pass away…but of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone…for you do not know when the appointed time is.” (Mark 13:31-33) We are given snapshots of events here and there, but we are not shown everything. We are certainly not given a timeframe for these events to occur. Which leads to all kinds of uncertainty and conjecture.

5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land [the mighty angel from v 1] raised his right hand to heaven

6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay,

The mighty angel raises his right hand and swears by the God of heaven that there will no longer be a delay. Basically God is saying, “Let’s wrap this whole thing up!” What a welcome announcement this is for those saints on earth who we are about to see will experience terrible persecution at the hands of the antichrist. Jesus once said, “But for the sake of the elect those days [days of the Great Tribulation] shall be cut short.” (Matthew 24:22b) The voices of the martyrs cried out in Chapter 6, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10) God’s answer comes here in Chapter 10 – “NOT LONG!” So, the angel announces there will be no more delay…

7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

When the seventh trumpet sounds something significant will take place and it is not a good thing. The “mystery of God” will be accomplished. It will be finished. In the N.T. the word “mystery” refers to a new truth that was not revealed to the O.T. prophets. It is a truth that was later revealed to the various N.T. writers.

I believe the mystery that this verse is referencing may be the same mystery of the Gospel that Paul talked about in Ephesians:

“I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my preaching to you Gentiles. As you already know, God has given me this special ministry of announcing His favor to you Gentiles. As I briefly mentioned earlier in this letter, God Himself revealed His secret plan to me. As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now He has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 3:1-6 New Living Translation)

The mystery, the “secret plan” mentioned by Paul in Ephesians, is that Gentiles are included in salvation and become equal heirs with Jews in the body of Christ. But soon this will be finished. In other words, when the seventh trumpet blows, the time for the salvation of the Gentiles will cease. Their window of opportunity for salvation, which was flung open wide at Pentecost, will close sometime during the Tribulation period. Their opportunity for salvation is running out fast! [messages of Revelation]

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

The Lord tells John to take the scroll out of the angel’s hand and eat it. That seems strange until you realize the meaning of it. The prophet Jeremiah when he was re-commissioned as a prophet of God to Judah said, “Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts.” (Jer 15:16) Then you have Ezekiel. When he was commissioned to speak to house of Israel he said, “So I opened my mouth, and [God] fed me this scroll. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.’ Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.” (Ezek 3:2-3) A prophet of God must eat, must digest, and must consume God’s word before He can speak it to the people. And this is precisely what John is being asked to do.

The word of God is sweet to the taste. The psalmist describes it as sweet as honey. There is something sweet about delving into God’s word. However, it’s truth can sometimes be a bitter pill to swallow, especially when it points out our sinfulness and warns of its results. There is nothing as sweet as the name of Jesus and the promises we are given thru Him. But there is nothing as bitter as the wrath of God. The truth is sweet, but the consequences of disobedience and unfaithfulness can be bitter.

John, the servant is given his great commission to prophesy here in the last verse in Chapter 10…

11 And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

Thru John’s writing of the Book of Revelation the commission he is given here in this verse was fulfilled. Today, people in just about every nation and of every people group can read and study this book in their own language. Every word that John faithfully recorded can be analyzed and re-analyzed to try and figure out what’s going to happen in the end. But like I said before, God has only given us so much information. He wants us to have a general knowledge about what’s going to happen, but He has purposely veiled the specifics. There are some things He doesn’t want us to know.

When I taught this lesson years ago at a previous church, I laid out 500 pieces of a jigsaw puzzle on a table. I did not let the class see the puzzle box so they didn’t know what the picture on the puzzle was. Just looking at the various puzzle pieces I had them write down what they thought the picture was. How do you think they did? Actually, the class members guessed pretty close. They conjectured that it was a farm scene and a few specific elements that they could see on the puzzle pieces. But until the puzzle was put together the whole picture wasn’t completely clear to them. So it is with the Book of Revelation and it’s many puzzle pieces.

[after Cindy’s lesson before we sing]

So, let’s read it. Let’s study it. Let’s discuss it. In the end, as the old hymn says, “We will understand it better by and by.”