

No Further Delay
Revelation 10:1-11
Gary R. May
First Baptist Church of Diana April 20, 2011

Revelation 9 closes with a reminder of the failure of man to repent and follow God as well as the warning of one woe yet to come. Previously, seven angels have been recognized with trumpets in their hands. Six of the seven have sounded their trumpets as the story line is moving quickly toward the seventh and final trumpet blast. The sounding of the seventh will no doubt signal the beginnings of the final judgments of God. John used an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals to show the final preparations necessary for the opening of the final seal. He uses a similar technique between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. The scene opens with the closing remarks of chapter 9 on the minds of the readers and moves on to the final events of history. Man has refused to repent and the judgments of God are about to become more intense.

An angel described as “mighty” makes the journey from heaven to earth. Similarities are easily recognized between this angel and the Lord Jesus. This angel has a rainbow upon his head which parallels the rainbow around the throne of God in Revelation 4:3. The rainbow is a symbol of God’s mercy in His promise never to destroy the earth again by flood. The angel can then be seen as having the authority of the throne. This angel is also clothed with a cloud. God is often identified with the clouds as when He led the Israelites out of Egypt in a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. Dark clouds covered the Sinai when God gave the law to Moses. A cloud also received Jesus when He ascended to Heaven. There is also a reference to “his face like the sun” which seems to parallel a description of Christ from Revelation 1:16. In addition, a voice like a lion resembles the voice of Christ in Revelation 5:5. If this is a description of Christ, it is a temporary manifestation for a specific purpose rather than a permanent incarnation.ⁱ

While the parallels and comparisons to Christ and this angel are abundant, then identifying this angel as Christ has its problems. First, the rainbow, sun, and pillars of fire could be taken to suggest the appearance of heavenly glory. The clouds could merely be associated with the angel’s mission of judgment. In verses 5 and 6 the angel makes an oath swearing by Him who lives forever. The idea that Jesus would need to take an oath is especially problematic. These two verses considered seem to render the text to mean what it says, “a mighty angel”. The evidence of the text overrides the parallels that would suggest seeing this angel as Christ.ⁱⁱ

The angel is then described as one who holds an open book. The contents of the book are not given although the open posture of the book is in direct contrast to the sealed book of earlier chapters. This massive angel places a foot on the sea and one on the dry land indicating the words of the book are intended for all of mankind. His speaking with a loud voice compared to the loud voice of a lion reveals the nature of his call. He is speaking with great authority and calling attention to the message which will follow. This is particularly significant when one considers the lack of attention given to the warning judgments of the previous chapters.

Once the angel has sounded causing people to give attention, seven peals of thunder speak from heaven. Seven is to be taken as the literal number of times a voice is heard while it symbolically

represents completeness and fullness. This is likely the voice of God speaking and could be an extension of the seven spirits identified in chapter 4. John was about to record the message given by the voices when he was interrupted and instructed not to record what he had heard. This passage seems to indicate that John was recording the vision as it unfolded before him.

The announcement given in verses 5-6 reveal a central teaching of the chapter. George Beasley Murray says this is the reason for this first vision of the interlude. The message is that all matters of delay in the coming of God's final judgment have passed. Now is the time the prayers of the saints will be fully answered. What is done is done and finally the full revelation of the mystery of God is complete. Most modern translations use the word or concept for delay as opposed to "times no longer" which is a bit misleading. While it is true one era has come to an end and the end of time as we know it is on the near horizon, it is not true that time ends immediately following the opening of the seventh seal.

The phrase found in verse 8 "the mystery of God is finished" brings up an interesting idea. The idea that man cannot see the whole picture nor can he see clearly is taught in both testaments. We see a progressive revelation in the Old Testament and we see dimly into a mirror in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 13:12). As God has revealed Himself through the ages, man has had the privilege of gaining an understanding of God who is a mystery. Adam understood the mystery of God a little clearer when God granted grace and mercy after the fall in the garden. Noah understood the judgment of God and the grace of God through the flood and subsequent days. The mystery of God made great strides in revelation with the coming of Christ. The depth of His love and extent of His grace were demonstrated fully on the cross. Now as the judgments of God are poured out on the earth and man refuses to repent, the extent of God's patience in giving man chances is in full view and the mystery is solved. This era of human history is when God once and for all answers a question men have perpetually asked, "Why doesn't God do something about the evil in the world?" That mystery is fully solved as God judges the earth and His wrath against sin is experienced in full upon the earth.

John is then invited to take the book from the angel and to eat it. The results will be a sweetness in the mouth and a bitterness in the stomach. Such is the paradox of God's Word. Words of hope are also words of warning. Words of deliverances serve to highlight depths of bondage. Scenes of rescue give room for scenes of devastation. Up to this point, John has been relaying visions but now he physically gets in on the revelation. With this action John will not only hear and see but he will feel the irony of the coming judgment. There is nothing pleasant about pronouncing the judgments of God upon mankind to someone who will be judged by those judgments. The prophets of the Old Testament were not known for their winsome care free attitude. Several of them battled depression as a result of both their personal rejection by the people and knowing the consequences of man's refusal to repent. On the one hand, John looked forward to the day when the saints would be vindicated and evil would finally be defeated. On the other hand, he sees full well that fellow humans are attached to this evil and when God's judgment falls against evil it will consume those most closely associated.

Specifically, the little book concerns the great persecution yet to come with the seventh trumpet resulting in the third woe. This time of tribulation will fall upon all the earth. Those of the dispensational persuasion make a big deal about the coming last 3 ½ years of tribulation when

the intensities of God's judgments will increase. Historical premillennialists are quick to point out the suffering which will come to all on the face of the earth during the remainder of the tribulation period. Mounce reminds, "The people of God as they faithfully bear witness to the world are not delivered from martyrdom and death, but through martyrdom a death to glorious resurrection."

The bitterness of the charge given to John is seen in verse 14, he must prophesy concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. John must slip away from this interlude to again see the judgments of God poured out on the rebellious world. Many must be told about the impending doom because God is one who tells his prophets what he is about to do. He has repeatedly sent messengers to warn others of evil and its certain consequences. The scope of his prophecies will include many tongues and nations. The warning will go out to kings and common folks alike. No one on the earth should escape the warnings issued by the Revelation.

The modern church is no doubt an extension of John's commission. We too have received the book. To digest the words of the book is to come to the same sense of bitter sweet that John experienced. The Cross is foolishness to the world but the power of God unto salvation for those who believe. The book of Revelation found its way into the Holy Bible and the church has accepted this book as the divine Revelation of God. It is then the Word of God which must be preached to all nations. Everyone is to hear the warning of the last book of the New Testament. Everyone is to hear of the marvelous saving grace of our Lord. Once again, the responsibility falls on the back of God's blood bought church to be the messengers and proud proclaimers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

ⁱ Wiersbe

ⁱⁱ Newport 213