

“The Little Book”

As we have seen in the last chapter the last days will be horrific as earth and men are destroyed. The horror will be that men have rejected God and so they reap their reward, even on this earth. As always, God is justified in His actions, even if we cannot understand His reasons.

Our understanding, or not, of God's will, does not alter His plan, nor does it give us warrant to disregard His words and actions, or to apply any disreputable connotation to anything He does. Whatever God does and says must be perfect and holy. But, above that, He can act as He wishes, whether we like it or not.

Even Christians question God's will and actions! This is because they reject, or do not understand, the fact that God is supreme ruler of all He has created. Most Christians prefer to concentrate only on His love. Few dare to look also at His wrath. And even fewer will preach the full magnitude and breadth of His person and ways. Even so, God is greater than the description we have of Him in His word! He has deigned to give us a limited knowledge of Himself.

Though limited (partly because we could not understand anyway, and partly because He does not wish to give us further revelation), what we have is enough to alert us to the glory already displayed, and to suggest an endless future display beyond anything we now know, when this earth has completed its existence.

Now we come to what must surely be a terrifying angelic spectacle. The shepherds were amazed and scared witless by the appearance of an 'ordinary' angel who came to tell them Christ had been born. Here the angel is far more imposing, and carries a message of doom for all who reject God's word, for he comes to declare time has ended.

Verses 1&2

1.

“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 feet as pillars of fire.

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2.

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.”

John has been having vision after vision. Now, he sees ‘another mighty angel’, one of countless mighty angels presently with the Lord. People on earth claim to have seen angels, and I believe some of them, for angels are sent as messengers; they are with us throughout our lives and intervene, at God’s bidding, in many situations and activities of men. Yet, to actually see an angel must be awesome and even terrifying, such is their glorious appearance and power.

John saw a ‘mighty angel’... meaning strong, powerful, heroic. The accolade of ‘mighty’ can also be applied to men, when they are able to withstand Satan. Their strong stance is usually indicative of many other facets of strength and virtues not usually seen in the ordinary men of this world, whose god is their belly.

It seems from observation that many Christians *choose* to be as ordinary men, because it is more cosy to remain anonymous in their faith. Thus, they lose out on knowing the glories of serving God truly and with strength. In so doing, they also lose out on many other aspects of God’s power in their lives, bemoaning the fact that ‘God does not seem to listen’ to them, or that they see very little godly fruit in their lives! No wonder, when they have no wonder! (The implication is that Christians can stall God’s plan in their lives. This is sadly true. See how David ruined his life by his sin, even though he repented. God’s will **MUST** prevail, but our sins can often get in the way).

This was a mighty angel, capable of great deeds our imaginations cannot perceive or conceive. He came ‘down from heaven’ to our mortal plane, shrouded in a cloud and with a rainbow above his head. Christians may not like this allusion to the rainbow, but it is God’s creation! God created the first rainbow as a sign of giving security to people on earth. Later it was used, and continues to be used, as a symbol of the occult, as a symbol of the female messenger of pagan gods, and as a flag for homosexuals. Even so, we should not so easily hand-over this sign from God to pagans! It still belongs to God, though it is misused by unbelievers. (See more details of this rainbow on last page).

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The angel's face was so bright, it shone with the intensity of the sun, that men may not look directly at it. His feet or legs were like pillars of fire. These descriptions all indicate to us the importance of the angel and his power from God. He was of huge size, for he placed one foot on the sea and one foot on the land, straddling both with ease and strength. No doubt this was symbolic of the world-wide content of his message. In his hand he had a 'little book' or scroll, containing words from God.

It is easy (and, sadly, widespread) for Christians to see this kind of vision as being only for John's day, or as myth; they never see the marvellous and the miraculous, or know the full power of God in their lives. God is almighty and His power is with us today. Not the fake power found amongst charismatics and other pagans, but the real, ever-present power of God in our everyday lives. It is time for all Christians to take this power as their own, as God promises, and, in doing, displace the false power claimed by so many today.

Note: Some think this angel is Christ. I believe not, because the word "another", *allos*, is used to describe him. It denotes something of a numerical difference and refers to something that is the same sort but different. One cannot really speak of Christ as 'another' of the same sort. Also, in verse 6, the angel refers to the Creator (Christ) as separate from himself. His statement, that time would end, is the message he was to deliver on God's behalf, not necessarily on his own behalf.

Verses 3&4

1.

"And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

2.

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."

The angel was not only imposing in size and appearance – his voice was loud and frightening, like that of a lion. It is said that the lion's roar is the loudest animal sound in Africa, and can carry over five miles! When the angel cried out, the sound of seven thunders followed. If seven

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thunders roared the sound would be ear-shattering! I propose that seven thunders represented God's perfect will.

John was about to write down what he was seeing and hearing, when a voice from heaven (not identified) commanded him not to record what the seven thunders had said. We do not know, then, what these seven thunders were conveying. Nor do we *really* know if seven was a literal number (which it is in the Greek), if it merely stood for 'many', or if 'thunders' were symbolic of someone, perhaps angels.

All we can glean from a direct reading is that God was imparting information in an imposing way, but was not willing to reveal it at that time to anyone other than John and those in heaven.

Verses 5-7

1.

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

2.

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:

3.

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."

John then saw the huge angel, who was straddling the earth and the sea, lift up his hand toward heaven. This appears to symbolise deference to God and the heavenly direction from which the message was coming. The angel then swore an oath, something we are not at liberty to do on earth, but which is given to an angel by God.

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The angel 'sware'. That is, he invoked the name of God as his Lord and witness, as the Creator of all things temporal and spiritual, before uttering the simple but fearful message - that 'there should be time no longer'. Everything men on earth knew was to cease, and time, which is only in existence for the benefit of mankind, would just stop. History will stop. Human existence will stop. Current earthly life will stop. Only eternity remains and the great judgement!

When the seventh angel (read end of next chapter) spoke, the 'mystery of God should be finished', just as He had foretold through His prophets. What does this mean? It refers to the hidden things of God. Like what? The secret will of God for His saved people, not known to the unsaved. Thus, this term seems to be saying that the time available for salvation was coming to its end.

Verses 8-11

1.

"And the voice which I heard from heaven spake 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.

2.

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:

3.

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.

4.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

When the angel and the seven thunders had finished speaking, the voice John heard before again spoke to him, saying that he had to take the small book from the hand of the angel. This taking from the hand of angels, which he had done previously, probably is symbolic of taking

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God's word and relating it to men. It seems that whatever the angel had said was read out from the book (that is, God's declared will), because when John took it, it was open.

As John took the book, the angel commanded him to eat it. He warned that as he ate it, the book would taste sweet as honey, but when it reached his stomach, it would be bitter and cause him to feel the effects. John complied with the angel's command and ate the book. It indeed tasted sweet as honey, but as soon as it reached his stomach the book became bitter and gave him pain and nausea.

What is meant by this? The belly is often used as symbolic of man's innermost thoughts and being. To eat the book was to take it to heart. It was sweet because God had uttered it – but it became bitter because though everything God says is good, its effects can be grievous to men. To realise the import of such a message, God ensured that John could taste for himself the effect of God's warning words.

This interpretation seems to be correct, as the voice from heaven told John that he still had work to do as a preacher, teaching the word of God. John was to relate what he was seeing and hearing to the people of the churches as well as to the unsaved. There appears to be a hint here that after the visions of The Revelation, though old, he travelled to several countries (e.g. 'many peoples... tongues... kings'). And why not? It is also possible that, like Paul, John could have used a number of assistants to complete the task. But, we do not know.

As we have seen from the beginning of The Revelation, this book is written in mainly symbolic language, yet its messages are quite clear and forceful, with active and vivid pictures of what is to be. The first few chapters spoke to the churches at the time, but the visions then began to show us our own future.

Though we are not in that part of God's plan just yet, we do not know when those final stages will come upon us. All we know is, that God will act swiftly and there will be no time to escape or to make our own plans of escape. The vivid and dramatic speed with which homosexuality, Islam, Marxism, fascism, and other evils have propelled themselves onto the world stage, seem to underline the fact that these are the start of the last days.

Yes, we are in the last days, but we have yet to see most of the events mentioned in these texts

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(though we are witnessing the beginning). Even so, we cannot ignore what is said or think that the messages have nothing to do with us. We do not know if the events here will come upon us suddenly in our own lifetimes, so we must treat them as being imminent and act accordingly. We must live holy lives as though in readiness.

Everything in scripture is for our edification, so let us take these words to heart. We are seeing the ultimate in God's elective and predestined plan, as He starts to wind up our human existence. It is often claimed that those who believe in predestination have no urgency in their lives to preach or to live lives honourable to God. But, the words of The Revelation cause us to be alert! We are to treat each day as if it were our last. We are to 'prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.' How can critics ignore such a clear message?

The fact that God plans every little jot and tittle does not absolve us from preaching in season and out of season, with joy, power, and love for the lost. No, it is those who reject predestination who are lost souls, without merit and without cause! Instead of preaching the truth, they preach a false gospel in which men become the savers of their own souls, by their own thoughts and their own meagre decisions. Such are despoilers of truth and deceivers of hearts!

Revelation 10: additional notes

Mighty angel – Exceptional power to withstand Satan and sent by God to do His bidding.

Cloud – same as for the cloud that led the Hebrews through the desert, representing God's power and protection. The theophanic cloud.

Rainbow – though representing God's promise not to repeat the great Flood, and protection of the saints, it also represents the execution of God's judgments upon people who reject Him before His people are protected. Name comes from its shape – 'rainbow' only found in Revelation, and called simply 'bow' in the Old Testament, after the shape of the weapon (though as a weapon it was probably not known in ancient Israel). In Revelation this rainbow looked like an emerald, *smaragdus* (or, light green). Thus, this latter meaning is meant rather than the multi-coloured rainbow we might imagine, as it is also the foundation stone of the Heavenly Jerusalem. (This allusion is made in Revelation 4:3, "in sight like unto an emerald").

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Sun – in this context means the glory of God.

Pillars – feet/legs like columns of fire; symbolic - the angel bore massive responsibility before God.

Little book (*biblaridion*) – diminutive of *biblion* (scroll or small book, which is itself a diminutive of *biblion* – larger book or scroll. Thus, an even smaller version of a small version of a book, though it may also be used of *biblion* itself.

Seven thunders – seven is the primary number seven and therefore an indeclinable noun. That is, it means what it says! Any English transliteration starting ‘hept’ is similar to the Hebrew *sheba*’, which is similar to *saba*’, meaning fullness or abundance, or completeness. ‘Thunders’ is akin to roaring (e.g. as a lion – loud). In this context it translates as “there was thunder”.

Write – note that John was actually writing down whatever he saw and heard. He wrote on a clay tablet, parchment, or other material. He did not compose anything but simply documented everything as a reporter. No personal guesswork or interpretation!

Seal up – one interesting meaning is to seal something so Satan cannot know or see it. Possibly, the information concerned Satan’s demise on this earth, so God did not want him to know when that would be. This is the meaning in this text and the contents would be revealed when it happens later.

Time no longer – the very end of *chronos* – seasons and time itself, all come to their end (last day).

Mystery (of God) – things of God previously hidden, except to those who are His. This applies to the Gospel and many other aspects of God’s dealing with men, that they CANNOT know no matter what means they use to find out. This proves the great divide between saved and unsaved and the fact that the unsaved cannot understand the things of God. (re Mark 4:11,

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Romans 16:25, etc).

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