

## REVELATION 10-11

10:1-2 - This section begins with a dramatic descent of a mighty angel who is holding a small scroll in his hand (a message).

v.3 – Thunder is often associated with the voice of God.

v.4 – But just as John is getting ready to write what he hears; he is told not to write it down. He must witness it happen first, almost like a movie or vision. Only after he witnesses it must he write it down.

v.5-7 – The angel swears by ‘him’. Who is him? ‘Him’ lives for ever, created all that is and sits on a throne. The creator descriptors are always referring to God the Father, whereas Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain who is the key actor in the drama of salvation, and the one whose revelation John is writing down.

‘No more delay’ (v.6) means that the ‘mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to God’s servants the prophets.’ This mystery is about the second and final coming of Christ to fulfil what he accomplished with his death and resurrection.

v.8-11- The little scroll which tastes sweet as honey but becomes bitter in the stomach, also parallels experiences of Ezekiel (2:8-3:3). The meaning is that God’s word may be sweet, for it speaks justice and truth, but its implications for Israel and the people will be difficult, for it will involve judgement on the wicked and suffering of the righteous. Ezekiel prophesied about the fate of his own people. John must prophesy ‘about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.’

11: 1-2 - the scene now moves to Jerusalem. Chapter 1 was located in Patmos, 2-3 in Asia minor (The 7 churches), 4-5 was a scene from the heavenly court, 6-10 focuses on the world as a whole, while 11-12 moves to the temple and Jerusalem. Scholars suggest this section of Revelation was written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD because it refers to the Romans taking over the outer court of the temple while leaving the holy of holies intact. What actually happened is that the whole temple was burnt out, never to be rebuilt. Jesus, for one, foretold the total destruction of the temple and the holy city (Mark 13:2).

v.3-6 - refer to two witnesses. Elijah was expected to return at the end of the world (Malachi 4:56), and he was able to shut up the sky so that no rain might fall (1 Kings 17:1). Moses, on his part, was given the power to turn water into blood and to bring about the plagues that brought Egypt to its knees (Exodus 7: 17-21). Both Moses and Elijah also appear with Jesus on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John (Mark 9:2-9). References to the two witnesses as two olive trees and two lamps (v.4) are taken from Zechariah 4, referring to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two leaders who led the return of the exiles from Babylon in 520 BC. Olive Trees were also essential for all food production.

Lampstands represent the light of God in a dark world. The church in the time of John is called to be spiritual food and light in a time of suffering and persecution.

v.7 - refers to the beast that comes from the bottomless pit and will be dealt with more fully in Chapter 13. Daniel 7 also refers to such a beast. The Great figure of evil expected at the end of the age is merged with a belief in Roman Emperor Nero's return (a great persecutor of the Christians 30 years before Revelation is written and within the lifetime of John and other Christians). Christians were killed in the public square, their bodies covered with animal skins, strapped to poles and lit on fire to serve as lighting for Nero's evening garden parties. Can you imagine the shock, trauma and grief of living through such events as a survivor?

v.8 - the great city, whose name, prophetically, is Sodom and Egypt. Isaiah addressed the leaders of Judah (Israel as a whole) and Jerusalem (the spiritual capital) as 'rulers of Sodom' implying that the people resembled the inhabitants of that notorious city (Is: 1:10). Ezekiel condemned Jerusalem for retaining the evil ways 'brought from the land of Egypt' 23:27. Sodom's brutality (Genesis) and Egypt's oppression (Exodus) reflect different aspects of Rome. Christ may have been crucified outside Jerusalem, but Rome is ultimately responsible as the empire that crucified not only Jesus but his followers.

v.9-10 - 3.5 days (days also represent years) = 42 months (v2) = 1260 days (42 months of 30 days each). In 12:6 it is 1260 days, in 13:5 it is 42 months, and in 12:14 it is 3 years + ½. These numbers have roots in Daniel 9:27 where a week is spoken of as a week of years (7 yrs). This 'week' is divided into two parts: 3.5 + 3.5 (also in Daniel 7:25, 12:7). The events taking place within these 7 years refer to the reign of terrible king Antiochus IV, the middle point being the action of 168 BC – the installation of a statue of the Greek god Zeus on the altar in the Jerusalem Temple, another devastating and traumatic event. This is called the 'abomination of desolation' and is referred to by Jesus in the gospels as well. The expectation of Daniel's prophecy was that this would last another 3.5 years, but actually lasted about 3 years. During this time there would be widespread persecution, but then deliverance would come. And deliverance did come in 165 BC in the form of the Maccabean revolt, re-establishing Jewish independence for a time. But Daniel also prophesied of a glorious new age with the resurrection of the dead. The Jews, and later the Christians, took these happenings as foreshadowing the last years of world history when the complete 'mystery of God will be fulfilled.'

v.11-12 – To foreshadow the final resurrection of the dead, the two prophets are raised up and taken up to heaven to wait there until the 2<sup>nd</sup> half (3.5 years) of the tribulations will take place.

v.13 – more catastrophes come and more people repent, being added to the number that will be saved through the time of tribulations.

v.14 – The third woe to come is the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the tribulations.

The events of the time of king Antiochus were a foreshadowing of the events of the time of the beast or Anti-Christ. Among these events are the following highlights:

- 1) A falling away from faith or apostasy (Daniel 11, 1 Maccabees 1:15)
- 2) A great figure of evil opposed to God (Dan. 11)
- 3) He profanes the temple, setting up the abomination (Daniel 11)
- 4) The profanation is the signal for the flight of the faithful to the mountains or wilderness (1 Macc. 1: 28-29).
- 5) A tribulation more severe than any known before. (Dan. 12:1)
- 6) Tribulation would last for 3.5 yrs and this would be the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3.5 yrs (Dan. 12)

New Testament equivalents:

- 1) Falling away from faith or apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3, Mark 13:6)
- 2) A man doomed to perdition or the beast (2 Thess. 2: 3-4, Rev. 11:7)
- 3) Profaning of the Temple (2 Thess. 2:4, Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14)
- 4) Profanation as signal of flight of faithful (Mark 13:14, Rev. 12:6,14)
- 5) A distress such as has never happened before (Mark 13: 18-19, Rev. 7:14, 12: 12-14)
- 6) A time of stress, marked by supremacy of the beast will last for 3.5 yrs (Rev. 13:5)

The prophecy of the two witnesses is the 1<sup>st</sup> 3.5 years followed by the time of bitter trial when the antichrist reigns supreme, and in this period the events of Revelation 13-19 will take place.

But before all this begins to happen, the faithful are given a foretaste of victory (11: 15-19) with the blast of the seventh trumpet. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world will be one and evil will be defeated. The chorus in heaven has begun to be sung and the 24 elders continue to worship. This is intended to strengthen the faithful to endure the hardships to come without committing apostasy, standing firm to their beliefs and their trust that God will, indeed, be all in all, vindicating them for all eternity.