

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE LITTLE BOOK

10:1-11

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Revelation 10:1-11

The Little Book

There are angels... and then there are angels...

I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire... Revelation 10:1

We are now in a pause, or interlude, between the sixth and seventh trumpet. But John is not resting; he continues to see more and more of the Revelation of Jesus Christ...

John tells us he sees another strong angel. He has been watching the seven angels who are given seven trumpets. He has been telling us about the first six angels blowing those trumpets and the terrifying judgments that unfold with each one. It stands to reason all seven trumpet angels are strong, but they are described as being the angels who stand before God. This one, however, is a different angel and is specifically identified as being strong.

Most likely John is referring back to Revelation 5:2 where he tells us about a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?". This first strong angel announced the commencement of the breaking of the seals of judgment.

John sees the angel coming down out of heaven, which is different than falling from heaven. This angel is descending on a mission for God—the ones who fell were thrown out of heaven by God. It is worth noting that John's perspective seems to have changed from a heavenly vantage point to an earthly point of view.

This seems to be a very high ranking angel—his hallmarks clearly point to the authority of God or His Christ. However, do not jump to any conclusions (as some commentators have) that this angel is Jesus—he is not.

He is clothed with a cloud. What that exactly means, I am not sure, although I am hard pressed to not remember Jesus ascending in a cloud (Acts 1:9) days after His resurrection. The picture of God using the clouds as His chariots also comes to mind. (Psalm 104:3) Perhaps it simply shows the angel doing the same due to his exalted position. Or perhaps, and most likely, it seems to me, the cloud should remind us of the Glory of the Lord (Exodus 16:10; Luke 9:34).

We are not told there is “a” rainbow on this head, but “*the*” rainbow. The only rainbow we have seen in Revelation so far is the one which is around the throne of God, so we must consider that to be the intended inference.

No matter what the angel’s clothing or the rainbow on his head conveys, it seems obvious that this angel, as Christ’s representative, is well qualified to deliver the Word of God to John.

Pay close attention to the description of this angel. He is clothed with a cloud and the rainbow is on his head. Both descriptions seem literal. But we are told his face is *like* the sun and his feet are *like* pillars of fire. In other words, the sun and the pillars of fire are figures of speech—they are not literal.

Who else’s face was described as being like the sun shining in its strength? The account of the vision of Jesus (from the first chapter of Revelation) included this same phrase.

His feet are like pillars of fire. Again we see a simile which describes the angel’s feet being like pillars of fire. The pillar of fire in Exodus 13:21 gave the Israelites light by night in order to continue their travel around the clock. Typically, the pillar of fire which directed the Israelites represented the presence of God. Some people believe that the comparison of the angel’s feet to pillars of fire represents the fire of judgment—which is not at all unreasonable to consider since Jesus’ feet were described similarly in Revelation 1:15.

No matter what the details of the angel’s description demonstrate, we need to go back to the most obvious observation—this is one important angel who comes in the power and authority of his God—an authentic representative of Christ, Himself.

...and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.
Revelation 10:2-3

Now, on to what this strong angel carried with him. He had a little book. The strong angel in chapter 5 was also associated with a book or scroll. It is noteworthy that the Greek word in Revelation 5:2 for scroll is *biblion* and the Greek word for book in Revelation 10:2 is *biblaridion*. Both words mean scroll or book but *biblaridion* means a small or little scroll or book. The book in Revelation 10:2, in contrast to the book in Revelation 5:2, is a small or little book. Both strong angels are acting on God’s behalf concerning books which contain judgments of God. Interesting...

The little book which the angel had in his hand was open. This is in contrast to the scroll in Revelation 5 which held the judgments of God and was sealed tight with seven seals.

Next, let's look at what this angel did—He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land—this was no small angel! Perhaps his message was to the entire world, both the land and the sea; certainly as representative of Christ, this angel claimed dominion over both in his stance.

Once he established his stance on the entire globe, he cried out with a loud voice (just like the previous strong angel in Revelation 5:12). His cry is described as when a lion roars. Take a moment and soak in the picture—this strong and enormous angel, with his feet planted firmly on the earth, one on the land and one on the sea, crying out with a voice like a roaring lion. Talk about sound amplification! I'm thinking not a single person on earth could possibly miss his message!

When the strong angel finishes crying out seven peals of thunder, which seem to be personified, utter their voices. It is more than interesting to note that in the Greek the word for utter is *laleo* and refers to a prolonged or extended harangue or declaration. Whatever these peals of thunder have to say, it is not simple—it's going to take awhile—and it's not going to be pleasant.

When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." Revelation 10:4

As soon as the peals of thunder were done with their diatribe, John prepared himself to write what he had heard (remember, he was told in Revelation 1:11 to write down what he saw) but before he could write anything he was told to stop. He heard a voice from heaven which told him to seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder had spoken instead of writing them down.

This is one of the most mysterious portions of Scripture to ponder. What did the seven peals of thunder declare? And why wasn't John allowed to record it for us?

In the past, I have always thought that these seven peals of thunders were obviously announcing seven more judgments that are hidden from us. But as I have studied His Word inductively now for 25 years or so, I have come to think differently. I am more inclined to believe these seven peals of thunder will denounce the sin of mankind and announce the final judgments of God. In other words, before the grand finale begins, God will formally speak to His creation and give them a scathing tongue-lashing.

It is worthy of attention to observe that there will be peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake at each of the "sevens"—the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, and the seventh bowl. The first occurrence is *just after* the breaking of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:5). Revelation 10:3 informs us that peals of thunder will sound *just prior* to the seventh trumpet judgment while Revelation 11:15-19 tells us that flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm will *accompany* the actual sounding of the seventh trumpet. Revelation

16:17-18 lets us know we will see the same thunderous occurrence *just prior* to the seventh bowl of judgment. Check out the timing on the chart below.

(Seals)1 2 3 4 5 6 7=(Trumpets)1 2 3 4 5 6 7=(Bowls)1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Back to Revelation 10...

Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it... Revelation 10:5-6a

After the peals of thunder had spoken the strong angel who had established himself on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by Him Who lives forever and ever. Lifting your right hand when swearing an oath was, and is still, customary. It is an act of pointing to something greater than yourself under Whose supremacy you will keep your oath.

This angel swore by the One and only God, Who lives forever and ever. The oath would be kept through the strength of the One Who lives forever. There is only One Who lives forever and ever and thereby has the greatness to enable or cause someone to keep an oath—the One and only God. The message that the angel was about to disseminate to the earth was not one that came lightly—it was made by the One Who lives forever and ever, had carefully planned His story from before the beginning of time, and would be around to ensure its fulfillment.

The angel lifted up his right hand to the One Who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it. This is so significant. God created heaven and all the things in it so He has the right to destroy them. God created the earth and the things in it so He has the right to destroy them. God created the sea and the things in it so He has the right to destroy them to which all of heaven attests in Revelation 4:11. There is absolutely no dispute about this—God owns it all and has all rights to everything! And He will do with His creation what He intends. Should anyone disagree... well... I would not encourage anyone to try and stop Him...

Now the angel gives the following message, swearing it to be true by the Omnipotent God.

... that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets. Revelation 10:6b-7

The oath he swore included the promise that there would no longer be any delay. Finishing the mystery of God, which God preached to His servants the prophets, will no

longer be delayed, but will come in the days when the voice of the seventh angel is about to sound.

What did we just learn? We learned that the sound of the trumpet is not a short blast. The verb is present tense and shows us it is a continuing sound—like the long sustained sound of a shofar. On the first Saturday of every month, at 10:00 am, the residents of my community can hear a prolonged siren—the testing of our emergency system. Our siren sounds for less than a minute, but this blast of the trumpet will resonate for a long while.

God preached His mystery to the prophets who were His servants. A biblical mystery is a hidden truth of God that has not yet taken place or been fulfilled. So what is this particular mystery? Revelation 11:15 defines it for us. The mystery of God is the fact that the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.

When the seventh angel takes up his trumpet and prepares to sound it, the countdown will have begun—there will be no more delays—the angel will definitely blow it and then the mystery of God will be finished. In other words, once the seventh angel *prepares to sound his trumpet...* there will be no more delays until he sounds it. And once the seventh angel *begins to sound his trumpet...* the mystery of God will be finished—not before then... and no later... but then.

Make a note of this verse because in the next chapter we are going to see a huge intersection of events. It will seem like all of hell has broken loose, but in fact, it will be God taking His kingdom back once and for all. It is the largest, and possibly most important, convergence of prophecies we will see in Revelation.

Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.” Revelation 10:8

Has the seventh angel sounded yet? No. We've just heard the strong angel whose feet are on the earth and on the sea raise his hand to heaven and swear by God that once the seventh angel prepared to sound his trumpet there would no longer be any delays until the mystery of God was finished. The strong angel proclaimed what was about to happen, or in other words, made the announcement.

Now John hears the voice which he heard from heaven speaking with him again. This refers to the voice which told him not to write down the things he heard the seven peals of thunder say. The voice instructs John to go up to this gigantic angel, who is standing on the sea and on the land, and take the open book from his hand.

So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he *said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” Revelation 10:9

John does what the voice from heaven tells him to do. We are not told that John questions the command. He simply obeys the voice from heaven that he assumes is sanctioned by God and that gives me a lot of respect for John—not only because he was obedient, but because he was obedient to do a very frightening thing.

So John goes up to this powerful and enormous angel and says, “Give me the little book.” Do you see it? When God tells us to do something, we are to do it—no matter how impossible or frightening it might seem. God is the Lord of hosts and he puts us in whatever position he wants. In this case, this strong angel does what John tells him to because ultimately he is obeying God.

The angel, who undoubtedly heard the voice and knew its authority, told John the same thing. He said, “Take the book.” The angel added an additional instruction. He told John to eat the book. He also informed John what would happen. The angel told John that when he ate the book it would taste as sweet as honey in his mouth, but would make his stomach bitter.

If you know the Bible, this will sound familiar to you. In Ezekiel 2 and 3 Ezekiel is told to listen to the words of God. He is supposed to eat a scroll and that scroll is sweet in his mouth. Ezekiel was being given the words of God in order to speak for Him. The words were sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach.

Sweet in his mouth because of the personal joy and satisfaction of being the recipient of the Word of God... but why do those words turn bitter? What are so very many of the words of God which a prophet speaks? Judgment. In all due reverence, a true prophet might be inclined to have stomach problems simply because the words of God are such a hard weight on the prophet... he has to give forth that which no one wants to hear...

I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they *said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." Revelation 10:10–11

John obeyed and took the little book out of the angel's hand. He ate it, and it was exactly as the angel predicted—the book was sweet as honey in John's mouth, but in his stomach it was made bitter.

In the Greek, it does not say the actual words, “and they said to me”. Rather, the idea is simply, “it was said to me”. Up until now John has not heard a group speaking to him, but rather, the angel and the voice from heaven. Whoever it was that was speaking to him, it is the message that we can be sure of. John was told that he must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. Whatever message John “heard” when he ate the little book, however bitter it made his stomach—it was going to be an even bitterer pill for the rest of the world—which they would be forced to swallow soon...