

“THE ANGEL AND THE SCROLL.”

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Scripture Texts: Revelation 10:1-11

Introduction

It was a rough week in Oklahoma this past week. They had over two dozen tornados creating states of emergency in 12 counties, two earthquakes, major flooding from a foot of rain in a couple of days, and on top of all that, one of the tornados hit an exotic animal zoo and a bunch of lions and tigers escaped. They are calling it a “Tigernado.” I saw a weather map showing the percentages of a chance of tigers around the state.

You’re supposed to go underground for a tornado but above ground for a flood. You’re supposed to get outside for an earthquake but stay inside for tigers on the loose. What a confusing week.

Living in Oklahoma is a little like living in the book of Revelation.

As we turn the page to chapter ten we are expecting to hear the seventh trumpet, but instead there is an intermission with two parts, 10:1-11 and 11:1-14.

Remember this happened with the seals. There was a break between the sixth and seventh seal, and here there is a break between the sixth and seventh trumpets.

The Angel and the Seven Thunders, vss. 1-7.

John sees another mighty angel come down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow overhead, a face shining like the sun and legs like pillars of fire, one foot in the sea and one foot on the land.

So much for our images of angels being wispy feminine figures with wings and white robes playing harps and floating on fluffy white clouds. So much for our cute little plump, rosy-cheeked cherubs. This is no ordinary angel.

I like the way one pastor described these angels, “Vast, fiery, sea-striding creatures with hell in their nostrils and heaven in their eyes” (Peterson, *Reverse Thunder*, p. 104).

In Revelation we encounter angels as they really are. Yes, angels are real. They come to us when God wants something about the invisible realm to be made visible. They are agents, servants, ambassadors of God’s great salvation and judgment.

Sometimes they come in normal human appearance like the three men who appeared to Abraham and Sarah. Sometimes people have entertained angels unawares (Hebrews 13:2).

Other times they come in visions and dreams in immense and extravagant proportions.

I keep reminding us that we live in an open universe, not a closed universe, meaning there is a spiritual realm beyond our physical realm and that invisible spiritual realm regularly breaks into our physical realm. As J.B. Phillips once said, this is a visited planet.

Some commentators think this angel is actually Jesus, but it's not for several reasons.

First, this angel is called another mighty angel, one of three in Revelation.

Second, while Jesus does appear in the OT as an angel of the Lord, once He takes on our human fleshly nature, He can no longer assume the guise of an angel. Jesus is never called an angel in Revelation. Angelos is used only of a created, heavenly being. Jesus is different than and greater than the angels. Angels are closer to us than to Christ, after all they are creatures like us.

Third, we are told in Revelation 1:1 that God is making this revelation known to John by angels.

Finally, the angel swears by the only true, living God who has created everything for His glory.

Nevertheless, this angel does reflect the glory of Jesus. His face shone like Jesus', he is huge, mighty, he carries a scroll like Jesus. His voice is like a roaring lion, representing the lion of the tribe of Judah. This could be Gabriel, whose name means "Mighty one of God."

He is wrapped in the cloud of divine presence and has over him the rainbow of God's mercy and his face is like that of Jesus Christ, like the sun, revealing God's holiness.

He plants his feet on the earth and in the sea as a symbol of his dominion and authority, and that his message will affect the whole world.

If the Lord's angel who represents His power and authority is this great, then how great must the Lord be? To look at this angel and hear him is to get just a glimpse of the size, power, authority, majesty, greatness of Christ Himself. Behold your God! Behold your Savior!

We are expecting the seventh trumpet and we hear *seven thunders* instead. We are expecting an announcement to the whole world, but instead we hear a personal word spoken to John.

John heard what the seven thunders said, but he is told not to tell. Like when Paul saw heaven:

II Corinthians 12:4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

He knew they were in plain language that John understood clearly and was about to write down. Why was he told not to?

Jesus frequently told His disciples not to tell things, not because He didn't want it ever known, but because it wasn't the right time yet. There is a time for everything, known by prayer and discernment and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We are reminded and must remember that our knowledge of things is incomplete. We are told the meaning of many things in Revelation, the lampstands, the seals, the trumpets, but not everything. There is much we aren't told and don't know. We must keep our trust and confidence in God by faith, not by sight and not by hearing.

We are not told and we must not speculate. In other passages of Scripture thunder represents the voice of God. In Psalm 29 thunder is called the voice of God seven times. But what they mean or say we don't know. Only John knows and he was told not to tell us. He may not have been told why not to tell, but he obeyed and didn't reveal it.

God knows more than we know, and God doesn't intend for us to know all He knows.

People love to chase after the so called lost books of the Bible. But they won't bother reading the found books of the Bible, what God intends for us to know. Study and seek to understand what He has told us, not what He hasn't told us.

The Sweet and Bitter Scroll, vs. 8-10.

The angel has just announced there would be no more delay. So we could expect at this point to hear the seventh trumpet, but not yet. There is something more. There is yet more consolation and hope for the believer to be given.

What is on this little scroll?

The great scroll of Revelation 5 contained the redemptive purposes of God to be fulfilled in Christ. From other references in Scripture this seems to refer to the Word of God.

Why is he told to eat the scroll? This is not the first time in Scripture. Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll and then prophecy for God. To eat the scroll means to internalize it, to ingest it and digest it and deliver it to God's people.

Previous to this the Word has always been sweet.

Psalm 19:10 ... sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Ezekiel 3:1-3 And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as *sweet as honey*.

Why is this scroll sweet and bitter? Another way of saying this, is the Word of God is like a double-edged sword.

When we personally take in the Word of God it's wonderful, full of light and truth and forgiveness and hope and peace. It brings fellowship with God and deliverance from wrath, sin, death and hell. It's the message of salvation.

But that same Gospel also causes trouble and grief. First, in wrestling with our own indwelling sin, but also with the sin all around us. We can only know the sweetness of forgiveness if we know the bitterness of our sin and the offense it is against our holy heavenly Father.

Then there is the resistance and denial and hatred, and even persecution that come from the Truth being proclaimed. It is impossible to be faithful to the Word of God and not incur the world's displeasure and contempt and worse.

The Gospel is gloriously sweet, and it leads to bitter tribulation, persecution and suffering. Those who proclaim it also suffer for it. Preaching and believing the Gospel often leads to bitter experiences. You can lose your life telling the truth. That day may be coming closer and closer.

The Roman Catholic Cardinal Francis George of Chicago died April 17. He was a godly man who stood up against sexual immorality in his church. He said, “It is likely that I will die in my bed. My successor will die in prison. His successor will die executed in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history.”

You must prophesy again, vs. 11.

Verse 11 points to the next chapter.

This sounds like a mid-course encouragement. What John has seen and heard and written so far is very hard, the seven seals of suffering, the six trumpets of judgment. To be the mouth piece of God is a daunting thing. He is reminded of his calling and encouraged to be faithful in it.

John is being encouraged and empowered to continue the prophecy he is being given. Sweet or bitter, it doesn't matter, you must speak and prophecy and witness.

Application and conclusion.

First, God is sovereign, God is in control. God sends His angels and commands them. God delivers and brings salvation. God speaks and warns and announces ahead of time.

God is over and above judgements of plagues, tornados, earthquakes, floods, wild animals and roaring lions. God is the God in the midst of the wildernesses and tragedies.

God will accomplish all His perfect purposes on earth. Everything is under His feet, the earth is His footstool. If terrorists attack our country again, if corrupt and immoral politicians and judges completely destroy Christianity in America, if economic ruin falls on our land, nothing will stand in the way of God accomplishing His good and perfect purposes in all the earth.

For all the terrible things that have already been announced and revealed, and for all the terrible judgments that are to come, take great peace and comfort in this revelation of this mighty angel standing astride the whole earth, reflecting and revealing an even greater God.

Psalm 91:11-16 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
12 On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.
13 You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
14 “Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;
I will protect him, because he knows my name.
15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

Second, God has revealed great truth to us. He has not revealed everything to us, after all He is God and only He has perfect and complete knowledge. But we can be confident that God has revealed all that is good for us to know and all that is necessary for our salvation and for our future hope.

Some of you have read about the famous Scottish-American preacher Peter Marshall. He tells the story of an experience as a young boy running across the Scottish moors at night, when suddenly a flash of lightening lit up the darkness to reveal that one more step and he would have fallen over a cliff.

That is what God has done for us in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is like a great flash of lightning and a great crash of thunder revealing the judgment to come and saving us from stepping off the cliff of sin and death. He is our light in the darkness and has made us to be that light in other people’s darkness.

We all feel inadequate, but inadequacy must not incapacitate us. Because we don’t know all that we should say or do, doesn’t mean we shouldn’t say and do something. Inadequacy just

means we must have a certain humility in it and a great deal of dependence and reliance on the Holy Spirit through much prayer and Scripture reading.

When you eat food it becomes personal, it becomes you. Eat the Word of God, feast on the truth of God, gobble up the Gospel, internalize it so that it can come out of you in words and counsel and wisdom and hope and comfort.

A good witness first lives and breathes what he believes before he says it. Feast your hungry soul on the Word of God and tell others about what has been revealed and what must soon take place (Revelation 1:1; 4:1).