

Charts: The Second Parenthetical Visions: #14 (with reference to Chart #11)

PREFACE

Look at Chart #11.

If we look for a moment at Chart 11 we can see that at the end of the sixth trumpet there are two parenthetical visions. Then, immediately after the seventh trumpet is sounded, there is another, larger series of parenthetical visions even before the first bowl of wrath is poured out, which is narrated in Chapter 16 of Revelation. Traditionally the events described between Revelation 11:15 and 15:8 have been placed at the mid-Tribulation point, three and one half years in, with the two we will be looking at in *this* session—the angel with the little book and the two witnesses—a parenthesis at the end of the sixth trumpet.

My intention is to place *less* emphasis on the “mid-point” time frame. In some respects this can be a bit artificial in regards to some events; in others it is of specific, even critical importance. So I will be addressing each parenthesis on its own merits, determining, for each, whether it should be seen as following the timeline or pointing to something occurring either prior to the narrative, or later in the Eschaton.

In this session we will be looking at the first of two parentheses at the end of the sixth trumpet, both of which, although including some rather mystical, even confusing elements, seem to fit neatly into the timeline. That is, the first’s purpose and events follow chronologically between the sixth and seventh trumpets (see 10:7), and the second is grounded solidly in the Tribulation’s mid-point.

For these two studies we will be using Chart #14 (located at the end of these session notes).

THE ANGEL APPEARS

Read Revelation 10:1-2.

v1

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;

More than a few scholars would have us believe that this is Christ Jesus (e.g., Seiss), primarily because of the similarities—not identical, but similar—between this angel’s appearance and descriptions of Christ elsewhere (e.g., 1:12-16). And we should admit that most angels in Scripture are not so gloriously or powerfully presented as this one. But there are a number of solid reasons to understand this figure to be just as described in the text: “another angel.”

- Here once again we have John using the Greek *allon* (“another”), which means another of the *same* kind; that is, another angel like the trumpet angels, or perhaps in reference to the strong angel of 5:2. If it were Christ, he probably would have used *heteros* (another of a *different* kind).
- John also always uses a distinctive title when referring to Christ in the Revelation (e.g., “the Lamb,” “Word of God”). For him to refer to Christ here as just another angel would be extraordinary—and out of character.
- John says this is “another strong angel” (*angelon ischyron*) Nowhere in the NT is Christ Jesus called an angel. And elsewhere there are “strong” angels mentioned that are clearly not the Lord.
- Here the angel swears, “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.” Since Christ Jesus is God, He would not have uttered this, but would have, instead, sworn by Himself (Hebrews 6:13-14).
- Finally, this angel descends and plants his feet on the earth. If this were Christ, it would not be in accord with multiple prophecies of Christ’s return. (MacArthur)

No, this is a “strong angel”—either one of high rank and power, or one with a powerful voice for making proclamations—just as the text says. John’s description emphasizes the angel’s holiness and power to execute judgment.

If one is still hung up by the grandeur of this angel, let me remind you that there is another “strong angel” described in such glowing, glorious terms:

...“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you.’” (Ezekiel 28:12b-15)

This is, of course, a description of the “strong angel” Satan before “unrighteousness was found in” him.

I take the position that this angel is not the Christ, but there are some tantalizing similarities, found in Daniel's visions, between this angel and the archangel Michael.

Read Daniel 12:1.

Read Daniel 12:6-7.

v2

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;

We will return to the “little book” shortly, but right now let's focus on the posture and placement of this angel. His posture is one of authority, and his placement—“his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land”—implies a position of power and authority over the entire earth (Walvoord). Note that no less than three times in this scene, when the angel is referenced it includes the descriptive, “who stands on the sea and on the land.” That means it is important.

THE SEVEN PEALS OF THUNDER

Read Revelation 10:3-4.

Just about every week I give thanks to God for revealing Himself to us in His word. This is just one more confirmation that *our* God, the triune God of heaven, is unique among all the other supposed other gods of history and the only *true* God, for only He has put down in written form the facts of His character, His ways, His purpose for mankind—all for the edification of His followers, and so that others might be drawn to Him.

Yet there are things about our God that are *not* written down in His word, and even in this last book, called “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”—revelation, *apokalypsis*, the revealing, the uncovering—not *everything* is revealed. As we will see, some things are explicitly held back from us; some *mysterions* remain.

v3

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.

Time and again in the Bible, God, or His representatives or messengers, establish their authority with loud, commanding sounds or words. We can imagine the Israelites gathered at the base of Mt. Sinai holding their ears against the sounds of thunder and trumpet coming from God ([Exodus 19:16](#)). This time John describes the voice of the angel “as when a lion roars,” which, for anyone in close proximity, it would certainly set one back on his heels. Here, however, the purpose of the angel’s “roar” seems to be to call forth the “seven peals of thunder.” But again, as is so often the case, it isn’t *really* thunder, but thunderous voices speaking intelligible words.

v4

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.”

I’m not sure what to make of it, but I find it interesting that all this having to do with the thunder, the voices speaking with the thunder, etc., is all in the *feminine* voice. If it is the voice of God, as is easy to imagine, why would it be in the feminine?

But, of course, that is not the take-away; what we are to remember from these two verses is that John, even though from the outset he was commanded, by Christ Jesus Himself, to “write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things” ([Revelation 1:19](#)), here—in the first of two messages of which we will not be privy—John is told *not* to write down the words spoken by the “thunder,” but to “seal up” the words.

Let us be clear that we thus do not and cannot know what the thunders said. It is fruitless to offer conjecture, but there is a psalm that many commentators reference in connection with this passage. Note not just the mention of thunder, but also that *seven times* the psalmist David writes, “The voice of the Lord...” (i.e., Yahweh). First he calls upon Israel to ascribe to—to regard as belonging to—the Lord, qualities of strength and majesty.

Read Psalm 29:1-2.

Then David proceeds to narrate how the Lord sounds as He uses these qualities.

Read Psalm 29:3-9.

And we might add to this Job 37:5

“God thunders with His voice wondrously,
Doing great things which we cannot comprehend.”

Read Revelation 10:5-7.

v5-6A

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,

Here we have probably the best evidence that this is not Christ Jesus; he is swearing by someone higher than himself. The Son of God would not do this.

6B

...who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it,

Again, in this description of the one in whom the angel makes his oath, he describes as much the Son as the Father ([Colossians 1:15-16](#)). And just what is this oath so important that the angel swears to his veracity by the Godhead?

6C

that there will be delay no longer,
KJV: ...that there should be time no longer.

Walvoord: This expression (Gr., *chronos*) has sometimes been misunderstood to mean that time will cease. The expression here, however, does not refer to time as a succession of chronological events; rather it means that time has run out, that is, that there will be no further delay [[which is how most of our modern versions—even the NKJV—translate it](#)]. The end is now to be consummated. Even in eternity, there will be a time relationship in that one event will follow another.

This is a dramatic moment in the narrative, but the drama and impact of the statement is tempered by the fact that this is a slippery concept. By this I mean that, for example, at various places in Scripture “the Day of the Lord” refers to the last things as a whole, the Tribulation, the worst days of the Tribulation, the Rapture, or Christ’s second coming. In our first session I made the case for the Last Things (*eschaton*) being inaugurated by Christ’s first *parousia* (coming, presence) in Bethlehem. Some, however, say at His baptism, some say at His death or resurrection, while others say at the Rapture of the church. In various places, stated in different ways, it is implied that *OK, time’s up; this is it*—as here: “there will be delay no longer,” the “mystery of God is finished,” implying, *This is it, this is the end!* The next verse pinpoints this moment at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, yet after that we still have the seven bowl judgments, Christ’s return, Armageddon, et al. Look at what is proclaimed immediately when the seventh trumpet sounds.

Read Revelation 11:15-17.

Yet, this is pronounced well before Christ returns and takes His throne, with all the bowls of wrath yet to be poured out!

v7

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.

My strongest, overarching conclusion, after all just stated, and after reading the conclusions of others regarding “there will be delay no longer,” (v6) and “the mystery of God is finished,” (v7) is that the book of Revelation represents not just the *events and order* of the final days—that is, the culmination of God’s plan—but represents as well *how God perceives these final days*.

The evidence from The Revelation is not just that God is omnipotent, completely in charge of His creation, and completely able to mete out wrath and justice; not just that Christ Jesus is ultimate Lord, before Whom all knees will ultimately bow ([Philippians 2:10](#)); but that God has His own unique perception of all this. He does not see as we see; He does not count time as we: for Him it is fluid, ever-changing, circling back upon itself; and, far more, to Him something can be already in a state of completion, when to us it is still in process.

So yes, we can agree that this passage means

- “‘The mystery of God’ is His purposes for man and the world as revealed to both the OT and NT prophets” (Johnson). As David Guzik writes, “In this context, the mystery of God probably refers to the unfolding of His resolution of all things, the finishing of His plan of the ages.”
- Or that “the mystery of God” is “the secret of His allowing Satan to have his own way, and man too (that is to say, the wonder of evil prospering and of good being trodden underfoot)” (William Kelly).
- Or it could refer to Ephesians 1:10, “...the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth,” as MacArthur writes.

We can agree with those and perhaps other definitions for these phrases. Beyond that, however, this passage means that in the eyes and understanding of God, Jesus could declare even at the outset of His earthly ministry, “‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:15).

And in Psalm 2:7 we have the familiar prophecy of a Messianic King, “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’” All the verbs are in the *perfect* tense (corresponding to our *past* tense), meaning the action is completed. So the “today” refers to a point in time prior to the psalm’s writing. Yet this was written (probably) almost one thousand years before the birth of Christ.

Prophecy, of course, but it is written not that it will occur at some point in the future, but as if it has *already* occurred—because, I would contend, that in the mind and perception of a God who dwells outside of time, it has.

Thus, I conclude, we cannot, and should not try to require the text and events in the Revelation to always obey an earthly, human perception of time and sequence.

THE “LITTLE BOOK”

Read Revelation 10:8-11.

v8

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.”

We now hear again from the voice that earlier forbad John to write down the words of the seven thunders. Now the apostle is told to take the book—the aforementioned “little book”—from the strong angel. And we are again reminded that he “stands on the sea and on the land.”

Here it is just “the book,” (in the better manuscripts) but all other mentions of it ([vv2, 9, 10](#)) have “*little* book” because the Greek is *biblaridion*, which is the diminutive form of *biblion* (book). Because of this—and because of what happens to it—most scholars, but not all, conclude that this is a different book (or scroll) from the one with the seven seals ([Chapters 5-6](#)).

v9

So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book...

No matter how imposing, even terrifying, the appearance of the strong angel, just as any of us would in the same situation, John—in his vision—obeys the voice from heaven.

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.”

This is not something new to God’s word. The same thing was done to the prophet Ezekiel; the same imagery of eating the words of God was mentioned by Jeremiah; and David in Psalm 19 sings that “The judgments of the Lord are...sweeter also than honey and the dripping of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned.” Let’s look at the Ezekiel passage.

Read Ezekiel 3:1-4.

The passage in Ezekiel is essentially parallel to our passage in Revelation, for in both a document is “eaten” and then follows a command—to Ezekiel, from Yahweh; to John, from the angel and/or the voice from heaven—to carry those words to others. The extra part in Revelation is the “bitterness.”

v10

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.

Two questions remain for us, neither of which can be answered with certainty:

What is the content of the little book? If we make the logical assumption that the content feeds the eater with that which will be required for the second command in v11: “And they said to me, ‘You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings,’” then the answer is dependent on how the second command is interpreted. If that command is to “prophesy” (tell forth) for the purpose of saving as many as possible from “many peoples and nations and tongues and kings,” then the eating of the scroll represents the ingestion of God’s word—and specifically, in the Revelation scene, the gospel. And those words are indeed sweet; as the psalmist writes, “Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul observes them. The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth wide and panted, For I longed for Your commandments” ([Psalm 119:129-131](#)).

If, however, the command is a recommissioning of John for the task he is already about—the recording of the apocalypse—then the book could contain those events, or an understanding of them.

The second question would be, **Why the bitterness?** This was not part of the Ezekiel experience; here it may add weight to the possibility that the content of the book pertains to the judgments to follow.

Anything that reveals the power and glory of our Almighty God is something sweet to those who love Him, but if that entails something like the harsh judgments of the upcoming seven bowls, in which many more will suffer and die, this would add to the sweetness a layer of bitterness, even sorrow.

Let me close with some of John MacArthur's conclusion.

[The word in v11] "again" indicates John was being commissioned a second time (cf. 1:19) to write the rest of the prophecies God was going to give him. What he was about to learn would be more devastating than anything yet revealed—and more glorious. He was to be faithful to his duty to record all the truth he had seen and would soon see... So John is to warn of all the bitter judgments coming in the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls... He was to write the prophecies and distribute them, so as to warn all people of the bitterness of judgment to come, and of death and hell... This chapter presents an interlude of hope tinged with bitterness that reminds all Christians of their evangelistic responsibilities to warn the world of that day.

[In our next session we will be looking at The Two Witnesses of Chapter Eleven.](#)

THE TRIBULATION

The Sixth Trumpet

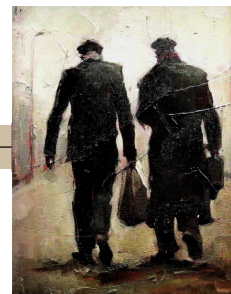
Second Parenthetical Visions

Revelation 10:1-11



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; 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... 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 11:1-14



Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it."

"And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth..." These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

Footnotes

Revelation 5:2
Psalm 29:3-9
Jeremiah 31:33-34

Daniel 8:26
Daniel 12:4, 9
Jeremiah 15:16

Ezekiel 2:8
Ezekiel 3:1-3
Revelation 5:9

Ezekiel 40-43
Revelation 21:10-23
2 Thessalonians 2:4
Revelation 13:14-15

Daniel 9:27
Daniel 12:11
Luke 21:23-24

Isaiah 37:1-2
Daniel 9:3
Zechariah 4:1-14

1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 44-46
Exodus 7:17-19
Acts 1:3-12

