

Revelation Chapters 10 and 11

The Seventh Trumpet...

The angel and the little scroll (Revelation 10 v 1 to 11)

Revelation 9 ended with the sounding of the sixth of seven trumpets, which usher in the end of all things. Now, instead of the *seventh trumpet*, we have another 'interlude' until Revelation 15. These interludes serve a dramatic purpose, but also show mercy in allowing more opportunity for repentance. It is as if God brings things to the brink, and then pulls back a little, to grant mankind more time to repent. But with the sounding of the seventh trumpet there would be "no more delay" (verse 6).

- How does this passage show that the Revelation given to John, though it extended to the end of the age (verses 6, 7), was by no means a *complete* disclosure of God's plan (verse 4)? What could John be sure would happen (verse 7)?
- What do you think made God's Word ("the little scroll") sweet to taste, yet bitter to digest? See also Ezekiel 3 v 1 to 3. In what ways is the whole Book of Revelation 'bitter-sweet'?

"The seven thunders sounded" (verse 3) – some commentators have suggested a connection to the thunderous voice of God as described in Psalm 29 v 3 to 9, seven times repeating the phrase 'the voice of the LORD'.

"The *mystery* of God would be fulfilled" (verse 7) – what mystery? Remember that in the Bible a 'mystery' is something no one can know unless it is revealed to him or her, and the term is used for many different aspects of God's redemptive plan:

1. The gospel itself is called the 'mystery of Christ' (Colossians 4 v 3).
2. God's purpose for the church is a 'mystery' (Ephesians 3 v 8 to 10).
3. The presence of Jesus in the believer is a 'mystery' (Colossians 1 v 27).
4. The bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles and the ultimate conversion of the Jews is also called a 'mystery' (Romans 11 v 25, 26a).

Perhaps this 'final mystery' refers to God's 'plan for the fullness of time', to unite all things in Christ, everything in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1 v 9, 10).

The two witnesses (Revelation 11 v 1 to 14)

"Measure the temple of God" (verse 1) – the Bible contains many examples of measuring:

1. In Zechariah 2 v 1, 2, a man measures Jerusalem, indicating God's coming judgment.
2. The millennial temple is measured extensively, including the outer courts (Ezekiel 40 v 17 to 19).
3. In Revelation 21, the New Jerusalem is measured.

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This 'temple of God' must be built for the fulfilment of end-time prophecies:

1. Daniel prophesied that the antichrist would profane the temple by setting up the 'abomination that makes desolate' (Daniel 11 v 31).
 2. Jesus said that the abomination 'standing in the holy place' would be the pivotal sign of God's final judgment (Matthew 24 v 15, 16).
 3. Paul wrote that the 'man of lawlessness' would sit in the temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2 v 3, 4).
- How are the 'two witnesses' described, and what ministries and powers are they given?
 - What happens when they have "finished their testimony" (verse 7), and how does God finally vindicate them?

The character of the two witnesses' ministry is prophetic (verse 3): they preach and demonstrate repentance ("clothed in sackcloth" verse 3), and their ministry is effective ("I will grant authority" verse 3).

"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands" (verse 4) – the witnesses have a unique, continual empowering from the Holy Spirit, as shown in Zechariah's picture of olive trees and oil lamps (Zechariah 4 v 2 to 6, 12 to 14).

But who are they? Possibly Moses ("strike the earth with every kind of plague" v 6, see Exodus 7 to 12) and Elijah ("that no rain may fall", see James 5 v 17, 18), as they were both with Jesus at the transfiguration (Matthew 17 v 1 to 3).

The seventh trumpet (Revelation 11 v 15 to 19)

In verse 15 the seventh trumpet finally sounds, but the seven 'bowl judgments' do not begin until chapter 15, so these verses are still part of the 'interlude'...

- When the final trumpet sounds, who is seen to be triumphant at the last?
- According to the twenty-four elders, what actions of God ensure his triumph over all opposition?

God's punishment fits the crime. The nations are angry with God, and he responds with wrath (verse 18); those that destroy the earth are themselves destroyed – see Psalm 2 v 1, 2.

The awesome phenomenon at the opening of the temple and the revelation of the ark (verse 19) is reminiscent of God's presence at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 v 16 to 20).