



THE MYSTERY OF GOD IS FINISHED

Revelation 10-11

Intro: the Revelation was given to John during a time when God's people were persecuted by the Roman Empire. As he noted at the beginning, John was their "brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation..." (1.9). We have paid particular note to the martyrs' plea as revealed in the opening of the 5th seal: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (6.10). God's people were willing to die for their Lord, but they also expected that their King would vindicate them and defeat His enemies! The Lord responded first by marking His people (chapter 7), indicating that He knew exactly who belonged to Him and would be victorious. Then the trumpets of judgment began to sound. As we noted in our last lesson, these judgments were not the final Judgment of the world, even though we should be mindful of the principles of these partial judgments. God's purpose in these partial judgments was to give man an opportunity to repent, an opportunity they refused (9.20-21). Now it was time for the Lord's final response.

Interlude: The Angel & His Little Book (Chapter 10)

1. The chapter begins with the appearance of "another strong angel coming down out of heaven". A few matters of importance regarding this messenger:
 - a. The importance of this messenger is indicated by his appearance. The fact that he resembles the description of both Jesus (chapter 1) and the Father (chapter 4) has led some to conclude that this angel is Jesus. However, that is unlikely since Jesus is nowhere described as an angel in the letter. The heavenly appearance of the angel shows that his message come direct from God.
 - b. When he appears on the earth, the angel places one foot on land while the other foot is on the sea (vs. 2). This indicates a universal scope of his message.
 - c. The angel proclaims that "there will be delay no longer" but when the 7th trumpet was sounded "the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets." (vss. 6-7) This is an important statement for the Old

Testament Scriptures not only looked forward to the coming Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom, but also the defeat of the world empire of that time. Note Daniel 2.44; 7.15-28; 9.27.

- d. When the 7th trumpet sounded, the martyrs' plea for vindication (6.10) would be answered.
2. In the latter half of the chapter our attention is turned to the little book that was in the angel's hand. While John had been forbidden from writing down and revealing some things (see vss. 3-4), he is instructed to eat the little book.
 - a. This picture is taken from Ezekiel 2.8-3.3. The point was that John would master the contents of God's message and thus be able to "prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (vs. 11).
 - b. But why did the message taste sweet, but then feel bitter? "The joy of receiving this message of hope from God was sweetness. However, when he considered the equally fearful message of ongoing persecution, as well as the punishment of the wicked, it was as bitterness," (Harkrider)

The Two Witnesses (11.1-14)

1. This can be a very confusing section, so let's begin by identifying the symbols in the text:
 - a. First, the temple and the outer court of the temple are differentiated (vss. 1-2). John is instructed to measure the temple (cf. Ezekiel 40-43), but not the outer court. The temple here represents God's people (the Jerusalem temple was destroyed 20 years prior), and the fact that His people should always conform to His will. Rather than conform to the will of God, those on the outside are attempting to destroy God's holy city.
 - b. The two witnesses. Various interpretations are given as the old and new covenants, the prophets and the apostles, etc. Main significance is that there are two of them, assuring that their testimony is true (see Deut. 17.6; Matt. 18.16; Luke 10.1). They are also described as lampstands and olive trees (vs. 4; cf. Zech. 4.1-6). Lampstands support the light and olive trees provide oil for the lamp. They possess great power from God (vss. 5-6; cf. 2Kings 1.10-14), indicating that their message could not be stopped.
 - c. The time frame. You will note that 42 months (vs. 1) is the equivalent of 1260 days (vs. 2). The point then is that God's witnesses testify while the nations are trampling the holy city.
 - d. The beast from the abyss (vs. 7). The beast assumes a leading role in ch. 13. It receives power and authority from Satan (13.2) and represents the Roman Empire.
 - e. The great city (vs. 8). Some identify this as Jerusalem since it is described as "where also their Lord was crucified." However, Rome is the best

identification. "Sodom was destroyed because of its immorality. Egypt was known for its bondage and persecution of God's children. The city where Jesus was crucified, Jerusalem, was known for its rejection of the Savior. All three were true of Rome." (Ken Green)

2. Interpreting this section:

- a. The measuring of the temple would again assure God's people that He knew exactly who was faithful to Him. Yes, the nations were outwardly raging, but God knows who belong to Him.
- b. Even though the nations had rejected God, He continued to send His message out. Again, the witnesses powerfully proclaimed the message of God during the entirety of the time that the nations trampled the holy city.
- c. But then it appears that God's cause fails. His witnesses are killed by the beast and the earth rejoices for a short time (3.5 days). The contempt the world has for God is shown by how they treated the bodies of the witnesses (vs. 9) and that they gave each other presents because they could no longer be tormented by the message (vs. 10).
- d. But after 3.5 days God's witnesses rise and ascend to heaven (vs. 11). God had not been defeated, and His enemies could only watch! An earthquake destroys 1/10 of the city and 7000 people, a harbinger of God's judgment that was coming. While the rest were in awe of God, it does not appear that they repented of their sins (vs. 13).
- e. Two woes have now passed (vs. 14). The first woe (9.1-12) was the consequences of sin. The second woe (11.1-14) was the rejection of God's message. The third woe would be the destruction of man's kingdom (11.15-19).

The 7th Trumpet (11.15-19)

1. At first this appears to be anti-climatic. No battle or great scenes of destruction. Just the proclamation that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (vs. 15). Again, this is the fulfillment of Scripture (see Daniel 2.44; 7.27).
2. Vss. 16-18 draw from Psalm 2 and Daniel 7. God's people exult and rejoice over His kingdom while the nations are enraged at their defeat.
 - a. Some may be confused by the notion of the dead being judged in vs. 18. Does this mean that this is the final Judgment? While the principle found here would certainly apply to God's final Judgment, the reference here is still to what occurred with the defeat of Rome and the triumph of God's Kingdom. The righteous, both living and dead, were vindicated. The wicked, both living and dead, were rebuked. In that way a judgment of the dead occurred.
3. The vision concludes with another glimpse into heaven. God's covenant in His

temple was safe and secure. God and His people would be victorious!

4. This concludes the first cycle of images. The rest of Revelation emphasizes the same theme of God's victorious people, but by looking at the spiritual battle being waged behind the scenes.