

Session 11 **John the observer becomes part of the action** 10v1–11

Chapters 8 and 9 have focussed on the unbelieving world, 8:13, and 9:4. The judgements are the consequence of the prayers of the saints (including the martyrs), 8:3-6, 9:13-15. The warning judgements are generally unheeded, 9:20-21.

Between the 6th and 7th seals there was a change of scene/perspective, 7:1-8:1, looking at the same period from the point of view of the church. The 7th seal marked the end of time.

The same structure occurs in the case of the trumpets. The warning judgements have come to an end with the 6th trumpet. The 7th trumpet will bring the process to its conclusion, 10:7, 11:15.

The mighty angel with the “little” scroll 10:1-11.

This is a new vision “And I saw ...” v1, c.f. 8:2.

“Another mighty angel”. These mighty angels introduce major scenes in the book, 5:2, and 18:21. His appearance was awesome, v1-3, and his message was of overwhelming importance, v5-7, greater than the role of the angel who also descended from Heaven, summoned by the 5th trumpet, 9:1.

A (little) scroll lies open in his hand, v2 – this is central to his mission but **first he has an enormous pronouncement to make, v5-7.**

A number of symbols emphasize the importance of the verbal message he is bringing:

- **His appearance portrays the glory of God**, with echoes of 1:7, 15-16, and 4:3, 5.
- **He plants his feet on sea and land – God’s universal sovereignty**, c.f. v6, and 13:1 and 11.
- **He raised his hand to Heaven, - God’s solemn declaration of intent**, Deut. 32:40, Ezek. 20:5-6, 15, 23, 42.
- **His loud voice is like the roar of a lion**, 5:5, Amos 3:7-8, Hosea 11:10-11.
- **His voice causes seven thunders to sound –the awesome presence of God**, 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:17-18, Ps. 29:3-4.

The seven thunders proclaim an intelligible message that John is about to write, 1:11, and 19. He is told to seal up the message of the seven thunders, v4.

He is given privileged information that we do not need to know, c.f. 2Cor. 12:2-4, Deut. 29:29. The God of the thunders is sovereign and His voice from Heaven settles the issue. The message of the open scroll is what we need to know.

The key to the symbolism of this vision is in Daniel 12.

Daniel was instructed to “seal up the book”, v4, and that “the words are sealed until the time of the end”, 12:9.

John is now presented with an open book because “there should be delay no longer”, v6 and “when the 7th angel is about to sound, **the mystery of God** would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets”, v7. “**Mystery**” does not mean “puzzle”, but is truth that awaits its time of revelation, c.f. Rom. 16:25-26 – examples, Mark 4:11 (Kingdom), 1Cor. 6:6-10 (Heaven), 15:51 (Resurrection), Eph. 1:9 (Creation united in Jesus), 3:1-6 (Inclusion of the Gentiles), Rom. 11:25 (Israel).

Two questions arise from Daniel 12.

1) To what historical period is this prophecy referring?

“That time” v1 refers to the period of the last rebellious king, of whom Antiochus was the prototype, 11:36-45. The context is the events at end of history, and the final judgement, 12:1-4, and 13.

2) To whom does the prophecy refer?

In its original setting it refers to Israel, v1, 7.

In Revelation the application is widened – not just believing Israel but the whole church. Two types of people are also described, 12: 10, with different destinies, v2, c.f. Rev. 21:6-8. Their antecedents were the people who lived in the days of Antiochus, 11:32-35. Suffering will reveal those who truly believe and will refine them. Others will fit in with the demands of corrupt society – in Revelation they have the mark of the beast, loyal to him rather than to God.

Two questions that are part of the vision

1) “How long shall the fulfilment of these wonders be?” V6

Daniel was instructed to seal up the book until the time of the end, v4. People will want to know everything about everything, but this will remain inaccessible until it is revealed/unsealed when the relevant time arrives.

A “man” (angel) with some similarities to the angel in Rev.10 gives an enigmatic reply, with a similar oath to Rev. 10:6.

“Time, times, and half a time”, v6. It will follow a period of intense persecution, v1, climaxing “when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered”, v7, c.f. Rev. 11:7 and 13:7.

Historically a similar event had taken place, during the reign of a Greek king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Daniel 8:8-14, 23-26, the persecution lasting for 2300 evenings and mornings (1,150 days – more than 3 years). This became a historical prototype for a later persecution that will precede the final judgement, Daniel 7:7-27.

Historically the 4th beast was Rome, 7:1-7 and it, in turn, became a prototype for the final beast (empire) out of which the final phase of persecution will emerge under the rule of the “horn”, 7:20-25 (king/ruler – N.T. Antichrist). “Time, times, and half a time” became a way of talking about a period of persecution, not necessarily a specific length of time.

Daniel 9:24-27 is notoriously difficult to interpret. The 7+ 62 weeks (483 years) may refer to the coming of Jesus, followed by His death and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, see Luke 19:41-44 and Matthew 24:15-20.

The Romans repeated the earlier desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes, Dan. 11:3, and c.f. Matt. 24:15. This pattern becomes a prophecy of the final great persecution/tribulation, Matt 24: 21-22, and the blasphemous behaviour of the final great antagonist, Dan. 11:36, c.f. 2Thess 2:3-4, and Rev 13:4-8. “Time, times, and half a time” becomes a way of speaking of such a period.

In Rev. 12:13-14 it refers to **the whole period between the ascension of Jesus and His return**, c.f. the comparable period in v6.

In Rev. 11:3 it **probably has a double significance – the whole church age and particularly the final period preceding the sounding of the 7th trumpet, v14-15.** The same period occurs in 13:4-8 and appears to refer to **the final period of history when the beast (antichrist) is given almost absolute power.**

2) “What shall be the end of these things?” What will the final outcome be?

Daniel is told that he does not need to know – the events described are a long way ahead. There is a need for patience, however long it takes. God is in control of the end and all that lies in between. Daniel can rest, awaiting his resurrection, as described in v2-3. **The book remains sealed.**

The sovereign LORD, described in v 6, now instructs John to take the open book, v8.

In the vision the 7th trumpet is about to sound and God’s whole purpose for His creation will be completed. **“Time will be no longer”, v6.** The message of the prophets was couched in language that both revealed and concealed, 1Peter 1:9-12. Now the full meaning of those prophecies will be revealed in the concluding events of history, Rev. 22:6-7. **The Kingdom inaugurated by Jesus is about to be completed, v15.** The final events are now underway and the restriction placed on Daniel has been removed.

The angel gives a further instruction – take the book and eat it, v9.

Eating the Word of God means taking it in so that it becomes an integral part of us, governing our thinking and behaviour and accepting the consequences of lining our lives up with it, Psalm 19:10, Prov. 24:13-14, Jeremiah 15:6. John is doing this personally and also as representing the church, v11, c.f. 11:3.

The background is in Ezekiel 2:8-3: 3 and v14. Like the witnesses in Rev.11, Ezekiel’s mission was to a rebellious people, most of whom would not respond to his words.

The message was both sweet and bitter – this is true of the whole of Revelation

- **Sweet because it was a message of salvation/grace, 5:9, 7:9, 14:6, 21:24; bitter because it would bring judgement to those who refused it, 11:9, 18, 17:13-15, 21:8 .**
- **Sweet because it promised reward for obedience, 7:9, 14-117, 14:1-5, 22:3-5; bitter because the witnesses would suffer persecution, 1Peter 4:12-14, 6:9, 11:7-10, 13:7-10.**

John took the book out of the angel's hand, c.f. 5:7.

Obedience and symbolic action was followed by the command to prophesy, v11.

Literally "They said ... you must prophesy" – perhaps the plural of royalty/divinity.

The preposition could be "about" or "against" – probably **both - a message of salvation and warning of impending judgement.**

Chapter 11 must be interpreted in the context of this commission, not just to John but to the whole church.