

Sermon – 08/07/2007 pm

Delay No Longer

Study Text: Revelation 10:1-7

Four angels of death led forth a horde of hellish horses to kill one third of the human race. This is what John saw as the sixth trumpet was sounded. Divine judgment had begun. God limited this judgment and there was still time to repent – *but the rest of mankind did not repent* (9:20). Men and women were so set in their idolatry and immorality; their hearts were so hardened, they did not see the grace of God. They did not see the end approaching. They did not realise that ‘now is the day of salvation’; tomorrow it will be too late.

In chapters 10 and 11 we come to another interlude in Revelation. Remember there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal. So it is here between the sixth and seventh trumpet. This interlude does not fit in chronologically; rather it focuses on a different scene. In chapter 7 the saints were sealed and we saw the great multitude in heaven. Here the focus is again upon the saints and upon the proclamation of the gospel in the church age. John himself is re-commissioned as a prophet and two witnesses preach the gospel with great power. As Jesus said the *gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come* (Matthew 24:14).

Another Strong Angel

John saw another strong/mighty angel coming down from heaven (10:1). The first time he saw a strong angel was when he was taken up to see the heavenly throne. That angel was shouting ‘who is worthy to open the scroll’ (5:1). Jesus was found worthy for he was slain and had redeemed people to God from *every tribe and tongue and people and nation* (5:9). Note the parallels in this chapter before us – another strong angel, a book and prophecy to many peoples, nations and tongues and kings – not to mention the mystery of God that was finished.

This second strong angel was coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. Who is the mighty angel? In Daniel 7 the ‘Son of Man’ came to the Ancient of Days with the clouds of heaven. Jesus said that Son of Man will return with the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory (Matthew 24:30). Could this angel be Christ?

See the further description of this angel. A rainbow was on his head much like in the vision which Ezekiel saw of the one upon the chariot throne. *This was the appearance of the glory of the Lord* (Ezekiel 1:28). The rainbow was closely associated with the throne of God (4:3). The rainbow was a sign of God’s glory and his covenant faithfulness. *His face was like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire* (10:1). Such features applied to the risen Jesus who John saw in his first vision (1:16).

For these reasons many understand this angel to be Christ, even though the word ‘angel’ is not otherwise used with reference to Christ. Maybe he is like the angel of the Lord, or a Christophany of the Old Testament. Christ indeed came from heaven with divine glory. He came with the gospel of salvation and also declared the just judgment of God (John 1:14, 5:22).

The cloud, the rainbow, and the sun and pillar of fire all have symbolic significance. We have already mentioned the rainbow covenant associated with the flood. Jews would be aware of the significance of the pillar of cloud and of fire. God led them out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. This was divine providence, and also divine protection. As their enemy, the army of Pharaoh, threatened to attack they cried out to the Lord. *Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord* said Moses (Exodus 14:13). The pillar of cloud and fire went behind and protected them from Pharaoh. This interlude in Revelation is about divine judgment and salvation.

This strong angel stood with one foot on the land and one on the sea (10: 2). He straddled the whole world as the one who has dominion over the creation. Jesus was faithful unto death and God raised him with great power. God exalted him above all dominions and *put all things under his feet* (Ephesians 1:22). This angel cried with a loud voice as when a lion roars (10: 3). The voice of God is described as a lion roaring in Hosea 11:10, and Amos 3:8.

Seven Thunders

Seven seals were followed by seven trumpets. Now John hears seven thunders. But the strange thing is that this time he is told not to write what he hears – so we are not told the content of these seven thunders. Some say that because there was no repentance (9: 20) further judgments were not declared. But sealing up does not mean revoking or cancelling but simply not revealing.

‘The seven thunders may be based on Psalm 29 where God’s thunders of punishment are equated with the voice of the Lord, which is mentioned seven times’. No doubt these thunders are related to judgments, and with God shaking the earth. They may also be related to the exaltation of Christ as King forever (Psalm 29:10).

Daniel was told of things relating to the end time but was instructed to ‘shut up the words’. *Go your way Daniel for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end* (Daniel 12:9). Daniel’s vision was before the time of Christ, before the cross and the resurrection and the inauguration of the Last Days. John however was living in the Last Days, as we are. Christ can return at any moment. The end is near. You should fear the judgment of God if you are without faith in him!

A Little Book

The strong angel had a little book open in his hand. How is this book related to the scroll in chapter 5 – if at all? ‘Scroll’ is the same word as ‘book’ in the Greek, but this is the diminutive form of the word. This is a **little** book. Some suggest that it is the same as the scroll in chapter 5 – others that it is part of that scroll or that it develops one aspect of that scroll. Note that this little book is open. The earlier scroll contained the purposes of God in judgment and redemption.

Maybe this little book is the Bible, the Word of God. The strong angel brings this little book with him from heaven. Maybe it is this book of Revelation itself. In the next section we see that John is told to eat this little book and then prophesy to the nations in much the same way as Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:1).

No More Delay

The strong angel raised his hand to heaven took an oath in the name of the Creator – the one who created the heaven, the earth and the sea. This is a deliberately comprehensive and specific description of the Almighty and eternal God. The mighty angel takes an oath in the name of the Almighty God. Nothing can be more certain in the universe than the declaration that is about to be made.

Some question whether this angel could be Jesus because of this oath. Yet the writer to the Hebrews refers to God swearing by himself since there is no one greater, when he made his promise to Abraham (Hebrews 6:13). By solemn divine oath the thunderous voice of this angel declares *that there should be delay no longer* (10:6 – the Authorised Version translation ‘there should be time no longer’ is somewhat misleading).

For I raise my hand to heaven and say ‘as I live forever’, if I sharpen my sword and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies and repay those who hate me. This is what Moses spoke from the Lord in his final message (Deuteronomy 32:40, 41). The message given to John in this message is the same. God has declared on oath that he will judge his enemies and the enemies of his people.

The martyrs under the altar cried out for divine vengeance they were told to wait a little while longer (6:10). The strong angel now says there will be no more delay. The full number will be brought into the kingdom of God and then the end will come.

The seventh trumpet was about to sound the last judgment. All God’s enemies, all idolaters and persecutors of God’s people will be destroyed. The Cross was meant to be Satan’s victory over the Son of God. But it was in fact God’s victory over Satan. Jesus’ death was meant to be his defeat but it was victory. ‘You put him to death, but with great power God raised him from the dead’ – this was the message preached by the apostles. Christians appear to be weak in the eyes of the world but in the end they will be victorious.

This is the mystery of God declared through the prophets (10:7) – the mystery of the gospel. Mystery does not mean something secret but God’s purposes revealed to men (Ephesians 1:9). The mystery of God is his total redemptive purpose which includes the judgment of evil and the salvation of his people’. Paul wrote of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations.

The message has gone out to all nations. The glorious good news has been preached to all nations. But this same gospel is bad news to those who do not believe. Jesus who saves eternally is also Jesus who judges eternally.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon