

A TWO-FOLD ASSIGNMENT FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS

10 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down out of heaven. [He was] robed with a cloud, and the rainbow was above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire. 2He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the land, 3and he cried out with a loud voice, like the roar of a lion. When he cried out, the seven thunders uttered their voices. 4And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up the things that the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them down." 5Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6He vowed by him who lives forever and ever, he who created the heaven and the things that it contains, and the earth and the things that it contains, and the sea and the things that it contains, [saying,] "There will no longer be [any] delay. 7But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound [his trumpet], the mystery of God will be fulfilled, just as he proclaimed by his servants the prophets."

8Then the voice I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9So I went to the angel, telling him that he should give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take it, and eat it up. It will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be sweet as honey in your mouth." 10I took the little scroll out of the angel's hand, and ate it up. In my mouth it was sweet as honey, but after I had eaten it, it was bitter in my stomach. 11Then they said to me, "You must prophesy again to many peoples and nations and languages and kings." (Rev. 10:1-11)

Introduction

The little boy has been waiting patiently all year long for the coming of Christmas Day. As the months go by and the seasons change, his hopes are heightened. Now it is December, and finally it is Christmas Day!

On Christmas morning the little boy jumps out of bed at five o'clock in the morning and runs downstairs in great anticipation. But to his surprise and disappointment, he finds a barren Christmas tree: there are no presents piled beneath the boughs of the tree. Then comes his father's explanation, "You must wait a little while longer. The gifts will come, but you must wait until Christmas night."

"In the meantime," continues his father, "I want you to go throughout the neighborhood and invite all the children to come to our house and join us for a great Christmas night celebration."

The story of the little boy serves to illustrate the message of Revelation chapter ten: As Christians, we must wait patiently for our Lord's return in glory, and in the meantime we must work diligently for His cause. This is the two-fold assignment for contemporary Christians.

Six trumpets have already sounded; all is now prepared for the seventh and final trumpet blast. The Apostle John—and the church—eagerly anticipates that seventh and final blast, which will announce the arrival of the Savior and the fullness of redemption to the glory of God. But when we come to chapter ten, we do not hear the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet; what we see is the appearance of another angel. In summary, the angel's message is for us to wait patiently for Christ's return and to work diligently to bring the gospel to the world—this is the contemporary Christian's two-fold assignment.

I. Wait Patiently for the Day of Your Salvation

In verse one we learn that John saw *“another mighty angel coming down out of heaven.”* This angel is sent from God, his mission is one of great importance, and he is representing the Lord Jesus Himself.

Here is one of the few passages in Revelation where an angel is described in great detail. This angel is clothed with a cloud; this feature is part of the description of the way the Lord Jesus shall appear when He returns in glory: *“the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? ⁶²And Jesus said, I am; and you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven”* (Mk. 14:61b-62.) This also matches the description of the Son of Man whom Daniel saw coming in His glory:

In the vision [I received] at night I looked and there before me came one who was like a son of man on the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and he was brought into his presence. ¹⁴He was given authority and glory and a kingdom, so that all the peoples, nations, and [men of every] language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13-14)

The rainbow appeared over the head of this angel. Compare this with the vision of the LORD given to the prophet Ezekiel:

Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. ²⁷I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. ²⁸Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. (Ezek. 1:26-28)

This also matches the description of God as He was seen by the Apostle John seated upon His heavenly throne:

Immediately I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne set in heaven and someone was sitting upon it. ³He who sat upon it had the appearance of a

jasper and carnelian stone. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. (Rev. 4:2b-3)

The angel's face was like the sun; with this feature of his appearance we may compare the description of our Lord Jesus at the time of His transfiguration: “[Jesus] was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light” (Matt. 17:2.) Also, when John sees a vision of the Lord Jesus, one of the things he notices is that “his face was like the sun shining in its brilliance” (Rev. 1:16b) The angel's feet were like pillars of fire. Another feature of Christ John saw in the vision was the fact that “his feet were like polished bronze, as if it had been refined in a furnace” (Rev. 1:15a.) Again, this is also a feature of the way in which the LORD revealed Himself to Ezekiel: “I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him” (Ezek. 1:27.) This great angel whom the Apostle John sees in Revelation 10 represents the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His divine glory.

In his hand, the angel “was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand” (vs. 2.) This little book corresponds to the book the Lamb opened in Revelation 5, it is the gospel—the Good News of salvation through the blood of Christ, the Good News that the Lamb of God has conquered and opened the seals and thus has given us access to the kingdom of God.

The strong angel “planted his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the land.” The stance of this colossal angel indicates his mastery and dominion over the entire creation; it is depicting the authority the Lord Jesus received from God the Father by virtue of His successfully completing His mission as the Servant of the LORD: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’” (Matt. 28:18.) The Apostle Paul testifies of Christ:

[God] raised [Jesus] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in this [present] age but also in the coming age. ²²And “he put all things in subjection under his feet,” and he appointed him to be head over all things for the church. (Eph. 1:20-22)

Then the great angel “cried out with a loud voice, like the roar of a lion” (vs. 3.) Notice that it is a cry, a shout that John hears; it is not the proclamation of a message. It is the triumphant shout of a lion. In Scripture the roar of the lion is associated with the work of the LORD in the salvation of His people (cp. Hosea 11:10-11) and the judgment of His enemies (cp. Isaiah 31:4,8-9):

They will follow Jehovah; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. ¹¹They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes, declares Jehovah. (Hos. 11:10-11)

This is what Jehovah has said to me, As a lion, a great lion, growls over his prey—and even though a whole band of shepherds should be called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor—so Jehovah of hosts will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights ...⁸The Assyrian will fall by the sword, [though] not [the sword] of man; and the sword, [though] not [the sword] of men, shall devour him. He will flee from the sword and his young men will be subjected to forced labor. ⁹His fortress will fall due to the terror, and his commanders will panic at the sight of the battle standard, declares Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem. (Isa. 31:4,8-9)

Also note such New Testament passages as Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30, which describe our Lord's final moments on the cross:

And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. (Matt. 27:50)

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (Jn. 19:30)

In response to the angel's cry, "*the seven thunders uttered their voices.*" Here is portrayed the divine judgment of God: "*seven*" being the biblical number of deity and perfection, and "*thunders*" representing the revelation of God in His awesome power as the Judge of all the earth. Compare this with the description of the Final Judgment as it is portrayed in Revelation 16:17-18,

The seventh [angel] poured out his bowl upon the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is finished!"¹⁸Then there came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on the earth, so tremendous was the quake. (Rev. 16:17-18)

The fact that the seven thunders utter their voice at the same time that the angel cries out points us to Calvary: the righteous judgment of God was there poured out upon Christ the Savior.

When the Apostle John hears the seven thunders utter their voice, he is about to write, but he is forbidden to do so (vs. 4.) John was about to write and make known what the thunders had said, he is about to proclaim it to the whole world—the judgment that fell upon Christ at Calvary John is about to pronounce against the whole world. But he is prevented from doing so at this time; rather, he is instructed, "*seal up the things that the seven thunders uttered.*" That is to say, the judgment proclaimed by the seven thunders that fell upon Christ at Calvary is also reserved for a future revelation and fulfillment, at that future date it will fall upon all those who are outside of Christ and remain in their state of sin and rebellion against God.

What is the significance of these things? At Calvary, God declared His judgment against sinful mankind; as Jesus approached the cross of Calvary, He declared, *"Now has come the judgment of this world"* (Jn. 12:31;) but at Calvary God executed that judgment only against Christ. At the end of history, God will execute His righteous judgment against all of sinful mankind who are outside of Christ and remain in their state of sin and rebellion against God, while all those who are in Christ will be secure under "the divine umbrella of salvation." By way of illustration: At Calvary, the rain of God's righteous judgment fell only upon Christ, and was suspended from falling upon the world. At the end of history, the rain of God's righteous judgment will fall upon the whole world, while Christ will hold His protective umbrella over those who have put their trust in Him and have given their hearts to Him. In the meantime, the execution of divine judgment is suspended so that mankind may be warned, called to repentance, and come to Christ the Savior.

In verses 5-7 this colossal angel, representing the Lord Jesus Christ, raises His right hand and takes an oath, vowing by *"him who lives forever and ever."* The angel's oath is a reference to Deuteronomy 32:40-42, a passage in which the LORD swears by Himself that He will judge His enemies:

I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, ⁴¹when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. ⁴²I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh: the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders. (Deut. 32:40-42)

The angel solemnly vows that with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet *"the mystery of God"* shall be fulfilled. In other words, God's sovereign plan to redeem His people and judge His enemies shall be fully revealed and accomplished with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, which, as we have seen from Revelation 11:14-19, announces the end of history, the day of Final Judgment, and the coming of the eternal kingdom of God.

The first assignment given to contemporary Christians is to wait patiently and with confidence for the day of our salvation—the day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear in power and great glory at the end of the age.

II. Work Diligently to Bring the Gospel to the World

The voice of God commands John to take the little book out of the angel's hand (vs. 8.) This is the third time that the colossal angel's stance (one foot on the land and one foot on the sea) is noted; this time it reminds us of the great comfort and inspiration found in the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,

*baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***" (Matt. 28:18-20)

Upon approaching the angel, John receives the following instructions: First, he is to take the scroll and eat it (vs. 9.) As Christians, we are to "digest" the Word of God and assimilate it into our lives, so that our whole life becomes a living testimony to the gospel; as the Apostle Paul says of the Corinthians:

You yourselves are our epistle, written on our hearts, known and read by all men. ³You show that you are an epistle from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor. 3:2-3)

John is told that the scroll "*will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be sweet as honey in your mouth.*" Because the Word of God exposes the sinfulness of man and proclaims the judgment to come, it is resisted and hated by the natural man; therefore, there is the element of bitterness that is experienced by the faithful servant of Christ as he lives and proclaims the truth of God. The Lord Jesus Christ declares to His disciples, "*All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved*" (Matt. 10:22.) But at the same time, because the Word of God is the saving truth of God, it is a delight to the believer's heart; therefore there is the element of sweetness; note Jeremiah 15:16, "*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Jehovah, God of hosts.*"

In verse 11 we hear the second command addressed to the Apostle John: "*You must prophesy again to many peoples and nations and languages and kings.*" Here is the voice of the Old Testament prophets urging the New Testament apostles and the New Testament church to carry on the ministry they began. Fundamentally, prophecy is the proclaiming of God's Word; and the message of the entire Old Testament is summed up by the Lord Jesus as a proclamation of the gospel:

[Jesus] said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Lk. 24:44-47)

The second assignment given to contemporary Christians is to work diligently to bring the gospel to the world. We are to endeavor to do so by means of prayer, by means of financial support of missions, by the willingness to offer ourselves, as well as our sons and daughters, as the Lord calls; and by personal witness in

both word and life as we are given opportunity. By the grace of Christ, we are to do so faithfully, even in the face of opposition, or ridicule, or resistance, and even if we see no fruitfulness.

Conclusion

Our desire may be for the immediate fulfillment of all God's kingdom promises and the return of Christ in glory. The Lord assures us that that great Day will surely come. But before the arrival of that Day, our Lord expects us to faithfully carry out the two-fold assignment He has given us: 1) we are to wait patiently for the day of our salvation; and, 2) we are to work diligently to bring the gospel to the world.