

A Second Interlude, Part I- John Called to Witness of Coming Judgment

Call to Worship: Psalm 29

Hymn #2- *God, My King, Thy Might Confessing*

1st Scripture: Ezekiel 2:1-3:15

Hymn #10- *O Come, My Soul, Bless Thou the Lord...*

2nd Scripture: Revelation 10

Hymn #21- *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*

Introduction:

You may recall that between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals, in chapter 7, there was an interlude given us, answering the question, “Who is able to stand the great day of God’s wrath?” And there we saw that all of those who had received the seal of God; all of the elect, the *true Israel of God*, who were sealed by the Spirit, would indeed persevere throughout the time of the great tribulation and “stand” on the day of Christ’s visible return in judgment, making it safely home to glory.

Well here, yet again, between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments, we are given, as it were, another breather; another interlude, before coming to the final trumpet, where Christ returns in judgment and unto the consummation of His glorious Kingdom. The sixth trumpet has sounded, and the time for warning is about to end, when the seventh trumpet blows and the bowls of God’s wrath are poured out consecutively, unto the universal judgment of all of mankind, remaining outside of Christ.

This interlude begins here in chapter 10 and continues on into almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of chapter 11. And it is within this interlude that we are given a general glimpse of the state of the church throughout the duration of the church age. The church is called to be a “witness to the Gospel of Christ,” declaring the reality of the judgments given in this Book (and especially the coming “Final Judgment”), but she must anticipate great opposition and persecution in response to her message. She must remain faithful even in the face of sure opposition, remembering two things: First, some will indeed repent and be saved. God will call out His elect through the faithful witness of His persecuted and yet enduring church. And then secondly, she must remember her end, revealed at the blowing of the seventh trumpet, when Christ will vindicate her and set her

apart in glory, where there will be joy forevermore, in the absence of all sorrow and pain and suffering and death. And so, this interlude will encourage and remind us of both the sweet and bitter aspects of life as the church, the Body of Christ. The witness begins with John, who receives the Revelation, and then moves on into all of the churches, as they faithfully proclaim, with John, the message of the Revelation.

And all of this will bring us to the end of the first major section of the Book of Revelation, where we have especially seen God's judgment upon the visible world and those who dwell on the earth (the "earth dwellers"). Beginning in chapter twelve, we will take a walk behind the curtain of all that we have gone over, so as to behold the spiritual realm, and the demonic powers who operate behind our world; the perpetrators of every deception, who sit in the driver's seat, deceptively leading mankind to continue on in its rebellion against God and His church. To be sure, man is accountable, but we as a church, must always be awakened to the reality of what is really driving the chaos and rebellion, so that we will be on the alert, guarding our own hearts, clinging to Christ, while faithfully seeking to call out Christ's elect sheep by means of the Gospel and our faithful witness, even in the face of great suffering, trials and death. We must constantly remind ourselves of all that "really is" in the light of "what seems to be." Unlike the world, we have both, the Revelation and the Holy Spirit, who brings the reality of the Revelation home to our souls, by faith. And we are repeatedly reminded of the fact, that ultimately, our God reigns supreme, exercising complete sovereignty over everything that unfolds throughout all of history. What demons and wicked people mean for evil, God uses for good!

Well, let us now survey the first portion of this interlude, given to us here in chapter 10.

Here John, obviously having been brought back to earth (in the spirit), sees another "mighty angel" coming *down* from heaven. Last time (in Rev. 5), he saw a mighty angel, whose voice was so powerful that it penetrated every sphere of creation with the question, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" Well, this "mighty angel" comes as a representative of Christ, bearing the very authority and glory of Christ. Notice how John describes this angel in the divine likeness of God and Christ. The angel is described as being "clothed with a cloud," clearly a mark of the divine glory (Ezek. 1:4; Rev. 1:7); having a "rainbow on his head," again another mark of the divine glory (Ezek. 1:28Rev. 4:3); "his face

was like the sun,” again another mark of the divine glory (Rev. 1:16); and finally, having feet like pillars of fire, which again would coincide with the divine glory (Ezek. 1:27; Rev. 1:15). Clearly, this angel is either Christ Himself or an angel that is directly associated with Christ. I would lean toward the latter, understanding this to be “Christ’s angel” in keeping with Revelation 22:16, where our Lord states, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches.” Either way, the main point here is to convey the supreme authority that is connected with this angel. His message is paramount; it is significant and must be heeded by all. The divine glory that he reflects, confirms this.

We are then told that the angel has a little book/scroll, open in his hand, and he sets his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, representing the divine authority he has been given over the whole earth. And he cries out with a loud voice, “as when a lion roars.” And before we are given more information about the “little book,” which this mighty angel is carrying, we are told of these mysterious seven thunders, which “uttered their voices” in response to the angel’s loud cry. Then John moves on to say, that he was preparing to write down what the seven thunders had said (obviously, they spoke clear, audible words), but he was commanded by a voice from heaven, the following, in verse 4, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.”

This portion of the vision is very interesting, to say the least, and quite mysterious. Clearly, the Lord wanted us to know that something was said here, without revealing the specific content of what has been said. We can speculate a million different ways, but in a nut shell, part of the message here, involves, “There are more to the judgments of God, which we must be aware of, without knowing specifically what that “more” is.” In other words, it is a polite way of saying, “Recognize that in all that I am revealing to you, that you are not getting the whole package. There are indeed hidden elements to all that will take place; know this in advance. The secret things belong to the Lord, but all that He has chosen to reveal to us, is ours to study, ponder and apply.” Suffice it to say, brethren, that there are elements of God’s providence, that may not fit neatly into our understanding of things, and we must learn to simply trust God through it all, resting our souls on the many things He has revealed to us.” The seven thunders spoke, probably some more information regarding the judgment to come upon this world, but John was commanded to seal that information up, and simply to document what had happened.

Following this, the angel continues with his actions. Continuing to stand with one foot on the sea and one on the land, the angel raises his hand to heaven and takes a solemn vow. Representing Christ, bearing divine authority over all of the earth, the angel swears by God (by Him who lives forever and ever, and who created all things in heaven and on earth) that there would no longer be any delay at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which the seventh angel was about to sound. And in doing so, he gives the absolute assurance that there is a precise moment in time, when the warnings of God will be over, and judgment will come. At a certain point, amidst the blowing of these trumpets, the final trumpet will blow, and the door of repentance will be forever locked and sealed, without any hope of ever being opened again. For, “the mystery of God would be finished, as HE declared to His servants the prophets.” The universal bowl judgments will come, God’s plan of redemption will be complete, history as we know it will come to its immediate conclusion, Christ will return and the world will be judged and destroyed. God’s glorious and mysterious plan of redemption, which has been mocked and ridiculed and misunderstood by the spiritually blind world; that glorious plan which only the regenerate can grasp and appreciate; the calling out of God’s complete church, separated unto Christ as His Bride...it will be finished. And at that moment, the mystery; the mystery hidden from the world because it is a “spiritually discerned” mystery, will be brought to the forefront, completely annihilating every other deceptive definition of life adopted by the world and built by the devil himself; the mystery will be wholly revealed, and all who are outside of Christ; all who have failed to give heed to the many gracious warnings God has sent, will be forever condemned. God has declared this reality all throughout history by His prophets, and that moment in time will come. People will be married and given in marriage; people will be sleeping, people will be playing sports, people will be at work, people will be building their American dreams, people will be living as if life tomorrow will be a continuation of today, but when the final trumpet blows, it will all come to an abrupt end, and there will be no turning back. You see, the angel’s vow here ought to strike a sense of fear in the unbeliever. People don’t want to believe in the reality of a coming final judgment, but it will come, and when it does there will be eternal regret. Friends, the judgment that is coming, is final. If you are outside of Christ, your eternal destination in hell will be forever sealed. Do you see that? Do you get the message here? Don’t toy with God! Don’t delay any longer! Don’t gamble with your never dying soul! The finality of your judgment draws near. If you die today, it is sealed! If the last trumpet is blown, it is

sealed! That is why today is the day of salvation..., do you see that? Repent and turn to Christ today! Catch the warnings that have been given throughout all of history and that continue to be given in the present! Seek the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near!

John then hears that voice from heaven again (perhaps the voice of God, Christ, one of the four living creatures or one of the elders), commanding him to, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth” (vs. 8). And John goes and asks the angel to give him the scroll. And the angel gives it to John, commanding him to, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth” (vs. 9). And John takes the little book and eats it, and indeed it tastes as sweet as honey to his tongue, but it brings bitterness to his stomach. And the angel closes this section with the words, “You must prophecy again about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings” (vs. 11).

What exactly is this vision all about? Well, clearly John is being commissioned again unto a specific task of proclamation. In our first Scripture reading, we saw that Ezekiel was likewise given such a commission, at a time when he was told, that the people would not hear him. Jerusalem had already been besieged and was on the verge of being completely overcome and destroyed, and Ezekiel was to prophesy to the hard hearted Israelites in this setting, concerning the coming devastation that Babylon would bring upon Jerusalem. Not the ideal message to carry to people; a message that you know in advance will be rejected, but are still responsible to bring forth as a faithful watchman. In that setting, Ezekiel likewise had to eat a scroll, which was sweet to his mouth but bitter to his soul; a message of woe, hardship and destruction. Well, John is to proclaim such a message now, especially related to the coming final destruction of the world, given in the upcoming chapters of the Revelation.

The little book was sweet to the taste because it contained the righteous will of God, and His preservation and vindication of His persecuted church. All that God does and ordains is good and just, and so, it is sweet to the taste. And yet, it is also bitter to the stomach, because it contains both a message of the final severe hardship that is to come upon God’s people, especially brought about by the dragon and his servant beasts, and a message concerning the description of an unrepentant mankind and their final, universal condemnation, which while just and righteous from the standpoint of God’s law and glory, is yet sad and tragic, because neither God nor His people “delight in the death of the wicked.” John is to proclaim the content of this

Book, concerning many peoples, nations, tongues and kings. We will be given its general summation in chapter eleven, contained in the remainder of the interlude, followed by the blowing of the final, seventh trumpet, where Christ will visibly return to judge the world and rescue His beloved saints. Then chapters 12 and following will give us the long form of chapter 11, opening up the short summary in greater detail, exposing the horrible reality of the demonic activity going on behind the scenes, and the sure judgment that will come upon all who are outside *of* and who contend *with* Christ and His Bride/church. John eats this book because he is to ingest, internalize and apply this message to his own soul first, so that he can truthfully and accurately proclaim it to others, beginning with the seven churches of Asia. And then they, along with all churches of all times, carry and preach the same Gospel message, unto their own temporal hurt, with the hope that some will indeed repent, and that God will be glorified in their faithful proclamation/witness of the Gospel!

And brethren, let this be another clear marking and description of the *true* Gospel ministry. The preacher will preach many things that are unfavorable to the natural soul, including a message of the consequences of unrepentant sin, the wrath of God and the final judgment to come upon all who are outside of Christ. People cringe at the whole notion of preaching hell, and say, it is too fierce a message to be proclaimed, and too hard on the ears of the unsaved, and especially to the children. But I ask you, brethren, do we not see these key themes all throughout Scripture and all throughout the Revelation? Will there be any regret to the soul that is frightened into the arms of grace, if that frightening comes through a proclamation of the life giving truth? The Gospel is the most glorious, loving, gracious message ever to be told, but it only makes sense; it only obtains the power of the Holy Spirit, when it comes on the heels of conviction of sin and the fear of the wrath of God and judgment. Certainly, don't ever take away the love of God in Christ; don't ever preach a works Gospel, but just the same, don't preach a "politically correct" gospel or a social gospel, which is no gospel at all. The Gospel is not about living a better life here (from a physical standpoint)...Revelation teaches us the truth of this matter, does it not? The Gospel is not about getting the job you always wanted, getting out of poverty, getting the spouse of your dreams and making life easier here. The Gospel is about unworthy, wretched sinners, recognizing that they are presently at enmity with and under the judgment of God, so that they might desperately flee to Christ for grace and forgiveness, obtaining the righteousness *of* and reconciliation *with* God. The Gospel is

about God and His glory; it is about sinners being redeemed and transformed into the image of Christ unto this end! And this, my friends, is a very unfavorable message for a world that has taken hostage God's design, with the heinous, wicked intent of treasonously placing man at the center of it all. The Gospel is about death, both the dying of Christ, and the dying of sinners, who die to themselves first, if they are to become children of God. It brings about the product of, "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God!" Such a message; such a theme; such a reality will never be favorable to the unregenerate mind. And so, the preacher, like John, must proclaim the sweetest message of all time, but the reality of the coming universal judgment also brings bitterness to the soul at the same time. And the reality of the suffering church, especially while going through the severe trials that providence brings her way, can be bitter indeed. And that is why we constantly remind ourselves of the fact that our sovereign, holy, God and Creator sits on the highest throne, ordering the affairs of all things, unto the guaranteed end that He will be glorified and we will be eternally secured in Christ, the Lamb that was slain!

And so, we conclude the first portion of this interlude, as we prepare to come upon the seventh and final trumpet that is to be blown. Again, next time, we will consider a general summary of the witness of the church throughout the course of the church age (when six of the seven trumpets are blown), finally leading into the last trumpet, where Christ returns, vindicates His saints and brings universal judgment upon the world. And then, following this, we will enter the second major half of the Book of Revelation, from chapter 12 through 22.

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25