

CHAPTER 10

THE LITTLE BOOK OPEN

The lessons of this chapter are built around the symbol of the “little book open.” There are several ideas among commentators about the meaning of this symbol, but we believe the only plausible explanation is that it represents the New Testament. We offer the following reasons for this interpretation.

- (1) This little book is always open. God’s Word is always open to anyone who is willing to read and obey it.
- (2) John was told to take the book from the angel (v.8). He asked the angel to give it to him; however, he was again told to take it. God’s Word is always open and available to us, but we must take it. No one can obey the Word for us. It is each individual’s responsibility.
- (3) John was told to eat the little book. This shows we are to study and consume the teachings of the Bible. We must completely digest it.
- (4) After John ate the book, he was told he must prophesy again. To prophesy means to teach God’s Word, and in order to do that, we must first study and digest it.
- (5) This vision comes between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The trumpets warn of events that could

cause man to lose his spiritual life, but we may prepare ourselves to overcome these events by studying God's Word.

- (6) Verse 7 says that when the seventh angel sounds, the "mystery of God" will be finished.

The "mystery of God" is a reference to the gospel of Christ.

Due to the explanations given above, we believe that the only plausible explanation of this "little book open" is that it represents the Word of God.

One possible objection that we might attempt to answer is: The Word of God would not be referred to as a "little" book. We believe this refers to the fact that God's Word is understandable. Man has the ability to study and comprehend its message. If God's Word were a "large" book, it would be difficult to read and understand, but God's book is a "little" book. It may be understood by any man who seeks to know its message.

Verse 1. And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

The vision of chapter 10 begins with a description of a mighty angel who has a little book open in his hand (v. 2). The use of the term "mighty" indicates this angel possessed tremendous strength. This would in turn place great significance on the events of this vision.

This angel is symbolically described in four ways. First, he is clothed with a cloud. It may not be possible to put an exact meaning on this symbol, but one possibility is that it represents purity. When spiritual clothing is spoken of in Revelation, it is always white, which represents purity or holiness. We are not told that this cloud was white, but it probably was because no righteous, spiritual being was ever clothed in anything except white in the entire book of Revelation.

Second, he has a rainbow upon his head. The only time

the rainbow is used symbolically in the Bible, except in Revelation, was when God placed the rainbow in the sky to remind Noah of his promise to never again destroy the world with water. In 4:3 the emerald rainbow over God's Throne reminds us of the everlasting covenant God made with man to save those who are obedient to his will. The "little book" in this vision is that covenant between God and man. It is the New Testament.

Third, the face of the mighty angel was like unto the sun. This illustrates that the gospel, which he holds in his hand, is a tremendous light unto men. In Jn. 8:12, Jesus describes himself as "the light of the world," and tells us if we follow him, we "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The light of our life today is the gospel, which outlines the way whereby we can be saved. This type of symbolism is also used in 1:16 to describe Jesus as it states, "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Jesus is the light of the world today, and we can walk in that light by being obedient to the gospel.

Fourth, the feet of this angel are described as pillars of fire. Since he placed one foot on the sea and one on the earth to cover all mankind, the fire probably shows the urgency of the burning message of the gospel.

Verse 2. And he had In his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

This mighty angel holds in his hand a little book that is open. Because of the reasons given in the introduction to this chapter, this little book is interpreted as the New Testament. It is significant that this little book is open. The gospel is available to all men at all times; it is never closed. The fact that this angel is standing with his right foot upon the sea and his left on the earth indicates that the gospel is for all men. There is no accountable person on this earth who is exempt from the teachings of the New Testament. The gospel is for all!

Verses 3, 4. And cried with a loud voice, as when a

lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

As this mighty angel cried with a loud voice, seven thunders uttered their voices. John was about to record the messages of the seven thunders; however, a voice from heaven instructed him not to write down their words. Much controversy and speculation surrounds the voices of the thunders and what they spoke. There is simply no way of knowing what they said because John was told not to record their words. Instead of trying to determine what was spoken, we must look at the entire picture and attempt to understand what the thunders symbolize, and why John was not allowed to record their messages. First, thunder is used by God to announce events of great importance. For example, in Ex. 19:16 there were thunders as God descended upon Mt. Sinai to give Moses the Ten Commandments. Therefore, in the context of this passage, the mighty angel is holding the gospel in his hand. As he cries with a loud voice, the thunders sound, indicating a message of great importance. There is nothing more important in this world than sounding the message of the gospel of Christ. If this is the lesson being taught by these symbols, then why are their messages sealed? The most likely reason is that the gospel was already complete at the time of the writing of Revelation. Everything that man needed to know concerning how to obey the gospel had already been revealed through the writings of the apostles. We need no further revelation. God's Word is complete in every respect, and our obedience to it will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven.

Verses 5-6. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the

things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

The angel lifts his hand to heaven and swears by the God of heaven that upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, time should be no longer. God has created all things; therefore, when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, God will also bring all things to an end. The seventh trumpet will take us into the time of Judgment (11:15-19), just as the seventh seal did in 8:1-5, and the seventh plague will in 16:17-21.

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, all things as we know them will pass away, and we will see a new heaven and a new earth as God has promised (2Pet. 3:10-13). When this happens time will be no more. We will be in an eternal state.

Due to the context of this chapter, it is very possible that the phrase “there should be time no longer” has a much more significant meaning than simply informing us that time will cease when the seventh angel begins to sound. As we look at the structure of the chapter, one question to ask is: Why is the sounding of the seventh trumpet mentioned here? The answer to that question may lie in the fact that these trumpets are warnings. But, since there is an entire section concerning the seventh trumpet, what is its significance here? It could be to warn us that when the seventh trumpet sounds, man will no longer have time left to obey the gospel. Let us look at the structure of the chapter. The mighty angel is holding the gospel open in his hand (v. 2); the seven thunders sound the importance of the gospel (v. 3-4); the angel warns that when the seventh angel sounds, man will no longer be able to obey this gospel because the mystery of God will be finished (v. 6-7).

Therefore, we must study and proclaim the gospel all through the Christian age (v. 8-11), so man will be able to avoid the eternal punishment that will come with the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15-19). At that time all things will be finished. Man will no longer have the opportunity to obey the gospel. His eternal destiny will be sealed.

Verse 7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The entire description of events during the seventh trumpet is given in 11:15-19. When this trumpet sounds, the mystery of God will be finished. This mystery that will be finished is the gospel, or God's plan to save man. Col. 1:26-28 states, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Therefore, the mystery that was hidden throughout the ages was the fact that Christ was to come to earth and die for the sins of all men, including the Gentiles. Because of this, we can be sinless in God's sight through Christ Jesus. When this seventh trumpet sounds, this gospel will be finished or completed, and man will no longer have the opportunity to be obedient to it.

The last phrase in this verse is rendered as follows in the ASV: "according to the good tidings which he hath declared to his servants the prophets." This reinforces the belief that the "mystery" refers to the gospel because the gospel is "good tidings."

JOHN EATS THE LITTLE BOOK

Verse 8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

John receives instructions from heaven to take the little book out of the angel's hand. Although it is not stated, it is understood that the voice out of heaven was either God's or Christ's, or at least a message from them. John was told to

“go and take the little book,” which indicates that one must study God’s Word in order to receive it. God will not force his Word on anyone.

It is emphasized once again that the little book is open. The Word of God is never closed; it is always open to those who are willing to take it.

Verse 9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

John asked the angel to give him the little book, but he was again told to take it. This is the second time he has been told that he must take the book, which emphasizes the fact that every person is responsible for his own actions in seeking and accepting God’s almighty Word. No one can do it for us, and God will not overwhelm us with his Word in some miraculous way. The gospel is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16); however, it is our responsibility to follow the commands he has given in order to receive that salvation.

John is instructed to take the book and “eat it up.” This must symbolize the thorough study or digestion of God’s Word to which every Christian should apply himself. This will enable us to correctly understand God’s message (2Tim. 2:15).

John is also told that as he eats the book, it will be sweet as honey in his mouth, but it will make his belly bitter. It is easy to understand that God’s Word would be sweet to those who read, understand, and obey it; thereby, receiving the forgiveness of sins as God has promised. The psalmist writes in Ps. 119:103, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” God’s words are sweet to those who accept them.

Understanding why one’s belly would be made bitter after digesting God’s Word is somewhat more difficult. This must be a reference to the necessity of teaching God’s Word to others once it has been studied and digested. This is in agreement with verse 11, which states that John must

once again prophesy before many people. A situation similar to this is recorded in Ezek. 2:9-3:4. Ezekiel was sent a “roll of a book” from God and told to eat it. After he ate the book, God instructed him to go and speak his words unto the house of Israel. Therefore, after Ezekiel ate the roll that contained God's words, he then went and spoke the words that he had eaten to the people of Israel. When anyone studies and understands God's Word today, they must feel the necessity of teaching others. A passage that is parallel in meaning to the message of this verse is Jn. 7:37-38 which states, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” As one studies and understands God's Word, it will be sweet as honey to his mouth, but his belly will become bitter in order that the rivers of living water will flow from it.

Verse 10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

When John consumes the little book, the results were exactly as the angel had stated. It was sweet to his taste but bitter to his belly. Obedience to the gospel is the sweetest thing on earth; however, there is also a great urgency to teach others this same sweet gospel.

Verse 11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

This verse once again supports the interpretation of the “little book open” as being the New Testament. John had just taken the little book and consumed it, and is immediately told in the following verse that he must prophesy again to many nations and people. We should point out that John is actually participating in this vision. Therefore, the lesson being given to subsequent readers of Revelation is that each one of us must study, consume, and digest God's Word and then deliver that message to all people of the world.