

Just as there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals (chapter 7), there is also a brief pause in the judgments between the sixth and seventh trumpets. Here John sees an angel declaring that the Old Testament prophesies are about to be fulfilled as Christ returns to judge the ungodly and establish the entire earth as His kingdom.

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: 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,

“And I saw another [another of the same kind] mighty angel come down from heaven” - Some commentators believe this angel to be Christ Himself, but the Greek word for “another” means “another of the same kind,” that is, another being of the same kind as the angels John has already been describing. Also, notice that this angel is coming down (not going down) from heaven. This indicates that John’s current perspective is from earth.

“clothed [surrounded; wrapped] with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head” - The angel was not naked under a cloud but he was surrounded by a cloud wherever he went. The cloud can be associated with God’s glory and presence. John also saw a rainbow around the angel’s head, a symbol of God’s mercy in the midst of judgment.

“and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire” - The angel’s face was radiant with glory and his feet burned like pillars of fire. The cloud, the rainbow, the radiant face and burning feet seem to indicate that this angel had just come from the presence of God. Moses’ face glowed temporarily after he had spent some time with God on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 34:29).

“And he had in his hand a little book open” - Some have tried to identify this “little book” with the seven-sealed book of chapter 6, but that book was apparently large since it was written within and without and had seven seals. This book is “little” (implying less writing) and is open. We will need to gather more clues as we work our way through this chapter before we can attempt to identify the book.

“and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth” - As the angel sets foot on the earth, he takes a stance spanning land and sea, indicating that the declaration he is preparing to make applies to the entire earth. Since the angel is speaking for God, his stance also (and possibly primarily) illustrates God’s sovereignty over the entire earth.

³ And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴ 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.

“And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth” - Apparently the angel did not cry out any intelligible words, unlike the thunders which John indicates did say something intelligible. If the angel has said something understandable one would presume that John would have said so. Instead, it seems the angel, like a lion, gives a loud victory cry of triumph, as implied by the declaration he makes in vs. 5-7.

“and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices” - Seven thundering voices respond to the cry of the angel. It’s not clear if the seven thunders uttered in unison or each one in turn with their own statements.

“And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write” - In contrast to the angel crying out with a loud voice like a lion, John understood what was said by the thunders and was preparing to write it down. This phrase also gives us evidence that John did not write Revelation from memory after the vision was ended but was at least taking some notes during the vision for his use later on.

“and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not” - A voice from heaven (perhaps God’s) forbids John from writing down what was uttered by the seven thunders. Obviously God did not want those things revealed and so John apparently took these utterances to the grave. It would be useless to speculate at what was spoken by the thunders, but apparently the information would do more damage than good if it had been revealed.

⁵ And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, ⁶ And sware 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:

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven” - John’s attention goes back to the angel standing on the land and sea who is now raising his hand to heaven to take an oath.

“And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever” - The angel swears by God Himself, the Eternal One, of the certainty of what he is about to declare. Such swearing by a greater entity to validate a statement as true was a common practice in those days, as we see in **Hebrews 6:13, 16**: *“¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself...¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.”* Daniel sees an angel in his vision do the same thing when asked how much time will pass before the prophesies he was seeing would be fulfilled: **Dan. 12:7** *“And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”*

“who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth...and the sea, and the things which are therein” - The angel’s actions so far have spoken to God’s absolute sovereignty over the earth (standing on both land and sea, giving the cry of triumph). He now adds to the description of the God he is swearing by. He describes God as the creator of not only heaven, earth and sea, but everything within each of them. God is sovereign over all of His creation!

“that there should be time no longer” - The angel is saying that there will be no more delay in the fulfillment of his declaration, for the time has arrived for it to be done. Essentially, time will have run out for Satan and mankind’s rebellion against God because He is preparing to exercise His sovereign authority over the earth and end their the rebellion.

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 angel declares that the sounding of the seventh trumpet will signal the completion/fulfillment of “the mystery of God.” In scripture a mystery is not a puzzle to be unraveled but a truth that has been hidden in the mind of God but at some point He has revealed it to His people. Biblical mysteries are not to confuse God’s people but truths that He reveals when the time is right.

What is the “mystery of God?” Our first clue is that this mystery has already been declared to the prophets. The central theme of the OT prophecies that remain unfulfilled concern the “Day of the LORD” when God will restore and prosper Israel as a nation and the LORD will reign over the entire world during a time of righteousness and peace. This idea is also the central theme of Revelation, which culminates in the return of Christ and the establishing of the kingdom of God on earth. As we saw in Rev. 1:1, the Greek word for “revelation” (*apokálypsis*) means “revealing; manifestation; appearing.” It may be that the “mystery of God” is the fulfillment of all of these prophecies by the return of Christ when He judges the ungodly and reigns 1,000 years over the earth from Jerusalem.

We saw back in chapter 6 that the sixth seal unleashes the events signaling the return of Christ (Rev. 6:12-17). It appears that the sixth trumpet and the interlude between it and the seventh is also preparing the way for Christ’s return and the establishing of God’s kingdom on earth for it will be heralded by the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-19).

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. 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.

The same voice from heaven that forbade John from writing the utterances of the seven thunders now commands him to go and take the “little book” from the angel that was holding it. When John asks for the book, the angel instructs him to eat it, warning him that although it will taste sweet in his mouth, it will upset his stomach.

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.

John obeys and, just as the angel predicted, it was sweet in his mouth but bitter to his belly. The context of the chapter, along with what the angel says to John in v. 11, seem to imply that the contents of the little book may have been the statement that the angel raised his hand and swore before God and declared. The finishing/completion/realization of the mystery of God is bittersweet. On the one hand there is the sweetness of God establishing His sovereignty over the earth as He takes control of it from Satan and mankind. On the other hand is the bitterness of God’s judgment on unrepentant mankind.

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

The angel informs John that his ministry is not over, for he must continue to prophesy (preach) the gospel to as many people as possible. He must warn them of the judgment to come and point them to the Savior that will redeem them and rescue them from that judgment. According to tradition, John is later freed from Patmos and returns to minister at Ephesus until his death. Perhaps during his time after Patmos John is able to continue to spread the gospel through his preaching and writings.