

REVELATION

Experience & Mission of the 144,000

Revelation 10:7

May 04, 2024

Last week we concluded our examination of the 7 Trumpets.

Today, we will turn our attention to the Interlude in Revelation 10:1-11:14

The Interlude between the 6th and 7th Seals introduced us to God's end-time spiritual army – the 144,000 (Rev. 7).

The Interlude between the 6th and 7th Trumpets reveals their Experience and Mission.

Before the blowing of the 7th Trumpet, John sees a mighty "angel" descending from heaven. He is clothed in a cloud, a rainbow is above his head, his face shone like the sun and his feet were like pillars of fire. Sound Familiar?

- Jesus was enveloped in a cloud (Matthew 17:5)
- He went up in a cloud (Acts 1:9)
- He is coming in the clouds (Rev. 1:7)
- The rainbow was the sign of a Covenant between God and the people of earth (Genesis 9:12-13)
- A rainbow appeared around God (Ezekiel 1:28)
- A rainbow encircles the Throne of God (Rev. 4:3)
- His face shone like the sun (Matthew 17:2, Rev. 1:16)
- His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace (Ezekiel 1:27; Revelation 1:15)

Even though John describes this Being as an angel, the evidence suggests that this it is none other than Jesus.

In his hand he holds a little scroll, which represent the prophecies of Daniel that had been sealed until the time of the end.

Daniel 12:8-9 - I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.

Before John can speak, Jesus plants his feet on the sea and the land, indicating the universal scope of the message about to be proclaimed. He roars like a lion and in response, the 7 thunders answer back, indicating the message is coming from the throne of God.

Job 37:5 - God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding.

John is about to write down what he has just heard, but a voice from heaven stops him: "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down." (10:4b)

What the 7 thunders have just said is, therefore, not relevant to God's people.

One of the things humans are really good at is making stuff up when they are not given an immediate or satisfactory answer.

Conspiracy theories are born out of unanswered questions.....

When studying prophecy, it is important not to venture beyond what God has revealed. We must resist the urge to make stuff up to fit our own narrative.

God has revealed to us everything that is important regarding our salvation. However, there are some things about the future that God has chosen not to reveal. We have to be okay with that.

Deuteronomy 29:29 - The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Jesus now raises his right hand toward heaven and swears by the One who is eternal and who created the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them, that "there will no longer be time."

However, John is then told that the end is not yet here. The Mystery of God will be complete and the end will come at the sound of the 7th Trumpet.

So, what is Jesus talking about?

There are 2 Greek words for our word "time"

- *Chronos* = a period or span of time.
- *Kairos* = a point in time.

It is "chronos" that is used here, indicating that a span of time has come to an end. Hmmm.....

The time-prophecies in the Old Testament are located in which book? Daniel. All the time prophecies of Daniel, (1260, 1290, 1335) fit under one umbrella of time – 2300 days/years – which ended in 1844.

It is revealed to John that the time prophecies of Daniel have an end date during the time of the 6th Trumpet, which lines up with our conclusions from studying Daniel's time prophecies.

- "This time, which the angel declares with a solemn oath, is not the end of this world's history, neither of probationary time, but of prophetic time, which should precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844" {Ellen White - SDA Bible Commentary}

The voice from heaven spoke to John again, instructing him to take the little scroll and eat it. He is told that it will turn his stomach sour but will be sweet "like honey" in his mouth. John reports that this is exactly what happened.

John's experience reminds us of Ezekiel's experience: He, too, was given a scroll and commanded to eat it. He found that it was "sweet as honey" in his mouth. The Lord went on to explain the bitter experience Ezekiel would have as he proclaimed God's message to the people of Israel (Ezekiel 2:9-3:11 also see Jeremiah 15:16 and Psalm 119:103).

God is revealing the Experience and Mission of his end-time people. It will be bittersweet. They will be filled with the sweetness of the Gospel message, but the mission will be a difficult and bitter one – filled with rejection, hardship and persecution.

John is now handed a reed and told to measure "to evaluate or judge" the Temple and the altar and to count the number of worshippers, but to exclude the courtyard.

This instruction echoes Ezekiel's vision where he saw a divine person measuring the Temple for the purpose of restoring it (Ezekiel 40-43).

We can conclude, then, that John's instruction has the same purpose – to restore the Temple in Heaven. But why would the Temple in Heaven need to be restored?

In the Old Testament, the Temple, Altar and Worshippers are only mentioned together in connection to the Day of Atonement in Leviticus (16:16-19, 30-31), which was the yearly day of judgment when God evaluated the stored sins of his people and then permanently removed said sins from the Tabernacle.

The courtyard (earth) and the Gentiles are not to be measured, which means, the evaluation is limited to God's people – they are the only ones under investigation.

Revelation 11:1 refers to the pre-Advent judgment, which exclusively concerns God's people. This judgment must take place prior to the Second Coming because its purpose is to determine whether those who claim to be God's people really belong to and are faithful to him. Seventh-day Adventists believe this judgment began in the fall of 1844.

Prior to this event, however, the Gentiles trample the holy city for 42 months.

Other than in Revelation (11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5), where is the only other place this time period is mentioned? Daniel.

Daniel 7:25 – He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

Daniel 12:6-9 – One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

Let's do some math (based on the Lunar Calendar).

360 (time) + 720 (times) + 180 (½ time) = 1260 (days) ÷ 30 (days) = 42 (months)

John is talking about the same span of time that Daniel was talking about.

As we know, that span of time began 538 AD and ended in 1798 AD. By 538 AD the institutional church was without rival. Their political/religious power would continue until 1798 when Pope Pius VI was expelled from Rome by French General Bertier.

It was during this period that truth compromised with error and human traditions replaced the pure Gospel – corrupting the church. People were not allowed to own a Bible and those who opposed the power of the institutional church were imprisoned, persecuted, tortured and killed.

During this 42 months of religious persecution, 2 new characters appear: God's 2 Witnesses. God will give power to his 2 witnesses, who will prophecy, "clothed in sackcloth," for 1260 days.

John describes the 2 witnesses as follows:

- They are the 2 olive trees and the 2 lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth (v. 4).

Ancient Israel's legal system required 2 witnesses in order to establish that something was true (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Jesus followed this principle when he sent out his disciples 2 by 2 to preach the Gospel (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). The early church continued the same practice (Acts 13:2).

In Zechariah 4, the prophet saw a lampstand with an olive tree on either side of it. He was told that the two olive trees represented "the two anointed ones" standing by the Lord of the earth. The olive trees provide a continual supply of oil to the lampstands so that the light never went out.

- If anyone wants to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies (v. 5).

Jeremiah 5:11-14 - The house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me," declares the LORD. They have lied about the LORD; they said, "He will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine. The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them; so let what they say be done to them." Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes.

- They have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain and to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want (v.6).

Elijah, by God's word, closed up heaven, so that it did not rain for 3 ½ years (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; James 5:17).

Moses, by God's word, turned water into blood and struck the land of Egypt with an additional 9 plagues (Exodus 7-11).

Symbolically, then, the 2 Witnesses represent the Bible as a whole – The Old and New Testaments together – shedding the light and truth of God on a dark world:

Psalm 119:105 – Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Matthew 24:14 – And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

John 5:39 – You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,

John 17:17 – Sanctify (set apart) them by the truth; your word is truth.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

During the Middle Ages, God's word was hidden by the traditions of men, and yet, the Bible still spoke through people willing to place their lives on line. The Word of God was preserved through the likes of the Waldenses, the Huguenots, Jerome, Huss, Wycliff, Tyndale, Knox and Calvin. Though they were weak, walking through life in sackcloth, their message was strong.

Isaiah 49:2 – He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

Jeremiah 1:6-8 – “Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

At the conclusion of the 1260 “days,” the 2 Witnesses are killed by “the beast coming up from the abyss.”

The beast is a symbol of a political power that steps onto the scene at the end of the prophetic 1260 days and possesses the characteristics of Sodom's wickedness (Genesis 19:4-11), Egypt's arrogance (Exodus 5:2) and Jerusalem's rebelliousness (2 Chronicles 36:14-16; John 19:12-15).

Satan's attempts to kill the word of God in the Middle Ages failed, so he switched tactics. Historicists identify the killing of the 2 Witnesses with the secular assault on the Bible and the French Revolution (1787-1799). Specifically, the 3 ½ years between 1793-1797, during which time the French government established a state-sponsored “anti-religion” religion known as the Cult of Reason. Bibles were burned and God was declared dead. Religion was abolished and all religious practice banned.

<https://www.iwp.edu/articles/2018/01/12/the-dechristianization-of-france-during-the-french-revolution/>

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/french-revolution-and-catholic-church>

The “killing” of the Word of God brought great joy to those who “dwell on the earth.” Why? Because the Word of God always troubles the conscience. A person who hears the Gospel is placed in a position where a choice must be made – to either accept or reject what they have heard. Those who are unwilling to surrender find no peace.

Hebrews 4:12 – For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The celebration, however, does not last. After 3 ½ days, God breathes life into the 2 witnesses and they stand up (see Ezekiel 37:1-10).

Those who had been celebrating are now filled with terror. They thought they had silenced the voice that had been tormenting them.

After their resurrection, the two witnesses are taken to heaven. There is a great earthquake that strikes a 10th of the great city and kills 7,000 people. The rest of the people are filled with fear and give glory to God.

This symbolic “earthquake” only destroys a part of Satan's kingdom.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Yet, as a result, the rest of the “people of the earth” are filled with fear and give glory to God.

This event parallels the 1st Angels Message of Revelation 14:7

Revelation 14:7 – He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

One of the outcomes of the French Revolution was a great revival of interest in the Bible.

- The 2nd Great Awakening – the religious movement of the early 19th century – began in the US in 1795.
- “Numerous Bible societies were founded from the beginning of the 19th century in the wake of the missionary societies established between 1792 and 1800 in England, Holland, and Germany. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804, the Bible Society of Basle in 1804, that of Berlin in 1805, Holland in 1814, Norway in 1815, the American Bible Society in 1816, and the Société Biblique de Paris in 1818.” – www.encyclopedia.com

These Great Bible and Missionary Societies spread the gospel across the world like never before in history – the 2 witnesses were alive once again.

Even though these events cover a specific period of earth's history, they are not limited to that time. Throughout the ages, God has always had people who are faithful to him. Who have not compromised with the world and who have stood strong in Bible Truth in the face of unrelenting pressure.

The explosion of the Gospel message, that began as a push back against the atheistic results of the Enlightenment will continue to the end.

Matthew 28:18-20 – Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”