

Revelation 10 & 11:1–14 — Parenthesis: Sixth and Seventh Trumpets

Notes on The Revelation with Practical Reflections

H. H. Snell

Chapter 10, 11:1-14:

The Parenthesis Between the Sixth And Seventh Trumpets

As we found a parenthetical announcement between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, so there is also a parenthesis between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. Sore and terrible judgments had been poured upon men, as we have seen, and before the climax, when Christ shall take unto Him His great power and reign, the visions and attendant acts, delineated in the tenth and part of the eleventh chapters, are brought before God's servant. The tenth chapter evidently intimates that Christ is soon about to assert His own rights in the earth, and to declare that He is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The mighty angel clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow about his head, his countenance like the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, seems symbolical of our Lord; for He is presented to us in a somewhat similar appearance in the first chapter. It was a vision John had of a mighty angel thus symbolizing Christ, because the period for the actual return of Christ had not yet come. It is, doubtless, to inform us, that however hardened, unbelieving, and impenitent men may be, yet that Christ is Lord of all, and is shortly about to lay claim to all, and, therefore, that matters will be rapidly hastened. We must refer to the book of Daniel to get anything like a clear elucidation of this tenth chapter. In the vision recorded by the prophet in the twelfth of Daniel, he says, And one said to THE MAN clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 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 a half; and when He shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things SHALL BE FINISHED (Dan. 12:6, 7).

The man clothed in linen refers us back to the vision in the tenth chapter, fifth and sixth verses, by the side of the river Hiddekel, which corresponds with the vision John had of one like unto the Son of man,

in the first chapter of Revelation. So that no doubt can be left on the mind that the man clothed in linen,

which Daniel saw, is Christ. In the tenth chapter of Revelation, John says, 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:

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 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. 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 [or rather, that there should be no longer delay]: 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 {Rev. 10:1-7}.

Thus we see that the similarity between Daniel's vision and John's is most striking; and by comparing them, as God by His Spirit may enable us, we shall be greatly helped in the understanding of both. Daniel, however, is commanded to shut up the words, and seal the book to the time of the end (Dan. 12:4);

whereas, John sees the little book open {Rev. 10:2},

because, I suppose, the time of the end, that is, the end of the age, or seventieth week, or the last half of it, has now come. The question in Daniel is, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

The answer is, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half {Rev. 12:7},

or three years and a half. In Revelation, instead of its being translated that there should be time no longer, it should be that there should be no longer delay. The thought that the time state is over, and eternity come, would be most incorrect; for the millennial age has not only yet to come, but John is told that he must prophesy again to peoples and nations. It is then an intimation between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, that there shall be no longer delay, and that restraint shall be withheld to the full consummation of the abominations of the wicked one; that the mystery of iniquity shall be quickly and fully developed. Daniel speaks of all being finished at the end of a time, times, and a half; and John also says, that when the seventh angel

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shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished. Both in Daniel and in Revelation the person lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by Him that liveth for ever; only in Revelation it is added, who created heaven, and the things which therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein {Rev. 10:6};

because, as we have repeatedly noticed in the apocalyptic period, God is denied by man, not only as Redeemer, but also as Creator. The mystery of God {Rev. 10:7}

referred to here cannot be "the mystery" of the Church, the body of Christ, spoken of by Paul: 1st. Because the mystery of the Church was not revealed in other ages unto prophets, but was kept secret since the world began (Eph. 3:5; Rom. 16:25); whereas, concerning the mystery of God,

it is here said that it should be finished, as He hath declared to the prophets. 2nd. We know that the Church is in heaven, before the book is taken, the seals opened, or trumpets sounded. Besides “the mystery” of the one body, the Church, there are other things in Scripture associated with the word “mystery.” We have the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16);

the

changing and the taking up of the saints, and identical with 1 Cor. 15, where we get the mystery {1 Cor. 15:51}

of the living saints changed, the dead raised, and the last trump (1 Cor. 15:52).

Appearances are certainly much in favour of such a thought; but for reasons before assigned, it cannot be the Church which is referred to in Rev. 10:7. Nor are the last trump,

and the voice of the seventh angel (of Rev. 10:7),

identical; for the former is connected with the saints being raised and changed, the latter with the Lord’s return from heaven with His saints. Neither are we to understand, that by “the last trump” is meant the last that will ever be sounded, any more than “the last day,” or the day when we shall be raised up (John 6), is the last period of time. In both cases we are clearly to understand, that they are the last to us in relation to this present time. That “the day of the Lord,” so often spoken of in Scripture, will have its course for a thousand years after we have been raised up “at the last day,” that is, after we have our “last day,” is certain, and also there can be no doubt but that after the raising of the saints “at the last trump,” another great trumpet will be blown (Isa. 27:13; Matt. 24:31)

mystery (1 Cor. 15:51)

of the resurrection and change of the saints; the mystery (Rom. 11:24, 25),

of Israel; the mystery (Eph. 1:9, 10),

of all things in heaven and in earth being gathered together in one, in Christ; the mystery (Rev. 17:5),

of the mother of harlots; the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7), etc.

Here it is the mystery of God,

the mystery, as I judge, that God should allow man to go on in such a course of unparalleled evil, and under such Satanic energy. Some have thought that “the mystery of God” is God grafting Israel again into their own olive tree, which prophets have so repeatedly foretold -- the time when Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa. 27:6);

but this is not called in scripture “the mystery of God.” However, it is clear that the sounding of the seventh angel will be the time when not only judgment will fall upon the ungodly, but when Christ will deliver, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and bring His ancient people into their long looked-for blessing and promised inheritance. Some have thought, that because “the mystery of God,” being

“finished,” is accompanied with the last or seventh of the apocalyptic trumpets, it must necessarily be the time of the

to gather Israel -- those who are now scattered to the four winds. It is evident, also, that this trumpet of Isaiah and Matthew is after the seven apocalyptic trumpets have sounded, because the last of their actions ushers in the personal return of Christ. Some one has said, that “the last trump” of 1 Cor. 15 is properly termed the last, because it announces the close or termination of the course of the Church’s pilgrimage on earth. In 1 Thess. 4 it is called the trump of God {1 Thess. 4:16},

but it is blown with an entirely different action and history from that of Isa. 27, or the apocalyptic. We might put the trumpet of Isa. 27 in company with that of Matt. 24:31, and it is blown in a scene of action which succeeds that of Rev. 8, 9, 11:15, where we have the trumpets of the Apocalypse. Among the several actions of the trumpets in Num. 10, we find that the last in order was for the gathering of the congregation together. The chapter concludes with the account of John’s being commanded to go and take the little book which is open in the angel’s hand {Rev. 10:8},

which he did, and was then ordered to eat it up {Rev. 10:9}.

This also he did and according to the saying of the angel, he found that it was in his mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as he had eaten it, his belly was bitter. Then it is said to him, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples and nations, and tongues, and kings {Rev. 10:11}.

As I have before remarked, this last command shows that the end of the age is not yet come. But as the apostle had here a very similar experience to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:3), we may gather this important practical instruction, that if we would be

God’s faithful witnesses on the earth, we must know what it is to eat God’s word -- the open book. Jeremiah said, Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart {Jer. 15:16}.

We must know, too, the inward experience of the truth. It is very sweet to gather up portions of God’s word. The Scripture often becomes an object of intense present interest, as well as of comfort, but it has its bitter workings. It makes painful discoveries of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, reveals the secret springs of motive and desire, and uncovers the mask of worldliness; for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart {Heb. 4:12}.

In the parenthesis between the openings of the sixth and seventh seals, we had the tribes of the children of Israel brought before us, as well as nations, kindreds, and tongues; so in the parenthetical announcement between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, John is not only commanded to prophesy again before many nations and tongues, but Israel, too, is again introduced. Daniel’s people, with the holy city and temple of God, are presented at the opening of the 11th chapter. Gentiles are treading under foot the holy city. When this scene is fulfilled, Jews and Gentiles will be recognised as

such. Not so now; for in the Church of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all believers are one in Christ; but when the body is complete, and we have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then, as we have before seen, the seventieth week of prophecy relating to Daniel's people and city will have its accomplishment; therefore Jews and Gentiles will be again recognised as such. It will be the transition time between the coming of the Lord for His saints, and His coming with His saints. Our chapter, therefore, begins with the following announcement: And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (Rev. 11:1, 2).

We must distinguish, however, between THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES {Luke 21:24},
and THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES {Rom. 11:25};

for they are very distinct in Scripture. It is clearly the former which is referred to here. Our Lord said that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

We may say that the times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar, from which time, more or less, Israel and the holy city have been trodden down by them, and Gentilism has had the ascendancy. It ran through its four successive monarchies, and since then has been hastening on to its completion in the ten kingdoms, and final destruction (Dan. 2:31-45). The times of the Gentiles are thus running on, and Jerusalem is trodden down. After the Church is removed, the Gentiles will still tread it down, as we here see; and even when the Lord comes in glory with His

saints, He will find Jerusalem compassed with armies and then the end of "the times of the Gentiles" will have come. The Lord Himself shall fight against those nations (Zech. 14:1, 2). He is the stone cut out without hands that shall fall upon the Gentile image, break it in pieces, and scatter it as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors. THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES

is a very different thing. Israel, as a people, are now set aside, though a remnant is saved by the gospel, according to the election of grace. God is filling up the intended number of Gentiles to be saved (the word fulness might be rendered "complement"), and thus calling out of the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14). When God shall have fully gathered out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, the allotted number unto Himself, then shall the fulness of the Gentiles be come in -- come in to God; and Israel, now as a nation altogether under judicial blindness, except those to whom Christ is revealed, will then be the object of God's peculiar care and blessing. Paul calls this a mystery, and he would not have saints be ignorant of it. He says that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so [that is, in this order] all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Rom. 11:25-27).

The Deliverer, Christ, must come to effect this. Thus we see that "the times of the Gentiles" and "the fulness of the Gentiles" are two very different things. Our chapter, as we have seen, introduces us

to the holy city, the temple of God, the altar,

and them that worship {Rev. 11:1, 2}

-- all Jewish elements; and a people recognized as worshiping, not on Christian but on Jewish ground, and oppressed by the Gentiles outside. At this very time, too, God has His own special testimony. There are two witnesses. Their testimony is not of the heavenly calling, like ours, but they stand before the God of the earth, and assert His rights. They are like two olive-trees for fruitfulness, and two candlesticks as bearers of light in the midst of gross darkness. They do not bear the testimony of the gospel of the grace of God, but a miraculous and righteous testimony, like that of Moses in the days of hardened Pharaoh, and Elijah in the time of infidel Ahab. They testify to the reality of the living God, and are clothed in sackcloth, under a deep sense of the dishonor done to His holy and blessed name; they have power to shut heaven that it rain not, and to turn water into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues as often as they will. Moreover, they are not in the spirit of the grace of Christ, who prayed for His murderers, and returned blessing for cursing; but these witnesses are commissioned to execute vengeance on their enemies. This marks this testimony as coming on after the present gospel testimony shall have closed, and shows that the whole scene is characterized by Jewish and earthly righteous principles, and not by the gospel of the grace of God. It is an important point to

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notice, because it proves that the gathering out of the members of the body of Christ by the gospel of the grace of God must have been finished before this opposite character of testimony is introduced. We cannot conceive that God would command, and give power by His Spirit to His servants, to love their enemies {see Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27}

and devour their enemies {see Rev. 11:5}

at the same time. If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed {Rev. 11:5}.

Their testimony will continue for twelve hundred and sixty days, which is equal to about forty and two months, or three years and a half. At the close of this the beast, or Man of Sin, is brought before us for the first time in the Revelation. When they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and overcome them, and kill them {Rev. 11:7}.

To kill the body is all that man or Satan can do. Their dead bodies lie in the street of the city where our Lord was crucified -- Jerusalem now comparable only to wicked Sodom and infidel Egypt; and both Jews and Gentiles look at their dead bodies for three days and a half, and will not permit them to be buried; and, as we might expect, because of their death, these dwellers upon earth rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth {Rev. 11:10}.

Elijah was said to be a troubler of Israel, and God's true servants are a trouble to the world still, and ever must be, until Jesus is King over all the earth and every knee bows to Him. But God is the God of resurrection; and this is an idea far beyond the human intellect to conceive; and, as the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead struck the ungodly with utter confusion, so here again God's own power in raising the dead and shaking the earth, will turn the merriment and rejoicing of the ungodly into fear and distress. Resurrection has been and will be God's way of vindicating His own servants and of publicly demonstrating the reality of His own truth. These faithful martyrs may lie in the street and appear only as worthless corpses and vanquished tormentors; but after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand {Rev. 11:11-13}.

The effect of this was, that the survivors were affrighted, and gave glory, not to the God of the earth before whom these witnesses stood, and whose rights they contended for, but to the God of heaven {Rev. 11:13}.

They were troubled and terrified, like many others have been, at what they saw and heard; but we do not read that they bowed to Jesus as the Lord of heaven and earth, and took refuge in Him as their Savior. Oh, no! the scene forcibly reminds us of our Lord's own testimony to the dire depravity of the human heart, which shows that, if man rejects God's own word, no visions or calamities will savingly arrest him. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead {Luke 16:31}.

This scene closes the parenthetic announcement between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. It is followed by the solemn statement, The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly {Rev. 11:14}.