

The Apocalypse of St. John

Chapter Ten

In the last chapter the first two woes were unleashed upon the world (these corresponded to Trumpets 5 & 6). Now...

Ignatius Catholic Study Bible (ICSB) Note 10:1-11:14, Overview:

An interlude separates the sixth (9:13-21) and seventh trumpet (11:15:19), just as an interlude separate the sixth and seventh seal (7:1-17). This one sets in motion the second half of the book by renewing the commission to John, charged at the beginning of the book with writing down the prophetic visions (1-11), to prophesy "again" (10:11).

Orthodox Study Bible (OSB) Note 10:1-11:13

Orthodox Bible Study (OBS) Overview: "After the blowing of the sixth trumpet, we are brought closer to the end of the age. All that remains is the blowing of the seventh trumpet. But before this narrated, St. John inserts a series of visions meant to encourage the Church to persevere in preaching the Gospel and holding to [the Faith](#), even in the face of martyrdom." – Pg.114

Read 10:1-2

OBS The Angel is described as mighty (or strong) to indicate this is a key and powerful event [in this case, the commissioning of the Church to preach the Gospel to the nations]. The angel is clothed with a cloud, b/c he travels on the clouds from heaven to earth (just as the Son of Man is brought on the clouds from heaven to earth in Daniel 7:13). The rainbow was upon his head as a kind of heavenly turban reflecting the glory of God's throne from which the angel proceeds (see Rev. 4:3). His face shines as the sun, showing he comes from the presence of God (just as Moses' face Ex. 34:29). His feet were as pillars of fire to remind us that just as the Israelites were led through the wilderness at night by a pillar of fire - so this angel also comes to lead the Church through the wilderness of suffering.

The angel has a little book for the Church (a "biblaridion" rather than a scroll "biblion"). This represents the Gospel which the Church must take into all the world. -Pg. 115

OSB Note 1, 2

OBS The immense angel, like a colossus stands tall above the earth so that his voice can reach all. -Pg.115

Read 10:3-4

OBS The angel cries out with a great voice, as when a lion roars. This roar is a challenge to the world and a call for the servants of God to proclaim God's message with all boldness -to prophesy to the nations. -Pg. 115

OSB Note 3, 4a

ADD: In the Bible thunder is often associated biblically with a revelation or theophany of God. Seven thunders means the ultimate revelation of God, in all its fullness.

OBS Just as thunder in the heavens warns those on earth of a coming storm, so these seven thunders serve as warnings for those on earth to heed the Church's Gospel. -Pg. 116

OSB Note 3, 4b

Add: What does it mean biblically to prophesy and who is a prophet? A prophet is someone who declares the Word of God or God's message. So the open book given to John by the angel symbolizes the open proclamation of the Gospel. There is nothing secretive about what is known as the "Kerygma," (Gk. Preaching or Proclamation) which is the Gospel that the Church proclaims. Again, the roaring like a lion symbolizes that proclamation. Yet there are mysteries St. John is given which must be sealed up until it is time for God's final mystery to be revealed.

Read 10:5-6

ICSB: The immediate background is Dan 10-12, where Daniel encounters a heavenly figure who stood over the Tigris River. This messenger, too, had a glorious appearance (Dan 10:5-6) and swore an oath that God's plan would be fulfilled in the future (Dan 12:7). John stands at the other end of this prophetic pledge: what was far distant in Daniels day is fast approaching in his own (10:6).

Read 10:7

OSB Note 5-7

OBS -Within the angel's solemn oath is also a rebuke of the pagan idolatry rampant in John's day (Remember false worship, false belief & immorality go hand and hand). So the angel proclaims the eternal God as the only God and creator of all things (heaven and earth and the sea and all that are in them). According to this oath, the End is fast approaching, and the Church will be rewarded for its faithful perseverance in preaching the Gospel. In the coming days of the sounding of the seventh angel and the last trumpet, then the mystery of God will be finished (or accomplished). - Pg. 116

Add: The Gk. word used by John for “finished” here is: τελέω teléō, tel-eh'-o; from [G5056](#); It means: to end, i.e. complete, execute, conclude, discharge (a debt):—accomplish, make an end, expire, fill up, finish, go over, pay, perform. It is the same root word Jesus uses when He breathes His last on the cross and says “it is finished.”

OBS: This mystery of God, according to St. Paul was hidden from the previous ages, but now is revealed through the Church's preaching (Rom 16:25). The Church is here called to endure a little longer until the final trumpet is sounded and its labors are over. -Pg. 116

Read 10:8-9

Read 10:10-11

OSB Note 10:8-11

Add: The eating of the book can also remind us of our first parents Adam and Eve and their eating of the forbidden fruit. To eat something to take it into you and let it be part of your being. For our first parents this was sin. For St. John it is God's Word. The bitter-sweetness reminds us of what Fr. Thomas Hopko used to call the bad news of the good news. The good news is we have salvation in Christ. The “bad news” is that this means we must take up our cross and follow Him. There is no other way. But this is actually rhetoric b/c it's not really bad news, because the only way to be happy is by joining our lives and our crosses to Christ and His cross. This is the only way to true happiness.

OBS: The whole scene reflects the prophetic vision of Ezekiel. In Ez. 2:8-3:4 he was commanded to eat the scroll containing God's words (that is, to take them into his inmost being, making them a part of him) as a

preparation for speaking God's message to Israel. God's word was to be "sweet as honey in his mouth" (Ezek 3:3). Here St. John finds the Gospel message for the nations to be sweet as honey also, but after he eats it, it makes his stomach bitter. That is, though a joy to proclaim, it would lead to the bitterness of martyrdom. Pg. 118

OBS: The last statement: "You must prophesy again" means that St. John will continue his work of receiving visions and proclaiming them in the chapters to follow but it is also a call to continue the work of preaching the Gospel. St. John represents the whole Church, which must digest the word of God and proclaim it to the world (even if it sometimes seems bitter to the stomach), bringing His Word to many peoples, and nations and tongues and kings.

This is a call for us today: The Church may be tempted to shrink from this work during times of suffering, persecution and martyrdom, but it must persevere. Whatever the bitterness of suffering, the Church must fulfill its sacred commission (Mt 28:19-20).

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Chapter Eleven – Part A

Read 11:1-2

OSB Note 11:1, 2

OBS: The imagery of the reed is also in Ez. 40-42 and Zechariah 2. Reeds were bamboo-like canes that were long, straight and rigid enough to be used to measure lengths (often over 10 ft. long). John, like Ezekiel, is told to measure the temple to indicate its protection by God. The outer court is to be left unmeasured and unprotected by God. This is an image of the Church which is the true Sanctuary and Temple of God (according to St. Paul 1 Cor 3:16 & Eph 2:21-22). [Background for this is the second temple, built by Herod and destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD) had an inner sanctuary with its altar. Only Jews could enter these areas to pray and worship. Around these courts lay an outer court. Gentiles might enter this to pray but were permitted to go no further.]

The symbolism is that God might allow the nations to trample down and persecute the Church, the true and spiritual holy city of God, but only in its outer aspects. The inner life of the Church that is measured and known by

God, remains under His protection. Persecutors may even kill the bodies of the saints but their true life remains hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3) and untouchable.

Forty two months = 3 ½ years. This comes from the Book of Daniel (7:25; 12:7). It symbolizes a limited period and becomes in St. John's Apocalypse a paradigm (or pattern) for a short but savage period of persecution. - P.119-120

Read 11:3-4

OSB Note 11:3

OSB Note 11:4

Read 11:5-6

OSB Note 11:5, 6

Add: These two witnesses (or martyrs) incorporate many traditional biblical qualities of true prophets; Like Jonah who preached to Nineveh they are clothed in sackcloth (Jonah 3:4). Just as Elijah calls down fire from heaven upon those who wanted to arrest him (4 Kings 1:9-15) fire proceeds from their mouths and eats up their enemies. Like Elijah (3 Kings 17:1), they have authority to shut heaven so that no rain falls, resulting in the torment of draught. Like Moses (Ex 7:20; 8-10) they have power over the waters to turn them into blood so that the people no longer worship idols (Rev. 9:20). In Zechariah 4 the images of two olive trees and two lampstands represent God's unending presence. Likewise these two witnesses are seen as two lampstands along with an endless supply of olive oil (from the two trees), representing God's unending light and presence to the world. -P.121-122

Read 11:7-8

OSB Note 11:7

OSB Note 11:8

Note they are not killed until they have finished their "testimony" or "witness" (Gk. martyria) showing they were protected by God to complete their mission. This is the first mention of the beast and it literally says he

“conquers” them. At this point evil and the beast appear to have conquered. P.122-123

ICSB: Sodom and Egypt are places infamous for their moral depravity and oppression of God’s people.

Read 11:9-10

OSB Note 11:9

OBS On being left dead in the streets: The martyrdom of the two witnesses is a cause for jubilation on the part of their enemies. They gawk at their corpses for 3 ½ days not allowing them to be laid in a tomb –thus heaping these final insults on the two prophets who tormented them with their words and their powerful signs. P.123

OBS On the giving of gifts: When the Jews triumphed over their pagan foes and averted national annihilation, they celebrated their triumph by sending gifts to one another (Esther 9:21 LXX). In horrible parody of this, the enemies of God do the same thing. -P.123

Read 11:11-12

OSB Note 11:11

Read 11:13-14

OBS The lesson of the two witnesses has a double meaning. First it has the meaning of witnessing and proclaiming the Gospel. Just as the apostles were sent out two by two in order to proclaim the Good News to all those around them (Lk 10:1), so the Church’s faithful must do the same. The story also has the meaning of witnessing through martyrdom –as the word *martyria* signifies. Especially imprinted on the mind and heart of the original hearers would be the witness of the two holy and beloved martyrs who died in the great city of Rome, St. Peter and St. Paul. They are archetypal martyrs, giving the greatest of examples. Their blood was the seed of the Church. They form an image of the martyric Church, the embodiment and pattern for all martyrs. The two witnesses therefore are a symbol of the Church as she witnesses with power in the midst of the world, and seals her witness and proclamation with her own life -even with her own blood. –P.125

The lesson of the two witnesses for the readers (then and now) is that the Church must fearlessly speak its message for God will defend His faithful witnesses just as He defended these two prophets. Even if they are slain for the word of God, He will vindicate them in the end.