

The Strong Angel's Little Scroll
A Series on the Function of Revelation's Interludes: Part 2

Midway through the book of Revelation, between the sixth and seventh trumpet, there is a periscope involving a strong angel with a little scroll / book. In this second interlude (Rev 10:1-11:14), the apostle John observes a "strong" angel coming down from heaven and standing on earth holding a small scroll / book up towards heaven, and a voice from heaven instructs the apostle to take the book and eat it:

Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." (Rev 10:8-11)

While the idea of literally eating a small scroll may be hard to understand, an incident like this occurred earlier with the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, and it provides some clarity to the command given to the apostle John.

Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you." Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe. Then He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth. Then He said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel, nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate. (Ezek 2:8-3:7)

Several observations can be made of this passage in Ezekiel:

The scroll was full of lamentations, mourning and woe (Ezek 2:10).

Just as Ezekiel was told to "eat this scroll" and "speak to the house of Israel," the apostle John was told to "eat it" and "prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (Ezek 3:1; Rev 10:10-11).

Just like Ezekiel, the apostle John found the taste of the scroll "sweet as honey" (Ezek:3:3; Rev 10:9).

God's instruction of eating was intended to fill Ezekiel's "body with this scroll," and the ingested scroll enabled Ezekiel to prophesy in a manner that all would understand (Ezek 3:3-6). From this point on, at age 30 (Ezek 1:1), Ezekiel becomes a prophet of God.

Here an important observation must be made. Up until this point, the apostle John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and he was instructed to "write in a book" what he saw, "and send it to the seven churches" (Rev 1:10-11).

However, by eating the strong angel's scroll, he was given prophetic material that was additional to what saw while he "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This material was so important that he "must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (Rev 10:11). In other words, this prophesy was intended for the whole world beyond the seven churches!

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The change in prophetic content is immediate; the apostle John is instructed to see and **feel** what he is being shown; he is to "measure the temple of God and the altar" (Rev 11:1). During this tribulation period of trumpets, Jerusalem will apparently have a temple of God; however, at this time, Gentiles will be inappropriately "treading" or "trampling" around its outer court for 3-1/2 years (Rev 11:2).

Like the first interlude, this second interlude introduces another group of human beings: the Two Witnesses.

The Two Witnesses appear clothed in sackcloth and are prophesying to the world for a period of 3-1/2 years. As His witnesses, God will grant them the authority to:

Kill any who attempt to harm them by fire that flows from their mouths (Rev 11:5).

Have the power to stop the rain while they are prophesying (Rev 11:6).

Have the power to turn water into blood (Rev 11:6)

Have the power to invoke every plague known to man (i.e. diseases, the plagues of Exodus, etc.) upon the earth as often as they desire (Rev 11:6).

To God, the Two Witnesses are figuratively seen as "two olive trees" and "two lampstands that stand before the Lord on earth" (Rev 11:4). This precise imagery was used before during the restoration of the Second Temple for Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the governor of Judah:

The two olive trees represent two anointed servants of God who stand before the Lord on earth.

Then I said to him, "What are these **two olive trees** on the right of the lampstand and on its left?" And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?" So he answered me, saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." Then he said, "These are the **two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.**" (Zech 4:11-14)

The two lampstands represent what is behind the Two Witnesses, "not by might nor by power, but by God's spirit."

Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a **lampstand** all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side." Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, '**Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.**'" (Zech 4:1-6)

After their period of prophetic testimony, the "Beast from the Abyss" will make war and kill the Two Witnesses (Rev 11:7). The identity of the "Beast from the Abyss" poses a problem. The only beasts that the book of Revelation mentions is one from the sea (Rev 13:1) and one from the earth (Rev 13:11), both of whom are introduced in the third interlude. From the bottomless pit called the abyss is the fallen angel king of the abyss named Abaddon (Hebrew) / Apollyon (Greek) who was released when the fifth trumpet sounded signaling an unfallen angel to use a key to open the abyss (Rev 9:1-2, 11-12). It is very likely that it is this fallen angel who slays the Two Witnesses.

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The bodies of the Two Witnesses will be on a street in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified (Rev 11:8), which would be in the vicinity of the present day Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Their bodies will be left out for public viewing for 3-1/2 days (Rev 11:9-10), in which people worldwide will rejoice and celebrate, because there will be no more prophetic indictments nor harmful spectacular natural events and plagues.

With an audible voice from heaven, the world will see a visible rapture of the Two Witnesses and followed by an earthquake that destroys 1/10 of Jerusalem and kills seven thousand. This produces great fear among the people, and many will praise God (Rev 11:11-13). What is uncertain is how many will come to a genuine faith in God.

It is significant to note that the death of the Two Witnesses is the cause of the second woe, which associates the end of the Two Witnesses to the end of the sixth trumpet (Rev 11:13-14).

The Two Witnesses are reminiscent of the Old Testament prophet Moses who had the ability to invoke supernatural wonders and spectacular natural events to demonstrate to the world the reality of the God of the Hebrews.

God gave Moses a staff with which to perform the spectacular signs (Ex 4:17).

The signs were to validate his authority as God's spokesman to both the Hebrews and Pharaoh (Ex 4:15-16; 7:1-3).

And instead of recognizing the sovereignty of the God of the Hebrews, Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

Given the length of the ministry of the Two Witnesses (1260 days = 42 months = 3-1/2 years), it is possible to correlate these events to Daniel's 70th week.

Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for **forty-two months**. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for **twelve hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth." (Rev 11:2-3)

1. In Daniel's prophecy, the 70th week begins with the emergence of the "one who makes desolate" and midway through this seven year period, Believers will be prevented from worshiping and complete desolation and destruction will occur. Although Daniel's reference to sacrifice and grain offering do not correspond to the New Covenant, it is an indication that the worship of God is prohibited.

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, **but in the middle of the week** he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." (Dan 9:27)

Because the ministry of the Two Witnesses takes place when the Temple is preserved while its outer court is being "tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months" by the nations, it appears that they ministered during the early years of Daniel's 70th week.

2. Daniel's prophecy of the 70th week indicates that a covenant is made. While there is no information about this covenant, it is believed to be some sort of peaceful agreement – perhaps it was a covenant that allowed worship in the Temple, which would be violated when its desecration occurs. In John's third interlude, when Satan empowers the Antichrist (the Beast from the Sea, Rev 13:1-8), the beast is given the authority to act for 3-1/2 years "to make war with the saints and to overcome them." All of this is within the context of the last Gentile kingdom which God judges to: 1) finish the transgression, 2) to make an end of sin, 3) to make atonement for iniquity, and 4) to bring an everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24).

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There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and **authority to act for forty-two months** was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. **All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life** of the Lamb who has been slain. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. (Rev 13:5-8)

Because the Antichrist who had the authority to make war with the saints, it appears that he ruled during the latter part of Daniel's 70th week.

The second interlude is significant for introducing time and the Two Witnesses. This facilitates a hermeneutic correlation with Daniel's 70th week prophecy and God's judgment in Revelation, and it may be implied that the Two Witnesses ministered in the early part of Daniel's 70th week.