Christ Will Reign Forever and Ever

Revelation 10:1-11:19

Key Verse: 11:15 “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

 As we studied in chapters 6-9, the wrath of God is revealed when the seven seals are broken and the seven trumpets are sounded. Chapter 10 is the second interlude between the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet while chapter 7 is the first interlude between the sixth seal and the seventh seal. Chapter 11 describes what happens to this world and heaven when the seventh trumpet is sounded. John’s vision continues.

Look at verses 1-4. “***Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down***.” Who is the mighty angel in verse 1? Some may say that he is Jesus because of his brilliant figure. But the Scripture never describes Jesus as an angel, but the Lord and God himself. Many figures and events which appear in John’s revelation are parallel with those are in the book of Ezekiel and of Daniel. So, the mighty angel in verse 1 is parallel with the angel Michael, who appears as the great prince who protects God’s people. (Dan 12:1) This mighty angel holds a little scroll in his hand. He plants his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, which means that he controls the world. When he shouted, the voice of the seven thunders spoke. He did not allow John to write it down, but just to seal up. Then the angel raised his hand to heaven as if he swears, and said, “***There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets***.” (6-7) Here the mystery of God is God’s plan for this world and heaven. This mystery of God is written in chapter 11:15-19.

Look at verses 8-9. Then the voice from heaven told John to go to the angel and take the little scroll from him. So, John went to the angel and asked him to give him the little scroll. What did the angel say to John? “***Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey***.” (9) I don’t know how big the scroll is, but it sounds strange for John to eat the scroll. But, how did John respond to the angel? Verse 10 says that he took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. As the angel said, it tasted as sweet as honey in his mouth, but when he had eaten it, his stomach turned sour. (10). Then the angel said to John, “***You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.***” (11)

What does it mean that John eats the scroll which is sweet in his mouth and sour in his stomach? In order to understand this, we have to read Ezekiel’s vision first in Ezekiel 2 &3. God called the prophet Ezekiel and asked him to preach God’s message of judgment to his people Israelites. God called them rebellious, obstinate, and stubborn people who would not listen to God’s message. In Ezekiel 3 God called Ezekiel and asked him to eat a little scroll. God said to Ezekiel, “*Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in mouth.*” (Eze 3:3) So, eating the scroll means accepting God’s message and obeying his will. God’s word is as sweet as honey as the psalmist says. (Ps 119:103) God is love. He is compassionate and merciful. His words encourage the depressed and gives lives to the dead. However, God is righteous, too. He judges the evil. He punishes those who do evil. To those who do evil God’s message is sour and bitter. The word of God is living and active and penetrates our bones and marrows, and convicts our conscience and leads us to lament over our sins. The word of God brings us with godly sorrow which leads us life and peace. (2 Co 10:7)

People like to hear only good message from the Bible such as about love, blessing, prosperity, success, and so on. They don’t like to hear the heart-breaking message such as repentance, judgement, discipline, and so on. To them the word of God become sweet and sour. We have to deliver the message of God as it is, whether it is sweet or sour. The word of God is the word of God. In today’s passage the angel of God asked John to deliver the message of God’s judgment to his people. In verse 11 the angel told John to prophesy about peoples, nations, languages and kings. He meant that John has to testify what he heard and saw through his vision. God showed John what would happen to this world through the visions of the seven seals and the seven trumpets. To those who are washed by the blood of the Lamb his message will be as sweet as honey. To those who do not repent and keep doing evil his message will be as bitter as wormwood.

Unlike other chapters, in chapter 10 & 11 God let John participate in the work of God such as eating the little scroll and prophesying, not let him just see and watch the vision. In chapter 11 God gave another mission to John to carry out. What is another mission? Look at 11:1-2. “***I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told***, “***Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.***” Here, interpreting of measuring the temple of God and the altar and the worshipers is also related to Ezekiel’s measuring the temple area in the book of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 40-48 God told the prophet Ezekiel to see how God measuring the temple area, the altar, and its worshipers. The purpose of the measuring was to restore the temple of God and his people, and finally to establish God’s kingdom. In the same way in Revelation the angel also told John to measure the temple, the altar, and its worshipers so that God’s temple and his people may be restored and God’s new kingdom may be established. In verse 2 the angel said to John to exclude the outer court from the measuring because the outer court of the temple is given to the Gentiles. Here the Gentiles indicates the unbelievers and pagan worshipers, who later will persecute the believers. The Gentiles will trample on the holy city for 42 months. It means that the Gentiles will persecute Christians for three and half years.

How does God deal with these unbelieving generation? In verse 3, “***And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth***.” God will appoint his two witnesses who will prophesy for 1,260 days, which is three and half years. The angel continues to say who they are. “***They are “the two olive trees” and the two lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth.” If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want***.” (4-6) Who are the two witnesses? Some say that they are Joshua and Zerubbabel. Others say that they are Elijah and Enoch. But most believe that they are Elijah and Moses. In 1 King 17 &18 the prophet Elijah told King Ahab that it would not rain for a few years. As Elijah said, the heaven was shut up and it did not rain in Israel. A few year later when Elijah prayed on the mount of Carmel, it rained. (1Ki 17:1, 18:45) In Exodus 7:17-21 Moses turned the water of the Nile River into blood when he stroke it with his staff. He also brought all kinds of plagues with the power of God to Pharaoh, who stood against God. Elijah and Moses had power to shut up the heaven and to turn water into blood. They also appeared together when Jesus was transfigured on the mount. In Matthew 17 when Jesus was transfigured into the glorious and beautiful image, Elijah and Moses appeared and talked with Jesus. (Mt 17:1-8)

What does it mean that God appoints the two witnesses in the middle of the tribulation? Through the judgment of the last seven seals and the six trumpets, probably half of people on this earth died. According to 9:20-21, the rest of mankind who survived still did not repent or stop worshiping demons and idols. God has compassion on them. God wants to save even one more person from the final judgment. God wants to rescue even one more soul from the fiery lake of burning hell. Here we learn the heart of God who values one lost soul more than the whole world. There is no one who is not worthy before the eye of God. Even though people rebel against God and do not stop worshiping idols and demons, God is patient with them and waits until they repent. So, God sent the two witnesses to this world in the middle of his judgment. When they arrive this world, did people welcome them? What happened to them? Look at verses 7-10. “***Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth***.” (7-10) When the two witnesses finished their mission, death waited for them. The beast, which is Satan, attacked them and killed them. Their bodies were displayed in the public area and humiliated by people. For three and a half days their bodies became laughing stocks while people celebrated their death. What a tragedy and sadness to these two powerful servants of God! They remind us of Jesus who was crucified on the cross and hung on the tree for three days. Jesus did nothing wrong for them. Jesus delivered the message of God’s kingdom and taught the word of God. He loved people and served them until he suffered. The result of his love for his people was death on the cross.

We wonder when the outcome of our love returns with hatred and betrayal. We wonder when the result of our sacrifice for the Lord accompanies with poverty and famine. We wonder when good people suffer while evil people seem to be prosperous. But our story does not end in death. The story of the two witnesses does not end in death. Look at verses 11-12. “***But after the three and half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on***.” As the resurrection of Christ followed his crucifixion, the resurrection of the two witnesses follows their death. After the three and half days, the breath of life entered them, and they became alive. In the book of Ezekiel 37:5-12, as the dried bones in the valley became the vast army of God after the breath of life from God came into them, so these two witnesses came back alive strong and powerful again. Their resurrection became a great shock and fear to all those who celebrated their death. On September 11 2001 when the twin towers were attacked by the terrorists and collapsed, some people in the Middle East danced and celebrated. But soon they received the showers of missiles and their land was occupied by foreigners. The two witnesses were ascended into heaven before the eyes of the evil as Jesus was ascended into heaven. (Lk 24:5, Acts 1:9) Look at verse 13. “***At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven***.” Our life often seems to end in failure. That’s not true. Our life will be over with happy ending. We have to wait until the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet, will sound. We must be patient and be faithful until all the woes pass away. (14) Finally, the seventh trumpet sounds.

What happened when the seventh trumpet sounded? Look at verse 15. “***The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.***” When the seventh trumpet sounded, there were loud voice in heaven, the heavenly chorus, which praised the Lord who will reign forever and ever. They praised that the kingdom of this world became the kingdom of the Lord and of the Christ. How long have we been waiting for this moment that this world becomes the kingdom of Christ! Jesus’ first message as the Messiah was “*The kingdom of God is near! Repent and believe the good news*” (Mk 1:15) Jesus taught his disciples to pray: “…*your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” (Mt 6:10) Whenever I drive by Wash U campus, I pray in this, “May your kingdom come, your will be done!” But, now the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of Christ. F. Handel wrote this glorious moment in his “*Hallelujah*” in *Messiah*. “The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ and of his Christ. And he shall reign forever and ever!” Amen! We have to endure hardship until this world becomes the kingdom of Christ. We must preach the gospel until this world becomes the kingdom of Christ. We must wait patiently until this glorious day comes. Trump served this country only for 4 years. Now Biden rules us for 4 years. But Christ Jesus will reign us forever and ever because his kingdom will never end. Amen!

When this glorious praise is heard, the twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “***We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time had come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—and for destroying those who destroy the earth***.” (17-18) When this world loses its power and authority and hands over them to the Lord, nations are angry. But they do not know the day of judgement has come. The time has come when the Lord judges the dead, rewards his servants, prophets, and all those who revere his name. The time has come when the Lord destroys those who destroyed the earth. That day the temple of God will be opened and the ark of the Lord will be disclosed. (19) There will be no more needy for hiding the mystery of God. There will be no sin on this earth because this world is filled with God’s glory and it became the kingdom of Christ.

One of senior missionaries in Chicago was preparing to be a missionary in the Middle East. Everyday she sang hymns and memorized them one chapter and another like John eats the little scroll. We asked why she is memorizing the hymns rather than carrying hymn books. She said that in the Middle East when her hymn books are taken away, she still can sing hymns as long as she memorizes all of them. They cannot take away what is in her heart and in her memory. Like John and like this senior missionary we may let the word of God richly dwell in us so that we may become the witnesses of Christ to the ends of the earth until Jesus comes again, until this world becomes the kingdom of Christ our Lord. Amen!