

The Seventh Vial Chapter VII. The Oath Of The Angel



Continued from [Chapter VI. The Little Book](#)

THE grandeur of the vision is heightened by the awfully solemn act which the august being, who stood with one foot planted on the sea, and the other on the earth, now proceeded with great impressiveness to perform.

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the earth and upon the sea 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." (Revelation 10:6.)

Our translation does not give the precise import of the angel's oath -(three Greek words)- literally, "The time shall not be yet." The angel refers plainly to the time when some event important in itself, and anxiously desired and expected by John, as representative of the Church, would happen, and of which the angel had just spoken, and been answered by the thunders which had disclosed the particulars of that great event. When, then, shall it be? "Not yet," answers the angel; "but," he continues, "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." That it was some joyful event, to the Church at least, whatever its aspect to the world, is undoubted, from the terms which the angel employs when speaking about it-(the Greek word translated as gospel)-the same word which is employed to denote the preaching of the gospel. It had been declared as *good news*.

We learn further from the angel's oath, that the event had ere now been foretold. It had been declared-preached as good news-to the prophets. To which of the prophets? Is there any of them to whom we find a revelation made-a revelation on oath-of the consummation or the finishing of some grand epoch in God's government of the world? We find such a revelation made to Daniel, conveyed in terms and accompanied with imagery so very nearly identical with those of the vision before us, that we can have no doubt the allusion is to that prophet.

In the last chapter of Daniel's prophecy we find a time of trouble spoken of, "such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." (Dan. 12) But Michael should stand up, and Daniel's people should be

delivered—"every one that should be found written in the book."

In the hearing of Daniel, one made inquiry at

"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 swore 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."
— Daniel 12:6-7

The epoch, which was to bear a complex character, inasmuch as it was to be a period of unexampled trouble, and of deliverance equally unexampled, was then far distant: accordingly Daniel is told, "The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." — Dan. 12:9

The vision of Daniel helps us to interpret that of John. In the words we have quoted, there is a reference made to a noted period in the Apocalypse—" a time, times, and an half," (Dan. 12:7) i.e. a year, two years, and half a year; i.e. twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days, or years. The period, we say, is a strongly marked one in the Apocalypse, seeing it embraces the reign of Antichrist. The angel affirms in his oath, that at the end of that period all these wonders of judgment and deliverance shall be accomplished. This enables us to determine what is here meant by the mystery of God, which shall be finished in the days of the voice of the seventh angel.

It also goes a great way to determine with certainty what the things were which the seven thunders uttered, but which John was forbidden to write. Seeing we are informed in Daniel that they were to take place at the close of the twelve hundred and sixty days, we infer that they were the seven last plagues, by which Antichrist was to be slowly consumed, and at length suddenly and fearfully destroyed.

The history of the "little book " begins after the sounding of the fourth trumpet; from which period, speaking generally, we date the rise of Antichrist. The oath of the angel, touching the finishing of the mystery of God in His destruction, bore that it should not be yet. A full millennium had to intervene—from the fifth to the sixteenth century: not sooner should Antichrist reach his meridian. But having attained the height of his power, the seventh angel would sound, - and then, as sure as God possessed almighty power and eternal being, Antichrist should be destroyed.

There was a high propriety in the angel's appeal to these two attributes of the Divine character. No power less than that which made the heavens and the earth could suffice to destroy so consolidated a system as the Papacy; and He only that liveth for ever could carry on through successive ages that series of events by which Antichrist should eventually be brought down. Nor was the propriety less of terming this great event the finishing of the mystery of God.

We know not how long God's providence over the world, in its present state,

shall last; but we know this—that the mystery of providence—that part of providence which, from the intricacies and perplexities with which it has abounded, has been a mystery to the wisest—shall come to a close when Antichrist falls. It is long since it was revealed to Daniel that there should be four grand epochs in the history of the world, marked off by the rise and fall of four great monarchies; that these should be preparatory to the kingdom of Christ; and that as soon as the fourth and last of these monarchies had fallen, that kingdom should be set up. The fall of the last monarchy was to form the completion of the scheme—the winding-up of the drama; and when finished, the admirable wisdom with which its plan had been arranged would be seen, and all the mystery in which, to human penetration, it had been shrouded during its progress, would be removed.

This long-predicted and much-desired event would happen, John was assured by the angel on oath, during the days of the voice of the seventh angel. Not longer was the patience of the Church to be tried, and not longer should Satan be permitted, by the instrumentality of his agents, to deceive and destroy the nations.

The seventh trumpet should sound the world's jubilee—the day of vengeance and the year of the redeemed. The idea that it is the day of judgment that is here announced is inadmissible; but in respect that the scenes by which the close of this part of God's providence shall be signalled will be second in importance and terror only to those scenes amid which time itself shall close, they are depicted by imagery taken from the last judgment. This period will be a harbinger of the day of judgment—in reality a judgment-day to the world. Accordingly, it is predicted, both in Daniel and elsewhere in the Apocalypse, that then the dead shall be raised; that is those whom Antichrist has slain shall stand up—not in their persons, but in their cause—that *their* innocence may be published, and *his* iniquity proclaimed, before he is cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

The vision ends with an intimation to John to receive the book from the angel, and eat it. He did so; "And it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." (Revelation 10:10b) To eat the book denoted the exercise of his mind respecting it. To understand a matter at once important and profound is pleasant—sweet as honey; but, alas! the book contained heavy tidings to the Church: it announced a period of twelve hundred and sixty years of sorrow to her, and of triumph to her foes: "And as soon as I had eaten (understood) it, my belly was bitter."

Once more was the voice of prophecy to be heard in the world before it should become silent for ever. "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." (Revelation 10:11) John was the last of the prophets, and this was the last prophecy. It respected the Church's last enemy; and as soon as this prediction should be published, the volume of prophecy would be closed. John was not in person to publish these sayings to the world. He was a prisoner in Patmos, kept there by the tyrant who now governed the world. But though he had been permitted that very day to leave the shores of the lonely isle, he was too full of years and sufferings to journey through the countries, and proclaim what was now made known to him. He was soon by death to rejoin in glory that Lord whose chosen and best

beloved companion he had been during his humiliation on earth. But, inspired as he was, to write the visions of Patmos, he is to this hour prophesying before peoples and nations. By the Church John has ever been held to be one of the greatest of those prophets which, though dead, yet speak unto her.

How infallibly certain is it that Popery shall be brought down! God has not only promised, not only prophesied, He has sworn to overthrow it. At the commencement of that grand scheme of Providence which embraces the four monarchies, the angel who stands upon the sea and the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that after a time, times, and an half, the mighty fabric of commingled tyranny and idolatry, symbolised by the Image, should be broken in pieces. And again, during the existence of the last monarchy, when the eighth and last head of the Beast was on the point of making his appearance, the same oath was repeated in the same solemn manner. The oath of the angel must be fulfilled, oppose it whoso list. (archaic word for wish, choose) Nor is God slack concerning His oath. Our impatience often provokes us to think that the vision tarries—that events pass slowly over the stage of time. We measure the duration they occupy by our own little span. We are like one who views the motions of the great bodies of the firmament at the distance of the earth, and to whom they seem to creep slowly across the sky, whilst, were he nearer, he would be dazzled by the rapidity and irresistible force with which they move onward. So would we judge of the events of Providence, were we to measure their progress by the standard here set up by the angel—God's eternity.

Twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days have been allotted to Antichrist. Climbing higher than mortal ever climbed before, he will remain, for that period, the wonder and the terror of earth. But to that term not a day, not an hour, shall be added. When it expires his knell will be rung, and a universe shall shout over his fall.

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