

INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION - PART ELEVEN

Life on earth is deeply affected by eternity. But eternity has two sides to it. On the one hand there is heaven, the presence of God, who loves us and waits to show that love by His work inside us. Chapters 4,5 and 7 have given us a glimpse of the possibilities of timeless grace transforming the horror of earthly suffering as in chapters 6 and 8. To help in understanding what lies behind such present day troubles we have been taken on a journey to hell in chapter 9 to see what the Devil wants to let loose on the human race by his most potent weapon, false teaching. The assurance to Christians then and now, is that Satan cannot touch us with his lies if we are sure in our minds where we stand with God.

In chapter 10, John was given further insight into just how the reality of heaven can transform the challenges on earth. Three strong angels feature in Revelation. The first spoke about a book,(5:2) and now the second was holding another book. He was strong because God has chosen to let His power loose through His Word. He was clothed with cloud because God had clothed His presence with a pillar of cloud as He led His people through the wilderness.(Exod.13:21) The rainbow was over his head as a reminder of the faithfulness of God to His promises.(Gen.9:13) His face shone like the sun as Jesus, the light of the world, had done in 1:16. His feet were like pillars of fire to remind us that the Lord's way is pure and that His word keeps our way pure.(1:15; Ps.119:9)

Just like Ezekiel in Ezek.2:8,9, John was told to eat the little book in the angel's hand and found it delicious.(10:2,9) The little book was presumably not the whole Bible but the little each of us really knows of the word of God and have taken into our whole being. After feeding 5000 people with twelve loaves, Jesus told His disciples to eat Him.(Jn.6:51-58) Again at the Last Supper He gave the same instruction.(Matt.26:26) He did not want us to be cannibals, so it must be in this sense that we are to take Him into our lives. Having eaten the book and enjoyed its sweetness John developed stomach-ache.(10:10) When the word of God truly gets to work deep inside us in conviction, the effect is also painful. But once we have allowed God to do what He wants through His word in our own lives we have something to say to anyone to whom God sends us.(10:11)

The angel stood on land and sea,(10:2) to make it clear that he came with the authority of the Creator who made both.(10:6) His voice was clear and confident like a lion roaring or thunder clapping,(10:3,4) but this message, perhaps of future events, was not yet to be revealed to man. Deliberately John was brought to the threshold of revealing the future to his readers, but then held back. Events still to come on earth are hinted at in this book but not spelled out to us because we do not yet need to know. There is something much more important from which speculation about the future can be a distraction. First we must understand the message which the whole Bible has already declared, described here as a mystery.(10:7) Paul in Col.1:27 explained that the mystery is 'Christ in you'. It was this mystery which was contained in the little book and needed to be swallowed whole, applied to us, and then proclaimed to the world.

This is the secret of bringing eternity into earthly experience right now, the proclamation of all that Christ can be in us today. The future can wait.

11:1,2 Q.1 What was John told now to measure? What was he told not to measure? Why the difference? What did the temple picture in the New Testament?(Jn.2:21; I Cor.3:16; 6:19) How is this passage similar to Ezek.40-42 and Zech.2:1? What was the purpose of all that measuring? What measure has God given us?(Eph.4:13) How are we to use it?

11:2,3 Q.2 What other key event in the Bible went on for three and a half years, forty-two months or 1260 days?

11:3,4 Q.3 Where else have we been told of two witnesses, two olive trees or two lampstands?(Zech.4:3) How has the idea of an olive tree been used as a picture in the Old Testament?(Ps.52:8; Jer.11:16; Rom.11:17) What could these three things be used to represent as far as we are concerned?

11:5,6 Q.4 What power did these two witnesses have? When had similar power been demonstrated before?(I Kgs.17; Exod.7-11) What each time was His reason for doing so? How does that help to explain these verses?

11:7 Q.5 In this passage, for the first time, we are introduced to the beast from the abyss? We will learn more about it in chapter 13 where it is described as having seven heads and ten horns. Rome was a city built on 7 hills. Could that provide an important clue to the identity of the beast? Would it have seemed in those days that Rome had won?

11:8-13 Q.6 In which city was the Lord crucified? Why should it be compared to Sodom and Egypt? Have you any idea what Rome did to the city of Jerusalem in the year 70AD? For how long was Jesus dead? What connection might there be between these two events? What would have been the reaction of the Lord's enemies to their seeming triumph on each occasion? What action did God take 3 days after Jesus death? What encouragement was this intended to be to the people of John's day? What happened to Jesus eventually?(Acts 1:9) And what would happen to His persecuted followers? And to the city of Jerusalem?

11:14 Q.7 What did the 'second woe' consist of? How did it compare to the first one?(9:12) In what sense were these 'woes' worse than the disasters that had gone before?

11:15-18 Q.8 Before the final 'woe' was revealed, what further glimpse of heaven were we given? What was happening there? Who was involved? How would this help the Christians suffering on earth? Of what future event are they reminded?

11:19 Q.9 One more glimpse of heaven was given in this chapter; what was it? How does Heb.9:11 help to explain this verse? What did the ark of the covenant contain in the Old Testament? Again what confidence was this glimpse of heaven intended to give Christians under persecution? And how can it help us?