

• Intervals between 6th and 7th seals and trumpets

• God's people protected

• Before the 7th trumpet...

In Revelation 4:1–8:1 we had six seals^{□1}, followed by an interval^{□2}, followed by the seventh seal^{□3}. Here we have six trumpets^{□4}, followed by an interval^{□5}, followed by the seventh seal^{□6}. In both places the interval is connected with the protection of God's people. Amidst the calamities that fall upon the world, God's people are kept safe. Only after they have received protection do the visions proceed to speak of the end of the world.

In Revelation 10:1–11:13 there are four incidents before the seventh trumpet sounds. There are the seven thunders^{□1}, the scroll which is both sweet and bitter^{□2}, the measuring of the temple^{□3} and the two witnesses^{□4}. Then the seventh trumpet is sounded^{□5}.

□1 6:1-17
 □2 7:1-17
 □3 8:1
 □4 8:7-9:21
 □5 10:1-11:13
 □6 11:14-18

□1 10:1-4
 □2 10:5-11
 □3 11:1-2
 □4 11:3-13
 □5 11:14-18

1. The 'seven thunders' are a reminder that some important matters concerning the future are not revealed to us

• God does not tell us everything about His purposes

1. The 'seven thunders' are a reminder that some important matters concerning the future are not revealed to us. John received a revelation that could not be shared. He tells us: *¹Then I saw another mighty angel coming down out of heaven, surrounded by a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire. ²And he held in his hand a little book which was open. He put his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth. ³And he gave a shout like the roar of a lion. And when he shouted the noise of seven thunders answered. ⁴And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write, but then I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Keep protected and hidden the things which the seven thunders said, and do not write them down.'* The angel is a giant figure. In many ways the description of him resembles the descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ elsewhere. It does not mean that he actually is Christ, but he represents Christ. The rainbow reminds us of Christ's mercy. The description of the face and legs reminds us of Christ's glory and power. The little book represents some aspect of the plan of God. His standing on the sea and on the earth tells us that this purpose is global and worldwide. But we are not told what the revelations were! It is a reminder to us that God has purposes that he has in mind but that he has not revealed to us.

2. Despite our limited knowledge we can be sure of the victory of God's kingdom

• God's plans will succeed

2. Despite our limited knowledge we can be sure of the victory of God's kingdom. *⁵Then the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven. ⁶And he swore an oath by the One who lives for ever and ever, the One who created the heaven and the things that are in it, and the earth and the things that are on the earth, and the sea and the things that are in the sea. He said, 'There will be no more delay, ⁷but in the days of the signal of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, then the mystery of God will be accomplished. It will come about according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.'*

Although there are things in God's plan which are not revealed to us^{□1}, yet this does not mean that there will be any failure in God's plans for the future. An angel – representing the Lord Jesus Christ –

□1 10:1-4

- *The delay will not be unbearable*

promises to us on oath that when the days of fierce suffering are upon us, the delay of the final coming of God's kingdom will not be too great. The 'mystery of God' (the gospel which no one can understand except by God's revelation) will be accomplished. The predictions of the Scriptures will all be fulfilled. The saints of God will arrive in glory. They will conquer Satan. They will receive the kingdom. Victory is to be ours both in this world and (even more) in the final events of history. The delay will not be more than we can bear.

3. The experience of the gospel will be a mixture of sweetness and bitterness

- *In its beginning it brings forgiveness, everlasting life and the closeness of God*

- *As it works out it brings pains, persecution and struggles*

3. The experience of the gospel will be a mixture of sweetness and bitterness. ⁸*Then there came the voice which I heard from heaven. I heard it again speaking to me: 'Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that is standing on the sea and upon the land.'* ⁹*So I went to the angel, and said to him that he should give me the little book. The book is the total gospel-message that will be proclaimed down the ages of history. He said to me, 'Take it, and eat it up. It will make your stomach ache with bitterness, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'* ¹⁰*Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up. In my mouth it was as sweet as honey, but when I had eaten it, my stomach ached with bitterness.* The gospel message is sweet in its beginning. It brings forgiveness, everlasting life, the closeness of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit. But then, as it works out, it brings some aches and pains! The pain of the gospel is the persecutions and struggles that are part of the total gospel. We have to overcome our own weaknesses (remember the churches of Revelation 2–3) and we have to persist in conquering the nations with the good news. John says: ¹¹*Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.'* The gospel is sweet at first, then we discover some bitter ingredients. If we persist in preaching it, all will be sweetness again in the day of vindication and reward.

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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