

Ministry of Grace

Revelation Chapter 10

¹Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ²He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. ⁴And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." ⁵And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. ⁸Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." ⁹So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." ¹⁰And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."
[ESV]

Notes

Revelation 10:1

¹Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.

“**another mighty angel**” – Some claim that this is Jesus Christ as the “angel of God” who appeared in the Old Testament. This supposition is based on the description of this angel (rainbow on his head, face like the sun, feet like pillars of fire) and the fact that he is clothed with a cloud, since clouds were a symbol of God in the Old Testament and Christ ascended into heaven on a cloud. There are several problems with this interpretation, however. The first is the fact that nowhere else in the New Testament (no time after His incarnation) is Christ referred to as an angel (He is referred to as the Angel of the Lord only in the O.T.)

The next evidence that this is not Christ comes from the word translated “another.” This is a form of *allos*, which means “another of the same kind.” The other Greek word translated “another” is *heteros*, which means “another of a different kind.” Since this verse uses *allos*, it means that this mighty angel is a mighty angel of the same kind. But the same kind as what? Either the same kind as the “presence angels” having the trumpets

Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (**Revelation 8:2**) [ESV]

or the same kind as the mighty angel mentioned in **Revelation 5:2** (the word translated “strong” in **Revelation 5:2** is the same as the word translated “mighty” in **Revelation 10:1**).

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" (**Revelation 5:2**) [ESV]

We really don't know which of these it is, but since the expression “mighty angel” is used to describe him, it is most likely the latter.

Another indication that this is not Christ comes from **Revelation 10:6** (see notes there). Finally, one more reason why this is not a picture of Christ is the fact that this angel sets his feet on the sea and land (see **Revelation 10:2**). Jesus will not set His feet on this earth again until the “second coming” which, throughout scripture, is pictured as a return in vengeance and judgment in the “the Day of the Lord.” The appearance of this angel is peaceful and merciful (the sign of the rainbow in the clouds – **Genesis 9:8-17**).

Clearly, this is a huge, powerful, holy representative of God sent to deliver a message to John just as other angels have been. To assume that this is Christ, however, is presumptuous and unwarranted.

“**wrapped in a cloud**” – Clouds are a symbol of God's presence throughout the Bible (**Exodus 16:9, 10; 24:16; 34:5; Numbers 11:25; 1 Kings 8:10; Psalms 97:2; Acts 1:9; Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7**). Although this angel is probably not the Son of God, he is characterized as having God's authority.

“**with a rainbow over his head**” – The rainbow is a symbol of God's covenant of peace.

Revelation 10:2

²He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

“**little scroll**” – This is a different word form from previous references to books (scrolls) in Revelation. The word “book” or “scroll” is typically the translation of the Greek word *biblos*, whereas this particular Greek word is *biblaridion*, which is a diminutive of *biblos* and means “a little book.” Today we might call it a booklet. The fact that the book is opened (not sealed) indicates a message for mankind that is not hidden, and yet we are not told what the message is. It may contain the message of the seven thunders mentioned in verse four, which may well be additional judgments.

“**his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land**” – This is an indication of the immense size of this angelic being, a symbol of his authority over both the land and the sea, and an indication that this is not Jesus Christ (see notes on verse 1).

Revelation 10:3, 4

³and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. ⁴And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

“**called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring**” – Some have taken this as an indication that this is Christ speaking since He is “the lion of the tribe of Judah.” But, just because two things have similar characteristics does not indicate that they are the same thing. What this does tell us is that this “mighty angel” who is huge in appearance, possesses a terrifyingly loud voice.

“**seven thunders sounded.**” – Exactly what is meant by the utterance of the seven thunders is nowhere explained. Some commentators claim that these seven thunders are the response of the rulers of this earth (demons) in defiance of the voice of the mighty angel. This, however, is pure speculation and is not supported by any other scripture.

What we do know is that thunder in Scripture is often representative of God’s judgment. For instance:

Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. (**Exodus 9:23**) [ESV]

As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel. (**1 Samuel 7:10**) [ESV]

you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. (**Isaiah 29:6**) [ESV]

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the seven thunders are seven additional judgments against the earth dwellers.

“I was about to write” – Whatever the source of these thunderous sounds, we know that they communicated something that was intelligible to John, for he was about to write the content of what they said.

“I heard a voice from heaven” – This is a clear indication that John’s vantage point is on the earth, unlike the previous visions that were from a heavenly vantage point. Remember back in **Revelation 1:19** John was commanded to **“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”** In obedience to God, John was about to write, but this voice, which may be from God, forbade John from writing down the content of what the seven thunders said. Even though this is the book of Revelation, meaning “uncovering” or “making known,” we have to realize that God does not reveal everything to us. None of us has a complete understanding of God’s Word and we won’t have until we receive our glorified bodies at the rapture.

Revelation 10: 5-7

⁵And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

“The angel ... raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever” – This is further evidence that this mighty angel is not Christ. If it were Christ he would have sworn by himself as shown in God’s promise to Abraham.

and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, (**Genesis 22:16**) [ESV]

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, (**Hebrews 6:13**) [ESV]

“that there would be no more delay” – The content of the oath taken by this mighty angel is a reference to time. The word translated “delay” is *chronos*, which is sometimes translated as “time.” Because of this, some commentators have portrayed this as a declaration that time is about to cease, that is, eternity is about to be ushered in. However, according to John Walvoord in his book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*:

This expression (Gr., *chronos*) has sometimes been misunderstood to mean that time will cease. The expression here, however, does not refer to time as a succession of chronological events; rather it means that time has run out, that is, that there will be no further delay.

And Oscar Cullmann in his book *Christ and Time* says,

None of the New Testament expressions for time has as its object time as an abstraction. This is not even the meaning of *chronos*, “time” ... In the New Testament we find this word for “time” used in concrete reference to the redemptive history; it may have the meaning of “season” or of “age,” or it may signify simply some space of time that is to elapse. Thus even the well-known passage in Rev. 10:6, where it is said that there will be no more *chronos*, is not to be understood as if the era of timelessness were meant;

rather, on the analogy of Hab. 2:3 and Heb. 10:37, we must translate: “there will be no more delay”

This reference to the ending of delay is apparently a response to the prayers of the martyrs under the altar recorded in chapter six:

They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (**Revelation 6:10**) [ESV]

John is told that the ending of the delay occurs with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. With this trumpet blast, the mystery of God will be finished.

“**mystery**” – This is a transliteration of the Greek word *mustēriōn*, which according to the Complete Word Study Dictionary, refers to “a truth which has hitherto been unknown but which now is being revealed.” So we have to ask ourselves what mystery John is talking about. According to William Kelley in his *Lectures On The Book Of Revelation* it is:

the secret of His allowing Satan to have his own way, and man too (that is to say, the wonder of evil prospering and of good being trodden underfoot). God checks, no doubt, the evil in a measure, partly through human government and partly through His own providential dealings.

This mystery that was “**announced to His servants the prophets**” must, therefore, be speaking of the many references by the Old Testament prophets to the earthly kingdom of God - the millennium.

By drawing all this together, we see that the mighty angel is, in fact, announcing the imminent judgment of evil and the ushering in of the millennial kingdom. This judgment of evil will happen with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which contains all seven of the bowl judgments poured out in rapid succession.

Revelation 10:8

⁸Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

The same voice which forbade John to write the utterances of the seven thunders now commands him to take the book from the hand of the mighty angel. Based on John’s description of the size of this angel and the fearful sound of his voice, it must have been no small thing for him to approach the angel and take the book out of his hand. Both the words “go” and “take” are in the imperative mood, indicating that they are not suggestions, but commands.

Revelation 10:9, 10

⁹So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

¹⁰And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

John, knowing that it would be futile for him to take the little book from the angel by force, nonetheless demands the angel to relinquish possession to him (“give” is the Greek word *dos*,

which is in the imperative mood). The angel then instructs John not only to take the little book but to eat it.

What, exactly, is the meaning of the eating of the little scroll? If we look at the Old Testament, we can see several examples of scroll eating and what is meant by it.

And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. And he said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. ... The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. (**Ezekiel 2:9 -3:4; 3:14**) [ESV]

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (**Jeremiah 15:16**) [ESV]

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (**Psalms 119:103**) [ESV]

The angel's command for John to eat the scroll thus probably indicates that he was to digest the contents of what was written on it. Based on the angel's proclamation regarding the end of delay and the coming of the woe of the seventh trumpet, it appears that the scroll contains a description of these coming judgments. The consumption of God's Word produced in John a sweetness, just as the consumption of God's Word by us today produces a sweetness that is unmatched by any other activity known to mankind. And yet, when we understand the judgments recorded in His Word that will be poured out upon those who reject Him, we are caused to shudder at the horror of the vengeance of a holy God against unrepentant mankind. As John understood the severity of God's wrath about to be poured out it literally "turned his stomach."

Revelation 10:11

¹¹And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

"again" – Having consumed God's Word, John is now told that he must prophesy again. The word translated "again" is *palin*, which means "back, back again, or again, as simply implying to return back to a former place, state, act, or time." This is probably an indication that the prophecies that are to follow in John's writing are actually things that chronologically occurred before the things he has just written about. In other words, the events in **Revelation 11:1-14** occur sometime chronologically before the sixth trumpet.

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