



## Revelation - Chapter Ten

### IV. Revelation 8:1-11:19 - The angels and the trumpets: warnings of coming wrath (continues)

#### IV.b Revelation 8:6-11:19 - Angels sound seven trumpets (continues)

##### Summary of Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten begins with the introduction of a mighty angel who held an open scroll in his hand. A voice from heaven told John to go and take the scroll from this angel, so he did. The angel then said to John 'Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth'. So John took the scroll and ate it and it was as the angel told him it would be. The scroll represents the Word of God.

#### IV.b.ii Revelation 10:1-11:14 - Interlude: the safety and suffering of God's city-sanctuary, his witnessing church

Between the sixth trumpet (9:13-21) and the seventh (11:15-18), another interlude is inserted. Like the visions that separated the sixth from the seventh seals (7:1-17), this interlude dramatises God's patient delay in inflicting his full and final wrath, and it assures believers that God will protect his own through the coming traumas.

##### IV.b.ii.1 Revelation 10:1-11 - The Angel with the Little Scroll

The vision of the angel with the scroll reveals John's authority to prophesy and God's perfect timing in consummating history.

<sup>1</sup> And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. <sup>2</sup> He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, <sup>3</sup> he gave a great shout, like a lion roaring. And when he shouted, the seven thunders sounded. <sup>4</sup> And 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.’

#### Revelation 10:1-4

Another mighty angel. This is a different angel to any that John has mentioned before. He is not one of the four who had released the terrible invading cavalry from the east (9:14-15), or the one previously identified as mighty in 5:2, although he does have a similar loud voice. As with the description of God on his throne, he is surrounded by a rainbow. Like the Son of Man, he comes with a cloud, and his face shines like the sun: <<*And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white*>> (Matthew 17:2).

His legs like pillars of fire reflect the glory of God’s presence in the wilderness: <<*The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people*>> (Exodus 13:21-22), and: <<*At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic*>> (Exodus 14:24).

His voice like a lion roaring could belong to the Lion of Judah (5:5); it is reminiscent of: <<*They shall go after the Lord, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west*>> (Hosea 11:10), and: <<*Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?*>> (Amos 3:7-8). Therefore some interpreters think this is Jesus himself. However, since 1:1 describes an angel sent by Christ to deliver God’s revelation to John, many see this as simply another mighty angel as the description suggests.

If this is the same scroll as previously mentioned in 5:1 then it is open because the Lamb has broken its seals. This seems unlikely for John described it simply as ‘a scroll’, Greek *biblion*, whereas here he uses the diminutive *biblaridion*. Therefore, many commentators see this as a separate scroll. However, in v.8 the words seemed to be used interchangeably.

It is little compared to the great size of the angel, whose stride spans sea and land. It will be given to John to eat and to proclaim (vv.10-11), completing the process of transmission from God to Christ to angel to John to the churches that was initiated in 5:7.

The mighty angel and a voice from heaven, acting together, supply a kind of fanfare to raise the level of excitement and expectancy. When the angel shouted, the voices of the seven thunders sounded. John was about to write down their messages when the heavenly voice stops him: Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down. John must seal up, that is, keep secret by not writing or not revealing, the messages of the seven thunders. This prohibition may serve a similar purpose to the angel’s announcement that <<*there would be no more delay*>> (v.6), since reporting these seven messages would have further delayed the seventh trumpet’s blast. Christ’s church must live by faith amid the unrevealed mysteries of God’s purposes.

<sup>5</sup> Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and the land  
raised his right hand to heaven

<sup>6</sup> and swore by him who lives for ever 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: 'There will be no more delay, <sup>7</sup> but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets.'

### Revelation 10:5-7

The angel's stance, one foot on the sea, one on the land, and his right hand raised to heaven, unites three spheres of the created order, as detailed in Genesis 1:6-10, as their divine creator is invoked to witness the angel's oath: <<*But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord, God Most High, maker of heaven and earth'*>> (Genesis 14:22), <<*For I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear: As I live for ever, when I whet my flashing sword, and my hand takes hold on judgement; I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will repay those who hate me*>> (Deuteronomy 32:40-41), and: <<*The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, raised his right hand and his left hand towards heaven. And I heard him swear by the one who lives for ever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished*>> (Daniel 12:7).

Like the figure in Daniel, the angel swore by him who lives for ever and ever. But adds to this oath an elaborate reference to God's sovereignty as creator over heaven, earth and sea, and what is in them: <<*Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith for ever*>> (Psalm 146:5-6). This comes as a further reminder of the first four trumpets, with their demonstrations of God's power over each of these spheres of the created order (8:7-12).

There will be no more delay. The angel swears that the era of God's longsuffering, which entailed delay of his martyrs' vindication (6:10), will end when the last trumpet sounds. However, this will not happen immediately as human's understand time for he goes on to state: but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, indicating that it is still a future event.

The mystery of God to be fulfilled when the seventh trumpet sounds is his plan to unite all things in heaven and earth under Christ's headship: <<*he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth*>> (Ephesians 1:9-10), making visible to all the sovereignty by which the Son now orchestrates every event for his church's welfare: <<*God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name*>>

*that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church>> (Ephesians 1:20-22).*

This mystery includes the unrestrained expression of God's wrath, signified in the bowl judgments, toward all who resist his reign (15:1), where 'ended' translates the same verb, Greek *teleō* rendered fulfilled here. The mystery is not a deep, dark secret however. On the contrary, it is an open secret, or divine plan, that God announced to his servants the prophets: *<<Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith>> (Romans 16:25-26).*

<sup>8</sup> Then 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.'<sup>9</sup> So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, 'Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.'<sup>10</sup> So 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.<sup>11</sup> Then they said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.'

### Revelation 10:8-11

The voice from heaven and the angel again act in unison to give John the instruction to devour the little scroll. Just as Ezekiel ate a scroll and found it sweet as honey in his mouth, so John must do the same, receiving God's words in his heart before he speaks them: *<<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), and: <<He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. He said to me, Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey>> (Ezekiel 3:1-3).* It appears that the common metaphor of 'devouring' an interesting book has been taken literally! Yet it can be effective: *<<He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears>> (Ezekiel 3:10).* The sweet word however made his stomach bitter. John, and by analogy all who follow in his work, have the sweet privilege of hearing and delivering God's 'good news' in v.7, their prophecies will inevitably bring them sorrow and suffering.

You must prophesy again. John has been given the spiritual gift of prophecy, a gift of great value to the church: *<<Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy>> (1 Corinthians 14:1), <<Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything;*

*hold fast to what is good*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21), and: <<*So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*>> (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Although some <<*from every tribe and language and people and nation*>> will be redeemed by the Lamb (5:9 and 7:9-17), at this particular time, John will see peoples and nations and languages resisting Christ and his witnesses (11:9, 13:7 and 17:15). Kings in particular will ally themselves with evil (6:15, 16:12-14, 17:2, 17:18 and 19:18-19).