

A Mighty Angel And Mysterious Book

Revelation 10

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I'm going to read the first seven verses of Revelation 10. This is the first section.

John says, "I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.' The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets."

One of the great mysteries that people have debated through the centuries is the question of why God allows evil to continue to exist in the world. Why is there still Satan, sin and suffering in our world? Why doesn't God just get rid of them? Those are some of the great questions that people ask. It's called "the mystery of iniquity." Why is there a devil? Why is there sin in the world? Why is there sorrow and suffering in the world? Why doesn't God eliminate all those things, set up His kingdom and reign for all eternity?

The answer is in 2 Peter 3:9, where Peter said, "The Lord is not slack..."—or "slow"—"...concerning His promise..."—to come again, to eliminate evil, to set up His kingdom—"...as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Why has God waited so long? Because God is long suffering. Even in the tribulation, the Bible says that "In wrath, remember mercy." So God has waited and waited.

If the Lord had come five years ago, some of you were not saved at that time and would have been wiped out. If the Lord had come 10 years ago, 20 years ago or 50 years ago, how many of you would have missed out? The Lord has waited for more people to repent in order to be saved. So God "is long suffering...not willing that any should perish."

But the time will come when God will put an end to evil, to Satan, to sin and to suffering. He will set up His righteous kingdom on earth and will reign forever.

Now this brings us to our text today. We come to chapter 10 of the book of Revelation. Look at verse 6, where you find the statement, "that there should be delay..."—or "time"—"...no longer." Make note of that. From that word "time" or "chronos," we get our word "chronology."

This statement is in anticipation of the coming kingdom and the completion of God's purpose and plan to judge and destroy sinners on the earth and to set up Jesus on His righteous throne to reign forever.

This is another parenthetical section of Revelation starting in chapter 10. It brings us to the longest and most detailed parenthetical section of the book. It is the parenthetical section that runs from chapter 10 to chapter 15.

The seventh trumpet is blown in Revelation 11:15, but it's not until chapter 16 that the movement sequentially and chronologically continues once again with the bowls of God's wrath being poured out on planet earth during the last half of the tribulation period.

Chapters 10-15 cover the time between the sixth and seventh trumpet or the second and third woes. In chapter 8, verse 13, we read "woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth" because of the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. We've discussed the fifth and sixth trumpets, but we haven't yet come to the seventh trumpet. That happens in chapter 11, verse 15.

Now there are two sections in chapter 10: the first is in verses 1-7, called the mighty angel; and the second is in verses 8-11, called the mysterious book. Some have called this "the big angel" and "the little book." I like that.

First, let's note some things about the mighty angel. I want to point out three things. The first is his character and clothing, in verses 1-2. John says, "I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven."

This is a vision, and John says, "I saw." He also uses the phrase "I heard." But we won't see the words "I saw" again until chapter 13, verse 1. That would be in a second aspect of the vision. So it is one vision that runs from Revelation 10:1 to 13:1.

What was this vision? It was of "another mighty angel coming down from heaven." The word "another" means "of the same kind." That takes us back to chapter 8, verse 3, where John saw "another" angel. It's the same Greek word translated "mighty" that we find here in chapter 10. The identity of this angel is a challenge; God doesn't explain who it is, so it is just a "mighty angel."

Why do we always want to find things that aren't in the Bible? I don't know. "The seven thunders uttered," and everyone wants to know what was the seven thunders. We have books written about it when the Bible doesn't even speak about it.

So this mighty angel is just a mighty angel. I say that, but there are some who think it is a reference to Jesus. I understand that. Before Jesus' Incarnation, in the Old Testament Jesus would appear and be referred to as "the angel of the Lord." It is believed by Bible scholars that is a "Christophany" or an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. I concur with that. But I don't believe that the angel in chapter 10 is a reference to Jesus Christ, because it is out of sequence to the Second Coming; there is no reference to Jesus coming down to earth during

the tribulation. There isn't a reference to Jesus coming until chapter 19. Chapter 10, verses 5-6 say, "The angel...raised up his right hand...and swore by Him who lives forever and ever," so it seems to be an angel, who is taking an oath swearing by God and His throne, that these things will come to pass.

Another possibility is that this angel may be Michael. In Jude 9, he is called "the archangel." He's not called "an archangel," so that indicates that there is only one archangel. But over 66 times in Revelation we have angels mentioned or referred to.

I want you to note the description of this angel. It says that he was "clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head." So angels are glorious and marvelous. A cloud was his clothes. The Bible says that God is clothed with the clouds. Jesus said that He would come with clouds. That's why some feel this is a description of the Second Coming. Clouds are used many times to describe the presence of the Lord, the shekinah glory.

I think clouds are beautiful. I think God created them for us to see their beauty and wonder.

There was a rainbow, as well, "on his head." A rainbow is a reminder of God's covenant promise to Noah that He would not destroy the earth again by a flood.

I believe in the story of Noah, the ark and the flood. People ask, "How can a God of love destroy the earth?" He did it once before, and He can do it again—just not by flood, because that was His promise as shown by the rainbow, but He didn't say He wouldn't use fire. In 2 Peter 3:10, it says, "The elements will melt by fervent heat...the earth will be burned up." So God will renovate planet earth, and there will be "a new heaven and a new earth." God's judgment will come upon this earth. So the rainbow reminds us that God keeps His promises.

Now notice the angel's countenance: "His face was like the sun." So he had a radiant, glorious face.

Then you have a reference to his feet: "...and his feet like pillars of fire." In Revelation 1:14-15, where Jesus is described in His Second Coming, it says that "His feet were like fine brass" and "His eyes like a flame of fire." This speaks of His holiness, His judgment and his righteousness.

Now notice in Revelation 10:2, "He had a little book..."—or "scroll"—"...open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land."

So I want you to note that we have his head, his face, his feet and his hand, in which we have a scroll. We get the word "bíblōs," and we get our word "Bible" from it. Some translations have "scroll."

Now don't confuse this "little book" with the seven-seals scroll in chapter 5 that was unleashed upon the earth. And don't confuse this book with any other than the prophecies of Revelation that John has yet to speak about concerning the promises of God's coming kingdom and judgment upon the wicked and unrighteous.

In verses 3-4, the angel “cried.” So we have his character, in verses 1-2; and then his cry or proclamation, in verses 3-4. “...and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.”

Notice that his voice was as the roaring of a lion. Have you ever heard a lion roar? It's amazing. Years ago I was with my family at the zoo in Portland, Oregon. We were at the opposite end of the zoo from the lion exhibit. Then a lion roared and it was amazing! My whole life I've been going to zoos, but the lions were always sleeping. It was like, “I want my money back!” Not this time! Everyone went running to the lion exhibit. I researched a lion's roar, and they say it can be heard five miles away! When the Lord comes back, He will roar like a lion, but this angel with divine authority roars with great power.

Now there are seven thunders that uttered their voices. This is another mystery. What are these seven thunders and who are the voices working together with these seven thunders? Thunder indicates that a storm is coming. You have the lightning and the thunder, which is in anticipation of God's judgment coming.

Then notice that John says, “I was about to write,” when the seven thunders uttered. It indicates that whatever the seven thunders said was intelligible, and John was going to write it down. But the voice from heaven or the Lord —we don't know what or who it was, perhaps an angel— said, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.”

It's important to realize that when God seals something up, don't go snooping around to try to figure out what it is. I don't believe in secret codes or hidden messages in the Bible. Every cult and every false religion has their book of their theories on what the seven thunders uttered. If you ever hear a preacher tell you what the seven thunders uttered, don't believe it. We don't know. When the Bible doesn't speak, we can't speak. When the Bible is silent, we must be silent. We don't need to look for some hidden message when we don't know. So we don't know what the thunders uttered, because God told John to seal it up.

In Job 37:5, it says, “God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.” The term we use for that is that God is “transcendent.” It means that God is above us, beyond our comprehension and beyond our finding out. We can only know God and what is from God as God reveals Himself to us and what He want us to know. You can't by searching find God. So only what God has revealed can we understand. For some reason God has concealed the seven thunders' utterances from us.

I like what the theologian J. I. Packer has said about this: “We should not pry into God's secrets. We are to be content to live with what He has told us. Reverence excludes speculation about the things that God has not mentioned in His Word. We must be content not to know what the Scriptures do not tell us.” I agree. We should not try to plumb into God's secrets when God says that is not for us to know.

Now notice the third thing about this angel. We have his character, his cry and now his

confirmation. In verses 5-7, he takes an oath or swears. “The angel whom I saw...”—referring to the mighty angel of verse 1—“...standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven.”

When we go into a courtroom to testify, we put our left hand on the Bible and lift up our right hand and we “solemnly swear.” We take an oath. That’s what this angel is doing. He puts his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, lifts up his hand and swears an oath.

What did he swear by? It says, “...and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it.” So God is eternal—He is the one “who lives forever and ever”; God is the creator of all things: heaven, earth and sea.

Then he says, “...that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel...”—that takes place in chapter 11, verse 15, as the third woe or the seventh trumpet when God will bring in His kingdom and wrap it up—“...when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished...”—or “completed”—“...as He declared to His servants the prophets.” So as God spoke through the prophets that He would judge sin and bring in His everlasting kingdom, that time will be now. No longer a delay. So the question of why has God waited so long is answered: no more delay. God is going to bring to pass the coming and culmination of His kingdom.

I refer you to 2 Peter 3:8 where he says, “Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” I can’t tell you how often I hear that verse misinterpreted. It’s interpreted that this is some kind of time code to figure out when Jesus will come back. There are all these crazy, concocted ideas to figure out when the Lord is coming. Any interpretation of any verse in the Bible that gives you a date for the coming of the Lord is a wrong interpretation.

What this verse means is that God is eternal. It is speaking of what we call “the eternality of God.” Time is no issue with God. Time begins and ends in God: “One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

So when we ask, “Why has God waited so long?” the answer is, to God, it’s just one day. It’s no big deal. God is living in eternity, and God’s got it all planned out.

Further on in that chapter, 2 Peter 3, in verse 10, it says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Then the application is in verse 11: “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?”

Another fact about Bible prophecy is that if the Bible prophecy doesn’t change the way you live, then you’re not understanding it properly and applying it in your life. The purpose of prophecy is not just for us to get information about the future; it’s for us to have a life transformation right

now. If your study of Bible prophecy doesn't change the way you live, then you have a wrong understanding of the Word. It's to motivate us to live godly lives.

Now what does John mean, in verse 7, by "the mystery of God would be finished"? I believe this mystery is nothing less than God's purpose, plan and program of waiting to judge sin and to set up His eternal kingdom.

Robert G. Gromacki said, "The mystery of God' refers to God's program of delay..."—I like that—"...and His long suffering between the entrance of sin and the establishment of His millennial kingdom of righteousness."

So "the mystery" is the fact that since sin came into the world, why has God delayed so long? The answer is that God is "long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish." But there is coming the seventh trumpet when God will wrap it up. His last judgments will come upon earth in the bitterness of the little book, and the sweetness of Christ's Second Coming, His millennial kingdom and the new heaven and new earth will come about.

Now another verse that anticipates these same events is Revelation 11:15, which says, "Then the seventh angel sounded." Back in chapter 10, verse 7, he mentions "the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished." Now in chapter 11, verse 15, the seventh angel, which is the seventh trumpet or the third woe, says, "And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" This is the culmination, the completion of God's plan.

Beginning with verse 16, "And the twenty-four elders..."—which I believe is a reference to the church in heaven—"...who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.'" That's consistent with there being a delay no longer. "The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth." So in chapter 11, beginning in verse 15, the seventh trumpet blows, and it is basically a proclamation in anticipation of God's culmination of His plan and purposes.

In this dark, troubled and sad world that we live in, I'm so glad that God has a plan. It may not be that it is unfolding in my timetable, but you can be glad that God doesn't go by what I want, because I don't know what I'm doing. But God does. God has it all under control. And there is coming a day when there will be no more Satan, no more sin, no more suffering and sorrow, God "will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes" and Christ will reign forever. It's not going to be about who's in the White House but who's on "the great white throne" that matters. Jesus Christ is coming again, and His promises are sure. The rainbow around this angel, in verse 1, indicates that God keeps His promises.

The second section of this chapter is verses 8-11. We move from the mighty angel to the mysterious book. John says, "Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said..." We don't know for sure whose voice this is. We know it came from heaven, but we don't know whose voice in heaven it is. And the voice said, "'Go, take the little book which is open..."—the tense of "open" indicates it had already been opened and remained open—"...in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.' So I went to the angel and said to him, 'Give me the little book.'"

At this point in the vision it is fascinating; John becomes a participant in the vision. He's not just seeing and hearing; he's participating. He was instructed to go to this angel and ask for the book. If I had been John, I would have said, "No, thank you! The angel had clouds clothing him, a rainbow around his head, his face looked like the sun, a voice like a roaring lion, feet like fire! And you want me to go up to him and say, 'Give me the book'?! I don't think so!" But John obeyed the voice from heaven. I would have run the opposite direction.

Verse 9, "And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.'" So there is the bitter and the sweet of God's prophetic Word. "Then I took the little book..."—or the little scroll that was open—"...out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.'" So in verses 8-10 is the command for John to go to take the book out of the angel's hand and eat it.

When this angel puts one foot on the land and one foot in the sea, that symbolizes conquering the world or restoring the world or claiming what is God's. God told Joshua that when he entered the Promised Land, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you." So in Bible days, that was a symbol of claiming your rights or claiming your property. You would walk on the land, and it would be a symbol of claiming what is yours. So in this representative angel, God is saying, "I'm reclaiming the earth."

In God's redemptive plan, He's not just saving sinners by His grace; He's actually going to restore planet earth. He's going to reverse the curse, and He's going to restore the earth to a place of paradise where we have communion with God. That's the millennial kingdom. So God is redeeming the earth by putting one foot on the land and one foot in the sea. He is claiming what is rightfully God's.

So in verses 5-6 we see that "The angel...raised up his hand...and swore by Him who lives forever and ever." He took this oath of the promise. And now this book John said, in verse 10, was "as sweet as honey in my mouth. But...[in] my stomach became bitter."

What does that mean? "The little book" represents God's Word and specifically, the commission, in verse 11, that "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" as it says in the King James translation. It doesn't mean he is going to stand in front of them; it means he is going to prophesy about them. So I believe "the little

book,” in context, is a reference to the prophecies that still need to be proclaimed by John in the latter half of Revelation or the plagues that are still to come, the promise of Christ’s return and His coming kingdom on earth.

So it is sweet and bitter, which represent the sweet and bitter aspects of God’s Word that are so important. The Scriptures have both a bitter and a sweet or positive message to them. And it is John’s commission that he will prophesy about “peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”

There is so much that can be said about this “little book.” Number one, I believe that God wants us to “eat” or assimilate or digest His Word. We use a figure of speech when we say, “I’ve been reading my Bible, and I’ve really been ‘eating it up.’” Or we may say, “I’m really ‘feeding on God’s Word.’ I’m ‘feasting’ on it.” God wants us to pick up the Book and to feed on His Word. I am absolutely and completely convinced that there is nothing more important than your relationship to the Bible.

You ask, “Well, isn’t that putting the Bible before God?”

No, because you cannot know God, understand God and be in fellowship with God apart from His Word. The Bible is like no other book. The word “unique” in Webster’s Dictionary means “one of a kind, having no equal.” The Bible is unique. It’s not to be put on par with the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price or the Doctrine of Covenants or any literature from the Kingdom Hall or the Quran or any other holy book. The Bible alone is the book from heaven; it is God’s holy Word. And if you want to know God, fellowship with God and be in communion with God, pick up the Bible. Eat the Bible. Digest the Bible.

When Jesus was in the wilderness, every time the devil tempted Him, Jesus quoted Scripture. When the devil said, “If...”—or literally, “Since”—“...You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread,” Jesus answered with Deuteronomy 8:3, which says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” In this incident, every response that Jesus gave was from the book of Deuteronomy. It was his favorite book of the Bible; He quoted more from Deuteronomy than from any other book of the Bible.

It’s not enough to have just your physical food; it’s more important to have your spiritual food. The Bible is bread, so eat it up. 1 Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”

My wife and I are excited right now, because we have all these grandkids coming. We just had a granddaughter born six months ago, and we just had one born three weeks ago. There is another one coming in August. We’re on a roll; just keep ‘em comin’. If I knew how much fun grandkids were, I would have had them first. They are awesome! What a blessing they are! It’s so exciting seeing that newborn get the milk of nourishment and then grow, gain weight and develop.

When you become a Christian, you’re like a newborn baby. The Bible’s your milk, so you need to feed on that Word. The Bible is also likened unto meat in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 in the King

James translation. So eat the meat of the Word. Psalm 119:103 says, "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

When I came to Christ in 1971, I picked up the Bible and I began to eat it and eat it and eat it. I haven't stopped since. What an amazing book is the Word of God! God wants us to devour it. Not just to read it but to digest it and to assimilate it into our lives.

Secondly, God's Word is both sweet and bitter. There are the bitter aspects of the judgments of God, the wrath of God and the punishments of God. And there is the sweetness of the promises of God, that the King will come and set up His kingdom, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

A lot of people only want positive sermons today. A lot of people don't want the book of Revelation or the wrath or judgments of God. But we should be open to the whole counsel of God found in the Bible. So we don't just want positive messages; we want the whole message or whatever God says in His Word.

Thirdly, we must eat God's Word to be transformed by God's Spirit. You can't separate the Word of God from the Spirit of God. The Bible was written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is understood by illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is for transformation by the Holy Spirit. When Paul talks about the "armor of God" in Ephesians 6, he said to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," verse 17.

The more I hide God's Word in my heart, the more ammunition the Holy Spirit has to transform my life. You can't grow apart from God's Word. So if you're a Christian but you're not a student of the Bible—reading, eating and feeding and digesting it—you're not growing, as you properly should.

Fourthly, we must share God's Word with others. John was told to "eat" the book. Why? So he could "prophesy...about many peoples, nation, tongues, and kings." In order to share God's Word with others, you have to take God's Word in yourself. We can't give what we don't have. So feed on God's Word and proclaim God's Word.

Amen.