

REVELATION 10:1-11

Revelation 10:1 to 11:14 is an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet. After the sounding of the sixth trumpet, despite the devastating judgment, the people were still unrepentant (9:20-21)

But before the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the believers on earth are told to present the Word of God to the world. Therefore, this interlude of Chapter 10 represents an opportunity to receive and proclaim the gospel.

REVELATION 10:1-4

¹ And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

² And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,

³ And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

⁴ And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Revelation 10:1–4)

A. I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven (Revelation 10:1)

The word “mighty” is also translated “strong” in Revelation 5:2. In Revelation 18:1-2, the same word is also used to describe the voice of another angel.

The identity of this mighty angel is not known. However, we can be sure that he is not the Christ for several reasons

- There is no mention of any worship being given to this mighty angel, which would be the case if he were the Christ.
- Christ is never described as an angel in Revelation.
- The word “another” [Gk: *allos*], which means it is another of the same kind. If the angel was Christ, then He would be an angel of another kind, another of a different kind [Gk: *heteros*].

B. Clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: (Revelation 10:1)

John describes the angel as follows:

- This angel is described as being “clothed with a cloud.” This has several possible meanings.
 1. This angel comes directly from the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. This is evidence of the angel's eminence and majesty. Cloud is always a picture of divine glory. Our Lord Jesus is said to come with a cloud (Daniel 7:13; see also Revelation 1:7; 14:14).
 3. In the New Testament, the word "cloud" is used of divine appearances related to judgment (see Matthew 24:30-31).
- The angel has a rainbow upon his head. The rainbow is a symbol of God's covenantal faithfulness. The rainbow was the sign that God gave to Noah after the flood (Genesis 9:12-16).
 - The angel's face was like the sun. Our Lord Jesus' countenance was described "as the sun shineth in his strength" (1:16).
 - The angel's feet were like pillars of fire. The description of the legs as pillars of fire highlights the magnificence of the angel's appearance. The imagery of the angel's legs as pillars of fire refers indirectly to God's providential care.

C. He had in his hand a little book open: (Revelation 10:2)

The angel, according to John, had in his hand a book (or a scroll), and the book was open. Here, John again relies on the prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:9).

The little scroll that is opened suggests that the readers would have a complete view of its contents. The contrast between the opened little scroll, and the sealed scroll is this – the message of the sealed scroll in Revelation 5:1 represents God's plan for the entire world throughout from beginning to end, which is known only to God and can only be known to man only to the extent that He chooses to reveal its contents.

D. He set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth, (Revelation 10:2)

John added that the angel "set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth" (10:2; see also 10:8). This is a picture of the angel's dominance and authority over God's creation in the sea and over the land.

E. Cried with a loud voice. (Revelation 10:3)

John again relied on Old Testament prophecy to help him express what he had seen. The phrase "cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth" (10:3; see Hosea 11:10; Amos 3:8; Jeremiah 25:30).

The roaring of the lion represents God's warning concerning impending judgment (Jeremiah 25:30). The Apostle Peter also describes Satan as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). But here the picture refers to the voice of a mighty angel who calls out with such volume that his voice is heard throughout God's creation.

F. The seven thunders had uttered their voices (Revelation 10:4)

John writes about an echo of seven thunders that accompanied the loud voice of the angel. The number seven has no special meaning. Seven stands for completeness, and the seven thunders simply mean that the noise of thunder is overwhelming to the people living on earth. Even here, John relies on Old Testament, and the allusion here is to Psalm 29:3-4.

G. Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Revelation 10:4)

The thunders had a message, but we are not told what was said. Even though John wishes to be obedient to the voice of Jesus who first called him to write (1:11, 19), he is now told by a voice from heaven not to do so.

God makes a distinction between the things that He has revealed and those He wanted sealed (Deuteronomy 29:29). Those things which God has revealed, we are to obey. Those which God has sealed, we are not to speculate. They remain a mystery that we must leave unexplained.

REVELATION 10:5-7

⁵ And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

⁶ And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

⁷ But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:5–7)

A. The angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, (Revelation 10:5)

Verse 5 repeats what we read earlier in verse 2 that the angel stands upon the sea and the earth, symbolizing his power and authority over God's creation. John then adds that he "lifted up his hand to heaven" (10:5). The raising of hands in our days signifies the taking of an oath.

In the Bible, there are also references to people lifting up their hands to swear an oath (Genesis 14:22; Daniel 12:7). God who swears by His own name and raises His hand to heaven (Exodus 6:8; Deuteronomy 32:40).

- B. And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: (Revelation 10:6)**

Verse 6 is an extension of the thought that began in verses 5. In verses 5 and 6, we see a three-fold division of creation. In verse 5, the order is sea, earth, and heaven; but in verse 6, the order is reversed.

The angel is also appealing to God who creates and sustains the world. Here, he appeals to God's providential care over all his creatures (Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 146:6; Acts 4:24).

- C. There should be time no longer: (Revelation 10:6)**

A literal translation of the phrase "that there should be time no longer" is that "time no longer will be." It means that the period of waiting is past so that God's judgments will begin to take place without any delay.

- D. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound... (Revelation 10:7)**

Here John is speaking in anticipation of the blowing of the seventh trumpet. So before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, there is a period of silence which is Chapter 10. John is asking the readers to wait until he has finished writing this interlude (10:1-11:14) that describes the task of God's people on earth.

- E. The mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:7)**

What is "the mystery of God"? John relies on the Old Testament prophets such as Daniel and Amos. Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel to interpret a dream he had, to which the prophet replies that no one is able to do so "but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets" (Daniel 2:28). Amos assured the people that "surely the Lord God...revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

When the seventh trumpet is sounded, God will cause His mysterious plan to become reality. When this trumpet sounds, the time has come for God and his Christ to rule the kingdom of the world and to judge the dead (11:15-18). The cry of the souls under the altar asking for judgment will be fulfilled on the Judgment Day (6:10; 20:11-15).

- F. As he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:7)**

The phrase "his servants the prophets" appears frequently in the Old Testament (2 Kings 17:13, 23; 21:10; Ezra 9:11; Jeremiah 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Daniel 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7).

It includes the prophets of both the Old and New Testament eras, of which John is the last one with respect to recording God's Word. The prophecy that God's servants declare is the message of His redemption to those who love Him and judgment for those who hate Him. God gives this message to his servants, whom he expects to pass it on to all people (10-11; 11:3, 10).

REVELATION 10:8-11

⁸ And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, *Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*

⁹ And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, *Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.*

¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

¹¹ And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. (Revelation 10:8–11)

A. ***Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. (Revelation 10:8)***

The first time that the voice gives a command to John – Go and take. John was told to go to the angel and take the little open scroll from him.

B. ***Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. (Revelation 10:9)***

The phrase “take and eat” is borrowed from Ezekiel. The prophet also heard a voice from heaven asking him to eat an open scroll (Ezekiel 2:8-9; 3:1-4).

John is told to eat the little scroll. He was informed that the taste will be sweet as honey in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. By eating the scroll, he realizes its effect in his inward being – sweet and bitter.

- The Word of God is sweeter than honey (Psalm 19:10; 119:103).
- The Word of God is also bitter in the sense that it denounces the depravity of man and declares the judgment of God. Another way to look at the Word of God is bitter to the unrepentant (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

C. ***It was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (Revelation 10:10)***

John did as he was told, but the sequence of the effects as a result of eating the book is reversed. It was sweet to taste, but it turned bitter in the belly. Some look at this literally, that John really did eat the book, and following the normal digestive process, it was sweet to the taste and later became bitter as it was being digested.

I personally see it as a figure of speech that the book is sweet to John – as it should be to all who delight in God’s Word – but as soon as he begins to preach it, the opposition of the unbelievers to God’s truth to them indicates that John has to endure bitterness in his inward being.

D. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. (Revelation 10:11)

“He” refers to the angel. However, there are some manuscripts that render it as “they.” Other translations simply put it in the passive tense – “I was told...” – without specifying who it was that said to John.

John is told to prophesy. Prophecy does not merely mean to foretell what is going to happen; it also means to propagate all that John had received. In short, he must proclaim God’s full revelation.

John is also told the people to whom he must prophesy. The AV has it as “before.” There are some translations that render it as “about.” In other words, John is told to prophesy “about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”

By the use of the phrase “many peoples and nations and languages and kings” in Revelation (11:9; 13:7–8; 14:6; 17:15), it appears that John is speaking of unbelievers who will be judged.

John categorises humanity in four ways – peoples, nations, languages, and kings. He uses this fourfold grouping of people seven times in Revelation (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15) though not always in the same order.

The point is that God wants all humanity to hear and respond to his message. He is concerned about all people, for all of them individually are made in His image (Gen. 1:27).