

## **A MIGHTY ANGEL'S MESSAGE**

### **Revelation 10**

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Revelation 10:1–11 (NIV)

“Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.’

Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, ‘There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.’

Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: ‘Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’

So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’”

**I. One of the disadvantages perhaps to expository preaching is that if you haven't been here for previous messages in Revelation, or missed several, you probably felt lost as I began reading Revelation 10 today.**

It'd be sort of like picking up Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* and being told to open to page 101 and start reading and never knowing where the first hundred pages had led us.

So we must take a moment to broaden our focus as we approach chapter 10 today. The word "Revelation" itself comes from a combination of words, which literally mean "away from hiding." It simply indicates that what is hidden is going to be uncovered and what is concealed is going to be revealed. As we have looked at the first nine chapters of Revelation we've found these things revealed for us. The Lord knows the condition of His church. That's revealed in chapters 1–3. For a moment in Revelation chapters 4 and 5 we are caught up into heaven to see what worship in heaven is like so that is not concealed from us and, as we understand what the worship of heaven is like, our own worship to the Lord is informed. Then in chapter 6 there is a process of judgment that is going to take place on earth, which is revealed in the figure of seals. In chapter 7 there is an interlude revealed which shows us during the period of judgment the safety of God's people. Then there were in chapters 8 and 9 a series of six judgments revealed going back over the process of judgment that is going to be poured out on the earth. The first four judgments reveal for us God's judgments against nature. And the judgments five and six in chapter 9 speak of a demonic influence that is going to be let loose on humanity and also a two-hundred million man army marching.

With that kind of background in mind we're coming to a point in which the sixth trumpet has sounded and we are now ready for the seventh trumpet of judgment to sound, which will bring in the end.

**II. But as was the case between the opening of the sixth seal and the seventh seal there is now between the sixth trumpet and the seven trumpet a pause, a break in the action.**

Or you might say it is an interlude. Why is it that as we are set to hear the seventh trumpet, instead of hearing that trumpet sound, we hear diversionary action, in effect a pause? It may result from two kinds of things. One is that God is extremely reluctant to sound the seventh trumpet. He is reluctant to end the cycle of judgment which will bring in the kingdom eternal because once that seventh trumpet is sounded the age of grace is over, the opportunity to extend repentance is finished and God, as Peter tells us, puts off His day of wrath in order that all who may would yet come in (2 Peter 3:9).

There is also another thing, though, that is happening during the interlude. That is that while the judgments were being poured out upon the world in the figure of the sixth trumpet it's as though we have the action happening on the center stage in the six trumpets. But off in the alcoves on the stage for a moment the bright lights of the center stage go out and there is a spotlight that goes on, on the stage over here and it shows us what is happening to the people of God in the time of judgment. And what the people of God are concerned with is how long the judgment is going to last and what their role is during the time of trouble. Revelation 10 sets out to answer this question to the people of God who are going through great trouble. "How long?" is the cry of the martyrs.

Chapter 10 attempts to answer that in the interlude. And chapter 11 attempts to answer the question "What is the role of the people of God in the time of trouble?"

So with that in mind, we come here today to chapter 10 answering the question "How long before the judgments are completed?"

**III. We have in chapter 10 an appearance of a mighty angel.**

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This mighty angel basically has two messages to bring. The first message in verses 1–7 is a sort of universal and impersonal message. It is known to the whole church. But beginning in verse 8 through verse 11 the message becomes individual and personal to John as he contemplates its significance. In verses 1–4 the mighty angel makes an appearance. As we look at the text of Revelation there are some three times in the Book of Revelation where an angel who is specifically called “strong” or “mighty” puts in an appearance. It may be the same angel. It could possibly be three different angels. This angel who now appears reminds us of the strong angel who in Revelation 5 cried out, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?” His cry was so loud it was heard in heaven and on earth and under the earth. This is a strong angel with a mighty voice. Here again, in chapter 10, is a strong angel whose feet are on the sea and on the land. And in chapter 18 there is another strong angel who takes a great millstone and throws it into the sea and through that action describes the fall of Babylon.

We see this mighty angel coming out of heaven, and if we're the Early Church or the church now we have been shaken by the events of the description of the judgments in chapters 8 and 9. The holocaust is presented, the thermonuclear blasts, which are destroying a third of the earth, the terror of demonic invasion upon mankind, and the horror of a two-hundred-million man army poised to march on the Euphrates that our hearts might be struck with terror. So, for the believers who might be terrorized by looking at the prospect of the future, suddenly there is a strong angel coming down from heaven.

I've got the feeling as I look at this angel that there's enough strength in one angel to single-handedly wipe out a two-hundred-million man army. That is the precise purpose here in Revelation, to tell the people of God that there is never anything to fear in the world, that the world can throw all of its might and all of its power and all of the terror of hell can break out, but

the people of God have the power of God. We know as the people of God we will never forget who has the ultimate power. Even one angel has more power than all of the marching hosts of hell and all the marching hosts of men.

The features of the angel are meant to project that image of power and strength to us. The angel comes down wrapped in cloud of divine presence reminiscent of Psalm 104:3 which describes the throne of God as being as one who makes the clouds His chariots. Over the head of this angel is a rainbow reminding us that with the might of God there is His mercy. And this angel is reflecting some of the qualities of God himself. Revelation 4:3 says around the throne of God there was a rainbow.

This angel's face is shining like the sun. If we could see him, and we can see him sort of enveloped in clouds, the clouds sort of circling him, then his face is shining as the sun. We remember from an earlier passage in Revelation that Jesus' face was like the sun shining in full strength (1:16). In other words, this angel which comes may very well have come straight from the presence of Christ, bearing the radiance of Christ. His legs were like pillars of fire. I've never seen anyone with legs of pillars of fire. But these pillars of fire are meant to awaken our memory to how God in the past had been with His people in the exodus of the Children of Israel. God had led His people through the darkness of the wilderness with a pillar of fire. Here is an angel coming now to remind us that God always leads His people.

The striking thing, though, about the angel is perhaps what is in his hand. That is the focus of Revelation 10. In this angel's hand is a little scroll which is open. This is the second scroll in the Book of Revelation. Earlier in chapter 5 we saw a sealed scroll that was opened by the power of the Lord. That sealed scroll contained in it the basic elements of the judgments, which are to break out upon the world. But this little scroll is an open scroll. Some have said this little scroll,

because it's open, must be the gospel. It must be the announcement of God's mercy. It could very well be that.

More than likely, though, what is actually in the little scroll is simply the fact that the time is very short. God doesn't have much more to say; the seventh trumpet is about to sound. What must be said must be said quickly. It is little and it is also open.

When we consider the context again, of the writing of Revelation, we must remember that there were small circles of believers that were scattered throughout the cities of Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. The individual believer was being persecuted for his faith, and his faith in the eyes of the world seemed of so little account. The Word of God in which he believed was ridiculed in the world. To that Word of God that was ridiculed, we now see the open word of God in the hands of a colossal figure. The Word of God is supremely significant. It is not puny or small. It is in the hands of a strong angel, and it will be proclaimed. Here is a word of comfort to the church: an open book that says no matter what men think of it, it is in the power of God and the open hands of strong angel. That comes across as something which is mighty and powerful.

This angel's feet are on the sea and on the land. The fact that this angel stands on the water and on the land says that the power of God stands as firm on the sea as it does on the land. Then this angel speaks with a loud voice as a lion roaring. When the angel speaks seven thunders sound. Now, all of a sudden our minds return; we've had seven seals; we've had seven trumpets, now we're going to get ready for another sequence of judgments: thunder judgments.

But John is told not to record what the seven thunders have said.

There are two things we may make of this. One is that God simply canceled the seven thunders and they're not to occur at all once they have sounded. That's within His prerogative.

Another thing may be that God may have simply wanted to leave some measure of mystery in his prophetic plan. Anyone who gets a scheme together and says, “This is exactly how everything is going to flow for the next years until the Lord returns, because it’s all here; it can all be put together”—I defy you to put together a system, if you don’t know what the seven thunders are. The seven thunders are a guarantee that nobody will ever quite get it all matched up before it occurs. So we don’t know yet what the angel’s voice produced. I like that there’s a little bit of mystery in regard to the end of the age. We don’t know what the seven thunders said. But we know that when they sound the end is awfully close.

This majestic appearance of the strong angel has come now to speak a word to all of us. The angel’s message in verses 5–7 is simply the fact that there is to be no more delay when the seventh trumpet call is to be sounded. The King James has, “There should be time no longer.” The idea is “There shall be no more delay.” But in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel the mystery of God as He announced to his prophets should be fulfilled. Notice the content of the seventh trumpet is found in 11:15. The seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.” When the seventh trumpet sounds it’s the last trumpet. The age is over.

This angel coming down is a reminder that at the very close of the age for the believers there will be divine announcement. No more delay. The question will be over, “How long?” and the question is not in the hands of man to answer, which is perhaps the primary point to be made here by the angel’s voice. The question “How long?” is in the hands of God to answer through His angel, His strong and mighty angel.

Over the experience of the church there have been many who have sought to answer the question “How long will it be before the Lord returns? How long before the last trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ will be raised first?” It is not given for man to know precisely and it is the strong angel who announces the coming of the end. We may do well to speculate with an open eye by saying that there are some things God has reserved for himself in regard to the age.

The angel when he says there will be no more delay affirms it with an oath that says when this angel speaks there will not be anything amiss at all. When he speaks, the mystery of God will be fulfilled which he has spoken to his servants the prophets.

We can perhaps spend a great deal of time here talking about what is involved in the mystery of God being fulfilled. The term “mystery” is used some twenty times in the New Testament, sixteen times prior to Revelation. It’s used in various ways. It’s used to describe the hardening of Israel now in the world is a mystery. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a mystery. The change that we’re going to experience at death—“Behold I show you mystery. We shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51). That’s a mystery. The Gentiles as fellow heirs of the Jews are called a mystery. Our union with Christ is called a mystery. Even as husband and wife, the two shall become one flesh—that’s a mystery. And it speaks of our union with Christ. There is a mystery, a lawlessness that is at work in the world today.

These mysteries only remain mysteries to the unbeliever. For every mystery in the New Testament is immediately made known or revealed to the New Testament church. What we see when the mystery of God has been fulfilled is simply that all the world will see at the seventh trumpet what the believers had been seeing all along. We know that God has appeared in Jesus Christ. It’s not a mystery for us. It’s not a mystery for us how the world is going to end. We know. It has been revealed. There is a sense in which God has appointed a day and it is a mystery

to many but to those who received Him we have been permitted to know the mystery and it will be completed for all the rest of the world at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

There then comes an individual and personal message of the angel to John, verses 8–11, later announcing no more delay. John is told to take the scroll and eat it. It will be bitter in his stomach and sweet as honey in his mouth. He takes the scroll and has the experience promised him.

**IV. Let's focus a couple moments on these features of the scroll—sweet to the taste and bitter to the stomach.**

The idea of the word of God tasting sweet is a phenomenon that has occurred a number of times in the Old Testament. Jeremiah the prophet ate the words of God; to him they became a joy and a delight to his heart. Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll. So in Ezekiel 3:3 the Lord says “‘Son of man eat 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.” Psalm 19:10 tells us that God’s words are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey. And Psalm 119:103 says, “How sweet are Thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” It’s this teaching coming forward that the Word of God is sweet for us to taste.

The Word of God tastes good, is the point being made. When we are most in trouble and in most need of God to do something in our behalf, the Word of God comes to us with the promise it tastes good. It tasted good the moment we heard the Word of God and heard Jesus say to us, “Come and follow Me.” That word was a good word. When, in John 3:16 the Word says to us, “God so loved the world he gave His only Son that who ever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life,” that word tasted sweet to our mouth.

In the New International Version, 1 John 1:9 says that “if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” and that word tastes sweet to our mouth. When a believer in a persecuted time hears the word that there is not to be any more delay, as John hears it here, that is a sweet word. It means that it is time to come out of the concentration camps. It is time to be released from the shackles that one has been bound in. It is a word of freedom, a word of liberation. The sweetness has come.

But as John takes this word, which is sweet to him as he is in exile of Patmos—no more delay, he then finds that when he digests it that it is bitter in his stomach. In what sense is it bitter? There are some believers, by the way, who began following Christ and the word is initially sweet. But they let sin accumulate in their lives so that over a period of time they become bitter. This is not the kind of bitterness, which is being reflected here. This is the bitterness which the believer experiences when he realizes that God is going to act and bring the age to a close, that it is sweet to him because he will be with Christ. But it is a bitter experience as well because you realize that there will be those who have not responded to the message. It is bitterness that results from the inability to change unrepentant human hearts. John contemplates the message of the Lord's coming and the end of the age. On the one hand it is very sweet but, on the other hand, as he digests its implications, it is exceedingly bitter. It is no light thing to say Jesus is coming. It is a word of hope to the church but a word of judgment to the world.

Therefore the announcement of judgment can never be proclaimed or prophesied glibly or as though there were no shocks or after affects to it. It is proclaimed by the prophets and by the people of God who have experienced something of the bitterness of the fact that there has been on the part of some an unwillingness to change, and that produces the bitterness.

We as human beings were born estranged from God. We could not see Him. We could not hear Him and we could not speak to Him. Jesus came as our teacher into life and laid down His life on our behalf so that we might be given eyes to see God, and ears to hear God, and a mouth to speak praises to God. He came and this task of bringing us to himself was sweet to His taste. He took the cross willingly. It was joyous for Him. But it was also bitter in His experience when He reckoned with the fact that there would be those who would not respond.

When we proclaim that Jesus is coming soon we proclaim it to believers with joy for it is our blessed hope. But as those who trust in Jesus Christ we never proclaim it glibly for we know that when the last trumpet sounds there will be those on earth who are found wanting. Therefore, we, too, must experience bitterness. But John is told, "You must continue to prophesy about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings" (Revelation 10:11). The knowledge of the end of the age is not something secret, which we kept hidden among ourselves. It is yet to be proclaimed. And as we proclaim it we will sense both its sweetness and its bitterness.

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, as we bow our heads in this moment of prayer, we want to thank You that Your Word has become sweet to our taste. If by our own carelessness, if by our own sinfulness, Your Word has become a bitter experience for us and our life is filled with anger and resentment, I pray Lord Jesus, that in these moments as we share the communion together that we will examine our hearts and lay before You those areas of our life where we are hurting and angry and upset, so that Your Word for believers can remain sweet. May the only bitterness attached to Your Word be that bitterness of human experience, which comes when we realize that there are those outside of Your flock, outside Your fold who do not know You, whom You are yet in this day of grace, before the final trumpet sounds, summoning us, like John, as Your people to declare Your Word

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to our friends and to our neighbors, to those whom we associate with. This is a call to us today, a personal word of the strong and mighty angel to us to remember the sweetness of Your Word but not forget its cutting bitter edge either. May Your Spirit come upon us as we share communion today and may You reveal to our hearts how much You love us and how worthy we are in Your presence because of Your sacrifice for our sins. We worship You and adore You today. Thank You for the offering of Yourself for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.