

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

THE SEVEN TRUMPET JUDGMENTS, REVELATION 8:1-11:19

A TWO PART INTERLUDE: REVELATION 10:1-11:14

INTRODUCTION

- Charles Ryrie, *The vision John received at this point is the longest in the book . . . This section also forms the longest interlude between judgments . . . Here, between the sixth and seventh trumpets, come a number of revelations before the sounding of that last trumpet.*
- Thomas Constable, *He interrupted the sequence of trumpet judgments, between the sixth and seventh trumpets, with the insertion of additional revelation (10:1–11:14). The emphasis shifts, temporarily, from the outpouring of God’s wrath on unbelievers to the consolation and encouragement of believers.*
- Kendell Easley, *In this chapter we learn more about John as a prophet required to proclaim the Word of God.*

A STRONG ANGEL AND A LITTLE SCROLL: REVELATION 10:1-11

- A. A strong angel descended from heaven (1-7)
1. His description (1-2), ***Then 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. 2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,***
 - a. *another mighty angel coming down from heaven*
 - 1) Charles Swindoll, *The appearance of this great angel was so magnificent that he made the previous wicked angels look plain by comparison . . . Clothed with a cloud, a face shining like the sun, feet like pillars of fire—all these things reaffirm his heavenly origin.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *He is probably not the same strong angel that John saw before (5:2), since there are many strong angels (cf. 18:21).*
 - 3) Kendell Easley, *This mighty angel is another one like the strong throne-room angel of 5:2. John describes him more fully than he does any other holy created being in Revelation.*
 - b. *wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head*
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *John saw him descending from heaven as a messenger from God (cf. 20:1) and clothed with a cloud, signifying his celestial origin and connection with judgment (cf. 1:7; 14:14, 15, 16; Matt. 24:30; 26:24; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27) . . . His crown was a rainbow, the symbol of God’s faithfulness and mercy (cf. 4:3).*
 - 2) Charles Swindoll, *A rainbow crowns his head, perhaps indicating God’s covenant of mercy with humanity in Genesis 9:13–16, in which the Creator promised never to destroy all flesh with a flood. The character of God hasn’t changed from the days of Noah. His grace and mercy endure even in the midst of judgment.*
 - 3) Kendell Easley, *... robed in a cloud suggests the cloud of God’s own glorious presence (Exod. 16:10; Luke 9:34) . . . a rainbow above his head perhaps like a multicolored turban reminds us of the rainbow around the heavenly throne (Rev. 4:3).*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *God is often identified with clouds. God led Israel by a glorious cloud (Ex. 16:10), and dark clouds covered Sinai when the Law was given (Ex. 19:9). When God appeared to Moses, it was in a cloud of glory (Ex. 24:15ff; 34:5). “[He] maketh the clouds His chariot” (Ps. 104:3). A cloud received Jesus when He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9); and, when He returns, it will be with clouds (Rev. 1:7) . . . We first saw the rainbow around the throne of God (Rev. 4:3); now it sits like a crown on the head of this messenger. The rainbow was God’s sign to mankind that He would never again destroy the world with a flood. Even in wrath, God remembers His mercy (Hab. 3:2). Whoever this angel is, he has the authority of God’s throne given to him.*

- c. *his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire*
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, . . . *his face was as the sun in its brilliance; and his feet were as pillars in their stance.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *His countenance was radiant like the sun, reflecting the glory and majesty of God. His feet (and probably his legs) were fiery pillars, which are reminiscent of the pillar of fire in the wilderness that was a manifestation of God's holiness, mercy, and judgment.*

- e. *he had a little scroll open in his hand*
 - 1) John Walvoord, *In contrast with the seven-sealed scroll (biblion) held by the Lamb (5:1), this angel held a small scroll (biblaridion, also used in 10:9–10). This scroll apparently contained the angel's written order for the mission he was about to fulfill.*
 - 2) Charles Ryrie, *The angel held a little book opened in his hand (v. 2) . . . the book had been already opened before it was seen by John at this point. That would indicate that this is not the same book as was seen sealed in chapter 5. The contents are revealed later in this chapter.*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *The tense of the Greek verb translated was open (perfect passive) indicates that someone had already opened it, and it was already unrolled in his hand. It probably represents a new revelation from God (cf. Ezek. 2:9–3:3; Jer. 15:15–17).*
 - 4) Mark Hitchcock, *The little book in Revelation 10 is often connected with the seven-sealed scroll in Revelation 5, but they don't appear to be the same . . . The little scroll is probably the revelation from God about the remainder of the contents of Revelation in chapters 11-22. It's the rest of the prophetic message John will record.*
 - 5) Grant Osborne, *The content of the scroll in 5:1 stems from Ezekiel 2:9–10, and that of 10:2–3 stems from Ezekiel 3:1–3. Both are part of Ezekiel's call and commission, and here they are part of John's prophetic commission.*

- f. *he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land*
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The angel took a stand with one foot on the sea and the other on the land (v. 2). This seems to present an image of conquest and to relate the angel and his ministry to God's purpose of taking possession of the entire world (land and sea), which will be worked out in the tribulation period.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *The angel stood astride the land and the sea, symbolizing his authority over the whole world (vv. 5, 8; 7:2; cf. Exod. 20:4, 11; Deut. 11:24; Ps. 68:22; 69:34).*
 - 3) William Barclay, *The angel has one foot on the sea and one on the land. This shows his size and power, for sea and land stand for the sum total of the universe. It also shows that the power of God stands as firm on the sea as it does on the land.*

2. His identity

- a. Charles Ryrie, *Some identify him with the Lord Jesus . . . there would be a problem in a descent of Christ as this point in the book . . . Others, point out that an angel might have these characteristics as well . . . the archangel Michael's name means "who is like God," which would make these characteristics not unexpected . . . It is quite possible that this angel is the same one who appeared in 8:3, the word "another" in 10:1 merely distinguishing him from the seven trumpet angels as it does in 8:3.*
- b. Mark Hitchcock, . . . *there are three clues that seem to indicate that this is not Jesus, but rather, a strong angel dispatched from God's throne. First, the angel is called "another" . . . This signifies at the outset that this angel is another of the same kind that just brought forth the seal judgments in Revelation . . . Second, Jesus is never referred to in Revelation as an angel . . . When Jesus appears in Revelation, there is no uncertainty about who He is . . . Third, in 10:6, this angel "swore by Him who lives forever and ever." While God does swear by Himself in Hebrews 6:13-14, in that passage, He makes it clear that He is doing so. But here in Revelation 10, it makes more sense to view the angel as an angelic being who swears by the person of God, the great Creator.*
- c. John Walvoord, . . . *though Christ appeared frequently as the Angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 16:13; 24:7; 31:11, 13; Jud. 6:22), there is no evidence that this person was other than a mighty angel (cf. Rev. 5:2), perhaps Michael the archangel.*
- d. Kendell Easley, *A better identification is made by comparing this angel with Gabriel, who also stands in the very presence of God (Luke 1:19). The mighty angel of Revelation 10 (especially vv. 5–6) is very similar to Gabriel as described in Daniel 12:7 "[Gabriel], who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, 'It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.' "* Thus, the similarity to Daniel 12:7 and the connection of Gabriel with the presence of God suggests that in Revelation 10 we have Gabriel himself. If so, John is the fourth and final human to whom Gabriel gave a divine message in the Bible: Daniel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21); Zechariah (Luke 1:19); the virgin Mary (Luke 1:26); and now John.

3. The strong angel's cry (3-4), *and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 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."*
 - a. The strong angel had a powerful voice
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The metaphor emphasizes the strength of the angel's voice.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Comparison with a lion roaring suggests that his powerful cry (a battle cry) concerns vengeance. This proves true especially if what he cried out appears in verse 6.*
 - 3) Kendell Easley, *So far in Revelation, we have heard many loud voices. Christ's was trumpet-like; the living creature's was thunder-like (1:10; 6:1). This is the only shout like the roar of a lion that we encounter, and it called forth an immediate response.*
 - b. Responses to the strong angel's cry
 - 1) *the seven thunders sounded*
 - a) Charles Ryrie, *Thunders are usually harbingers of coming storms (as in 8:5); these were apparently connected with some of the judgments involved in God's gaining possession of the earth.*
 - b) Charles Swindoll, *When the angel cried out with a voice like a roaring lion, seven thunders spoke (10:3). Perhaps these thunderous voices originated from the cloud that engulfed the angel. Clearly they were audible voices with a clear message.*
 - c) Kendell Easley, *Those who reply are the most mysterious of all the speaker in the whole book, the seven thunders. They only appear here in Scripture, yet John refers to them—the thunders—in a way that assumes we know what he means. We don't. Nobody does, but they were awesome.*
 - 2) *seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down*
 - a) Charles Ryrie, . . . *the specific details are not revealed, a voice from heaven (either God's or Christ's) forbidding John to do so.*
 - b) Mark Hitchcock, *Because the meaning of these seven peals of thunder is not stated, certainty on what they communicate is impossible. Many believe there may be a connection with the seven times God spoke in Psalm 29 and the seven peals of thunder in Revelation 10:3-4. But it seems reasonable to view the thunder as pronouncements of judgment . . . given the context, it is clear that these peals of thunder represent judgment, but we don't know the content of these judgments.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *An authoritative voice, probably belonging to God or Christ (cf. 1:11, 19; Dan. 12:4, 9), did not permit John to record the judgments that these seven thunders announced (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-4). This indicates clearly that God has not revealed in Scripture all the judgments that will take place on the earth during the Great Tribulation.*
 - d) John Walvoord, *While Revelation is primarily designed to reveal and not to conceal God's purpose and future events, some revelation was kept hidden as illustrated by God's prohibiting John to write what "the voices" of the seven thunders said.*
 - e) Charles Swindoll, *But a voice from heaven explicitly instructed John to "seal up" the words of the seven thunders, keeping them shrouded in mystery (10:4). One day in heaven we may learn what they said, but until then, we can only assume it must have been a frightful message of judgment.*
 - f) Kendell Easley, *This command powerfully reminds us that the Bible does not contain all the predictions about the end of the world that God has revealed to individuals . . . We do, however, have ample teaching in Scripture concerning the end time to enable us to prepare our lives for such a time—should it be our lot. This lines up with the long-standing Christian belief that the Bible is sufficient revelation for salvation and life, but it is not exhaustive revelation.*
 - g) William Barclay, *We need not even begin to speculate about what the secret revelation was. We simply know that John had experiences which he could not communicate to others. God sometimes tells someone more than that person can say or than a particular generation can understand.*
 - h) Craig Keener, *Most likely the seven thunders remain mysterious in order to teach that the hidden things belong to God (Deut. 29:29; cf. 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:17; 19:12). Revelation, unlike Daniel, does not seal up most of its contents (Rev. 22:10; cf. Dan. 12:9), but some things must remain sealed. The concealment of the meaning of the seven thunders reminds us that God knows far more about the future than he tells us.*

4. The strong angel's confirmation (5-7), *And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and 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, 7 but 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 he prophets.*
 - a. The angel swears an oath to God (5-6)
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The angel now confirms with an oath the purpose of God to take His rightful inheritance. He first takes the position of oath-taking (v.5), raising his hand to heaven. The basis of his oath is God, who is described here as the eternal One and as the all-powerful Creator (v. 6). The fact that the angel does not swear by himself may indicate that he is not Christ.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Lifting the right hand toward God was and is a customary gesture when someone makes a solemn oath (cf. Gen. 14:22; Deut. 32:40; Dan. 12:7).*
 - 3) John Walvoord, *The clear reference to God as Creator (cf. 4:11; 14:7) answers evolutionary speculation as to the origin of the earth, and it also affirms the omnipotence of God in dealing with the world in judgment when the time is ripe.*
 - b. The timing of the fulfillment of prophecy (7)
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The idea is that there will no longer be an interval of time, that is, a delay, because (v. 7) the mystery of God will be finished when the seventh angel sounds. This will be welcome news to the martyrs of the Tribulation, who are already in heaven awaiting God's vindication (6:9-11).*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *He appealed to God as the eternal Creator who can cause whatever He pleases to happen. This appeal strengthens the force of the oath and the certainty of its outcome. His message was that there would be no more delay in the outpouring of God's wrath (cf. 8:1). This announcement also implied that God would no longer give people extra time to repent . . . it is evident that the seal and trumpet judgments will take some time to unfold, which will give earth-dwellers time to repent (6:15-17; 9:20-21). But the bowl judgments will come very quickly in succession and will allow little or no time for repentance (cf. 2 Pet. 3:1-9).*
 - 3) Charles Swindoll, *At this point it would be wise to recall 6:10, when the tribulation martyrs cried out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" The mighty angel of Revelation 10 announces that God's response to those prayers will soon come to an end.*
 - 4) Kendell Easley, *Now we learn the point at which people can know for sure that the end of the world is under way—that the "meltdown sequence" is running irreversibly . . . In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet is "the signal" identifying the final end-time scenario . . . there will be no delay once the events of the six trumpets have occurred. The seventh trumpet will end everything (11:15-18). As we will see, the two great dramas in the rest of vision two tell how the consummation is carried out (chapters 12-14 and 15-16).*
 - c. *the mystery of God*
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *This expression, "the mystery of God," in this connection seems to indicate all the plans and purposes of God made known by Him to and through the Scriptures concerning His governmental proceedings with people on earth, looking always toward the establishment of the millennial kingdom under the rule of Christ. When Christ comes to take that kingdom, there will be no mystery, but, on the contrary, manifestation.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *The mystery of God probably refers to previously unrevealed details of God's plans for humanity that He was about to make known. Specifically it refers to what will take place to ensure that the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of Christ (11:15).*
 - 3) John Walvoord, *The reference, therefore, is not to hidden truth but to the fulfillment of many Old Testament passages which refer to the glorious return of the Son of God and the establishment of His kingdom of righteousness and peace on the earth.*
 - 4) Kendell Easley, *A mystery in the Bible is divine truth previously undisclosed but now made known through Christ or his apostles . . . with the blowing of the seventh trumpet God's final defeat of evil will be fulfilled. Then at last God's ultimate purpose in human history will be realized (11:15) . . . The good news that God's people need to hear is the word of his final triumph.*
 - 5) William Barclay, *. . . the mystery of God will be fulfilled. The meaning is that the whole purpose of God in human history will stand revealed. Much in life is difficult to understand; wickedness seems to have control. But, as John saw it, there is going to be a final showdown. God and antichrist, good and evil, will face each other; final and total victory will be won, the questions will find their answers and the wrongs will be put right.*

- B. John was commanded to take a little book (8-11)
1. The book was held by the strong angel (8), ***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."***
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *The voice spoke to John. This is the same voice that forbade him to write the content of the thunders in verse 4 . . . The voice commanded John to take the opened book from the angel's hand.*
 - b. Thomas Constable, *God or Christ ("the voice which I heard from heaven;" cf. v. 4) then commanded John to take the scroll (Gr. biblion) from the strong angel with authority over the whole planet (cf. 5:7-8).*
 - c. Warren Wiersbe, *God will not thrust His Word into our mouths and force us to receive it. He hands it to us and we must take it.*
 2. John went to the angel who told him to eat the book (9), ***So 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."***
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *When John asked the angel for the book, the angel told him to eat it and predicted that it would be bitter in his stomach, though sweet to his taste.*
 - b. William Barclay, . . . *God's revelation is never forced on any man; he must take it. God's messenger must be in the end a willing messenger, not a conscript, but one who has put out his hand to the task.*
 - c. Thomas Constable, *Evidently the little scroll symbolizes God's revelation that John was about to set forth. It is the revelation that the remainder of the Book of Revelation, or at least part of it, contains. . . . Eating is a universal figure for receiving knowledge (cf. Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1-3).*
 - d. John Walvoord, *Though no interpretation was given John, it is evident that in partaking of the book he was appropriating what the book states (cf. Jer. 15:16). The scroll seems to symbolize the Word of God and divine revelation in general, for John was told to deliver the Word faithfully.*
 3. John ate the book as commanded by the angel (10), ***And 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.***
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *John obeyed and found it so.*
 - b. John Walvoord, *Though the Word is sweet to believers, it will be bitter to unbelievers when it brings divine judgment on them.*
 - c. Thomas Constable, *John may have literally eaten the little book. Or he may have only devoured its contents metaphorically. This revelation was pleasant at first because it was a revelation from God (cf. Ps. 19:9-10; 119:103). But as John meditated on it and comprehended the fearful judgments that it predicted, he became distressed and the revelation turned bitter in his stomach. The reason for reversing the order of these effects compared with verse 9 may be to place the bitterness in closer proximity to the judgments that follow.*
 4. Reasons for having John eat the book.
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *The opened book apparently contained revelations from God. It included some of the things John was about to write so they would be revealed to us . . . The point of this interlude - during which John was commanded to assimilate these prophecies before he wrote them - is simply that it is necessary for the prophet of God to let the Word of God affect him first before he ministers it to others . . . This action is also a vivid picture of the truth that, although the fact of revelation may be pleasant to the taste, the contemplation or digestion of the truth may bring heaviness. This principle ought especially to be operative in our study of prophecy . . . when the child of God digests all of the truth of the judgments to come, it can only bring heaviness of heart.*
 - b. J. B. Smith, *While he doubtless rejoiced in a measure at the revelation of the coming triumph and glory, yet he was saddened and grieved because preceding that glory were to occur the most terrible judgments and martyrdoms in all history.*
 - c. Mark Hitchcock, *The act of eating the book means that John is to absorb its message into his life (Psalm 19:10; Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 3:3-3). While the instruction was specific to John, we should emulate him . . . The fact that it was "sweet" and then "bitter" refers to the fact that the prophecies John was giving were ultimately sweet, because they result in the coming kingdom of Christ, but they also contained a series of bitter judgments that must come forth before the kingdom could be realized. The gospel message we preach is also sweet and bitter. It is sweet to those who receive it, but bitter to those who reject it and face God's wrath.*
 - d. Kendell Easley, *Throughout Christian times, many who have truly proclaimed the word of the Lord have testified to the sweet-and-sour, joy-and-burden aspects of what they do. Those entrusted with the preaching task dare not remain emotionally detached from their message.*

5. The commissioning of John (11), *And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”*
- a. Charles Ryrie, *The commission is that the prophet . . . must prophesy again . . . In other words, these prophecies concern many people, and this is the content of the little book.*
 - b. Henry Swete, *It is no one Empire or Emperor that is concerned in the prophecies of the second half of the Apocalypse; not merely Rome or Nero or Domitian, but a multitude of races, kingdoms, and crowned heads.*
 - c. Kendell Easley, *The prophets of God must prophesy. They have a grave responsibility to dispense the word they have received from God. This was true of the Old Testament prophets. It was true of the New Testament prophets. As we will see in the next chapter, it will be true of the final end-time prophets.*
 - d. Warren Wiersbe, *The angel commissioned John to prophesy again; his work was not yet completed . . . John will have much to say about the nations of the world as he presents the rest of this prophecy.*

COMMENTS

- Charles Swindoll, *Just like John, we have roles to play in God’s ultimate plan. We can’t call ourselves “apostles,” and we don’t receive literal visions and revelations from God. We’re not required to swallow prophetic books to utter inspired words. But each of us has been given a crucial mission to share the good news of salvation with the world (Matt. 28:19–20). Yet just like John, we must first internalize the message, allowing it to become a part of our own lives.*
- Kendell Easley, *The sounding of the seventh trumpet will bring about the full completion of God’s judgment plan, and his word is both sweet and bitter to those for whom he gives it.*
- Grant Osborne, *Two themes dominate this chapter. The first is God’s complete sovereignty over his creation . . . The second theme is the prophetic witness of the church.*