

Revelation 10
The Mighty Angel with the Little Book

<p>1) What did John see coming down from Heaven?</p> <p>2) What was this angel wearing?</p> <p>3) What was this angel holding?</p> <p>4) Where did the angel set his feet?</p> <p>5) Do we know what the angel cried out?</p> <p>6) Is it important that we know what the angel said?</p> <p>10:6 The word translated “delay” (<i>chronos</i>, Gk.) is illuminating. The fact that numerous events do in fact follow suggests that the angelic proclamation does not announce the end of chronological time, but rather the end of any further delay. Events of the Great Tribulation will now pass swiftly, moving inevitably toward the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.¹</p> <p>10:7 The mystery of God, truth that has not been previously revealed (see Eph. 3:9), will be revealed and finished as the events of the final half of the Apocalypse develop. Significant aspects of this mystery have already been revealed through the Old Testament and New Testament prophets, but much remains that will be understood only when the events take place.²</p> <p>7) In verse 8, what was John told to do?</p> <p>8) What did the angel tell John to do with the book?</p>	<p>Revelation 10 (NKJV)</p> <p>¹ I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow <i>was</i> on his head, his face <i>was</i> like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.</p> <p>² He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and <i>his</i> left <i>foot</i> on the land,</p> <p>³ and cried with a loud voice, as <i>when</i> a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.</p> <p>⁴ 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.”</p> <p>⁵ The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven</p> <p>⁶ 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,</p> <p>⁷ 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.</p> <p>⁸ Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.”</p> <p>⁹ So I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book.” 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.”</p> <p>¹⁰ Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in</p>
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¹ *Believer's Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Re 10:6

² Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Re 10:7

	<p>my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. ¹¹ And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”</p>
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The Testimony of the Mighty Angel (Rev. 10:1–11)

More than sixty references to angels are made in Revelation. They are God’s army sent to accomplish His purposes on earth. Believers today seldom think about these servants (Heb. 1:14), but one day in heaven we shall learn about all they did for us here.

The description of the angel (vv. 1–4). This angel amazes us, for he has some of the characteristics that belong especially to the Lord Jesus Christ. John had seen and heard a “strong angel” (Rev. 5:2), and the same Greek word is here translated “mighty.” All angels excel in strength (Ps. 103:20), but apparently some have greater power and authority than others.

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.

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).

The fact that the angel’s face is “as the sun” corresponds to the description of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:16; his feet correspond to the Lord’s description in Revelation 1:15. His voice like a lion suggests Revelation 5:5. This being could well be our Lord Jesus Christ, appearing to John as a kingly angel. Jesus often appeared in the Old Testament as “the Angel of the Lord” (Ex. 3:2; Jud. 2:4; 6:11–12, 21–22; 2 Sam. 24:16). This was a temporary manifestation for a special purpose, not a permanent incarnation.

Two other characteristics would suggest identifying the angel as Jesus Christ: the book in his hand and the awesome posture that he assumed. The little book contains the rest of the prophetic message that John will deliver. Since our Lord was the only One worthy to take the scroll and break the seals (Rev. 5:5ff), it might well be concluded that He is the only One worthy to give His servant the rest of the message.

The angel’s posture is that of a conqueror taking possession of his territory. He is claiming the whole world (see Josh. 1:1–3). Of course, only the victorious Saviour could make such a claim. The Antichrist will soon complete his conquest and force the whole world to submit to his control. But before that happens, the Saviour will claim the world for Himself, the inheritance that His Father promised Him (Ps. 2:6–9). Satan roars like a lion to frighten his prey (1 Peter 5:8), but the Lion of Judah roars to announce victory (see Ps. 95:3–5; Isa. 40:12–17).

We are not told why John was forbidden to write what the seven thunders uttered, the only “sealed” thing in an otherwise “unsealed” book (see Dan. 12:9; Rev. 22:10). God’s voice is often compared to thunder (Ps. 29; Job 26:14; 37:5; John 12:28–29). It is useless for us to speculate when God chooses to veil His truth (Deut. 29:29).

The declaration of the angel (vv. 5–11). This declaration fills us with awe, not only because of what the angel declares, but also because of the way he declares it. It is a solemn scene, with his hand lifted to heaven as though he were under oath.

But if this angel is our Lord Jesus Christ, why would He take an oath? In order to affirm the solemnity and certainty of the words spoken. God put Himself “under oath” when He made His covenant with Abraham (Heb. 6:13–20) and when He declared His Son to be High Priest (Heb. 7:20–22). He also took an oath when He promised David that the Christ would come from his family (Acts 2:29–30).

The emphasis in Revelation 10:6 is on God the Creator. Various judgments have already been felt by the heavens, the earth, and the sea; and more judgments are to come. The word that is translated “time” actually means “delay.” God has been delaying His judgments so that lost sinners will have time to repent (2 Peter 3:1–9); now, however, He will accelerate His judgments and accomplish His purposes.

Recall that the martyred saints in heaven were concerned about God’s seeming delay in avenging their deaths (Rev. 6:10–11). “How long, O Lord, how long?” has been the cry of God’s suffering people from age to age. God’s seeming delay in fulfilling His promises has given the scoffers opportunity to deny God’s Word and question His sincerity (see 2 Peter 3). God’s Word is true and His timing, perfect. This means comfort to saints—but judgment to sinners.

In the Bible, a *mystery* is a “sacred secret,” a truth hidden to those outside but revealed to God’s people by His Word (Matt. 13:10–12). The “mystery of God” has to do with the age-old problem of evil in the world. Why is there both moral and natural evil in the world? Why doesn’t God do something about it? Of course, the Christian knows that God did “do something about it” at Calvary when Jesus Christ was made sin and experienced divine wrath for a sinful world. We also know that God is permitting evil to increase until the world is ripe for judgment (2 Thes. 2:7ff; Rev. 14:14–20). Since God has already paid the price for sin, He is free to delay His judgment, and He cannot be accused of injustice or unconcern.

The signal for this mystery’s completion is the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:14–19). The last half of the Tribulation begins when the angels start to pour out the bowls, in which “is filled up [completed] the wrath of God” (Rev. 15:1).

The directions that the angel gave to John (Rev. 10:8–11) should remind us of our responsibility to assimilate the Word of God and make it a part of the inner man. It was not enough for John to see the book or even know its contents and purpose. He had to *receive* it into his inner being.

God’s Word is compared to food: bread (Matt. 4:4), milk (1 Peter 2:2), meat (1 Cor. 3:1–2), and honey (Ps. 119:103). The Prophets Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:9–3:4) knew what it was to “eat” the Word before they could share it with others. The Word must always “become flesh” (John 1:14) before it can be given to those who need it. Woe unto that preacher or teacher who merely echoes God’s Word and does not incarnate it, making it a living part of his very being.

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. Nor can He change the effects the Word will have in our lives: there will be both sorrow and joy, bitterness and sweetness. God’s Word contains sweet promises and assurances, but it also contains bitter warnings and prophecies of judgment. The Christian bears witness of both life and death (2 Cor. 2:14–17). The faithful minister will declare all of God’s counsel (Acts 20:27). He will not dilute the message of God simply to please his listeners (2 Tim. 4:1–5).

The angel commissioned John to prophesy *again*; his work was not yet completed. He must declare God's prophetic truth concerning (not "before") many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings (Rev. 5:9). The word *nations* usually refers to the Gentile nations. John will have much to say about the nations of the world as he presents the rest of this prophecy.³

KJV Bible Commentary

10:1. Another mighty angel. Of primary importance is the identity of the strong angel. Happily, there are details which reveal that He is the "angel of the Lord" of the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ. He sealed the 144,000 (cf. 7:2–3); He offered incense with the prayers of the saints (cf. 8:1–6); He is **clothed with a cloud**, a heavenly clothing; **his face was as it were the sun** (cf. 1:16); **a rainbow was upon his head** (cf. 4:3); **his feet as pillars of fire** tallies with the description in 1:15. Why does Christ appear in the Apocalypse as an angel? Is this retrogression in doctrine, rather than progress? He appears as an angel because reference is made to conditions in Israel before their Messiah had been revealed to them in His incarnation. He takes the same position as He occupied in Old Testament times, another proof that the Tribulation Period is a part of the Jewish age and will remain unfinished at the first coming of Christ.

2. Attention is next directed to **a little book open** in the **hand** of the Angel. There are three views as to the identity of the little book: (1) It is the same book as the seven-sealed book of 5:1; (2) it is the aggregate of Old Testament prophecy concerning Israel (it is strange that a little book could contain so much prophetic truth); and (3) it is the part of the Revelation that is subsequent to the sounding of the seventh trumpet (i.e., 11:19–19:21). We prefer the first position (cf. also Ironside, op. cit., pp. 175–176). The reason is that in a book of symbols it would be confusing to have a detail in chapter 5 appear again in chapter 10 with another meaning and without some explanation. The reference then, is, to the title-deed to the earth. Here He makes His indisputable claim to all creating as His inalienable right. Further proof is forthcoming in the Angel's action. **He set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.** In the Old Testament such an act signified taking possession of that place (cf. Deut 11:24; Josh 1:3).

3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth. The voice of the Angel was like the roaring of a lion, for He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (cf. 5:5). A lion always roars when he has caught his prey (cf. Amos 3:4). In chapter 5 He was seen in the role of Lamb; here He is pictured in His wrath as a Lion (cf. 6:16). Again, **seven thunders** speak of God's activity in judgment.

4. Seal up those things ... and write them not. At this point John was **about to write** the import of the **seven thunders**, but the Lord did not permit it. The manner in which all takes place is not revealed (cf. Deut 29:29). In this book of disclosures this is the only detail sealed.

5–7. And swear by him ... who created heaven ... the earth ... the sea, and the things which are therein. The solemnity of the transaction is underscored. He swears by the God of all creation. What is the subject of the oath? Simply, it is that there will be delay no longer. The translation of "delay" (Gr *chronos*) as **time** is unfortunate (so AV), because it is inaccurate (cf.

³Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Re 10:1

AV Authorized Version

NASB). There is here no announcement of the end of time and the ushering in of eternity, for that comes over 1000 years later. The Angel is stating, rather, that there will be no more delay in rectifying the wrong government of the earth. Sin has held sway long enough. God's secret dealings are over, and His public judgments begin. Heaven is silent no longer, and man's day is about to close. **The seventh angel** is the one who sounds the seventh trumpet. What is the **mystery of God** that is finished? Reference is to His permission for evil to go on in its present course with seeming impunity. God appears to be silent in the whole conflict between good and evil. According to Jewish proverb, "Michael flies with but one wing, and Gabriel with two." In short, God is quick in sending angels of peace, and they fly swiftly. But the messengers of wrath come slowly. But they do come!

8–11. Now John is told to become actively involved in the unveiling of coming events. He is charged to **take the little book which is open in the of the angel**. The reply of the Angel in verse 9 reminds one of the experience of Ezekiel in his ministry (cf. Ezk 2:8–3:3). The eating of the scroll is done by faith through meditation and reflection. To **eat** is to incorporate into one's being (cf. Jn 6:49–58). The study of the prophetic Word, and its central emphasis on Christ and His ultimate victory has a twofold effect: **sweet** and **bitter**. It both gladdens and saddens. The truth of the Lord's reign and triumph was sweet to John, but the judgments and plagues by which that consummation will be brought about will be bitter indeed.

What is the meaning of the command to **prophesy again** concerning kings and nations? It will be remembered that only the first and second series of septenary judgments have been covered in the chapters thus far. There remains the last series (the vial judgments) to be unfolded.

Furthermore, there are other disclosures in chapter 12 to the end of the book concerning Satan, a final political leader, the Antichrist, the world system of godlessness, the reign of Christ, judgment, resurrection, and the new heaven and new earth. It is an approach to the subjects of chapters 1–11, but with many significant details added. The truth of the book is duplicated, just as Pharaoh's dream of the famine (cf. Gen 41:32) was repeated to him.⁴

Commentary:

10:1 This **mighty angel** could be the "strong angel" of 5:2 or the angel "having great authority" of 18:1. It is unlikely that this is Michael, who is referred to by name elsewhere (see 12:7; Dan. 12:1), or Christ, since He is never called an angel in the New Testament. Furthermore, unlike Christ, this angel comes to earth before the time of tribulation is over.

10:2 The **little book** is not the same as the scroll that was unsealed in 6:1—8:1. It is more likely the scroll eaten by Ezekiel (see Ezek. 2:9—3:3), although this scroll causes John's *stomach* to become bitter (vv. 9, 10), not just his spirit (see Ezek. 3:14). The angel standing with one **foot on the sea** and the other **on the land** conveys the image of taking possession. A majestic representative of God's throne is intervening in the affairs of the earth.

10:3, 4 The devil and his hordes present themselves as fierce lions (see 9:8, 17; 1 Pet. 5:8). The victorious **lion** of Judah (5:5) also has an angelic servant who **roars** like a lion. It cannot be known what the **seven thunders uttered** because a heavenly **voice**, perhaps Christ's, commanded John to **seal up** what he had heard (see Dan. 12:4, 9).

10:6 swore by Him who lives forever: Only by the all-powerful authority of the eternal Creator can the mighty angel (v. 1) make the declaration about how and when "the mystery of

NASB New American Standard Bible

⁴ *KJV Bible Commentary*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994, S. 2681

God would be finished” (v. 7). After the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15–19), there will be **no** more **delay** in the unfolding of events leading toward Christ’s return (19:11–21).

10:7 The mystery of God, truth that has not been previously revealed (see Eph. 3:9), will be revealed and **finished** as the events of the final half of the Apocalypse develop. Significant aspects of this mystery have already been revealed through the Old Testament and New Testament **prophets**, but much remains that will be understood only when the events take place.

10:8–11 As words of judgment, the book would **make** John’s **stomach bitter**, in the same way that Ezekiel’s spirit had become bitter (see Ezek. 3:14). The events of Ezek. 2; 3 occurred soon before God’s judgment on Judah and Jerusalem and were in effect the prophet’s commission. John may have sensed a similar commission here to **prophesy** his message of judgment to the world. John’s prophecy about **peoples, nations, tongues, and kings** may refer specifically to the remainder of the second woe (11:1–14), since there is a focus on the testimony of the two witnesses. However, the use of similar expressions in 13:7; 14:6; and 17:15 implies that John’s commission to prophesy most or all of the Book of Revelation, a prophecy which speaks of all the events leading up to Christ’s second coming (19:11–21).⁵

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The voice of the thunders (1–4). We do not know what the angel shouted or what the seven thunders uttered (Ps. 29). God has given sufficient truth in His Word for salvation and godly living, so we must not crave to know the hidden things (Deut. 29:29). The purpose of Scripture is to save sinners and sanctify character, not satisfy curiosity.

The voice of the angel (5–7). The angel said, “There will be delay no longer!” What joy this statement will bring to the martyrs (and others) who ask, “How long?” (6:9–11). God has His times (Eccles. 3:1–8) and will accomplish His purposes on schedule. Our responsibility is to be faithful and not curious (Acts 1:6–8).

The voice of the apostle (8–11). God still needed John to declare His message to the people. No angel could take his place. But to share God’s message, we must take the Word, receive it inwardly like food, and let it become part of us (Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1–11; 1 Thess. 2:13). The Word is sweet when you read it (Ps. 119:103) but bitter when it goes deeper and you digest it.

“If you conscientiously undertake to walk in the truth revealed, you too will know something of its bitterness. . . . We need the bitter as well as the sweet; and every soul who has walked in the truth, as God has revealed it to him, has found, at last, the blessedness of obedience.”

H. A. Ironside

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⁵Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Re 10:1

⁶Wiersbe, Warren W.: *With the Word Bible Commentary*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1991, S. Re 10:1