

# Notes on Revelation 10

## Intro

The great theme of Revelation is the unfolding of the eternal purpose (decree) of God. This centres upon the testimony of the church under persecution from the world and Satan, and the judgments poured upon the wicked. The finality is the glorification of the church and the destruction of the wicked. The purpose of the unveiling of the Apocalypse is to show the sovereignty of God over history and the total control of the Lord over all things for the comfort of the saints.

This passage, in the centre of Revelation, is a précis of the message of the book; it is the keynote of the prophecy.

## Chapter 10 is a parenthesis or an interlude between

- *The sounding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> woe trumpet* (chapter 9). This is the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet – the loosing of wicked humanity under demonic control, [Babylon on] the Euphrates (9:14). [Babylon (14:8) = worldliness, the greed, immorality, spiritual idolatry and affluence of the world, the enemy of God & the church. Egypt (11:8) = the world as a place of bondage in sin, the control of the enemy. The Great City (11:8) = Jerusalem of the world, the false church. Sodom (11:8) = the world as a place of wickedness.]
- And *the 3<sup>rd</sup> (last) woe trumpet* (Rev 11:15) the end of the world.
- This is in order to show the testimony of the church from a spiritual standpoint during this time; to warn the church regarding persecution but chiefly to affirm that God is in control to encourage the saints.

6<sup>th</sup> trumpet / 2<sup>nd</sup> woe  
3<sup>rd</sup> of men killed  
Humanity loosed under  
demonic control

Interlude:  
Gospel mystery preached  
Testimony of the church under  
persecution

7<sup>th</sup> trumpet / 3<sup>rd</sup> woe  
End of world, kingdom of  
Christ complete.

**1 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.**

**2 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,**

**3 and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.**

This is the Lord Jesus. Not just an angel but a mighty ‘messenger’ from heaven (*angel* lit.). Christ is often found as the Angel of the Lord in the OT. There is only one Archangel in Rev and this is the Son of God, see Michael in c12 in his office as Lord of the angels. So also the Michael in Daniel who stands for the comfort of the people of God (Dan 10:21). [Michael means ‘One who is like God’; Michael always represents the ambassador of God, who may be an angel in Jude 9 but is the Son in Rev. and Daniel.]

In this time of persecution (which is the setting here) the church’s comfort is in Christ who is in control and is fulfilling the divine programme.

### The description:

- *Wrapped in cloud* – Yahweh is always in a cloud [And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud’, Ex 19:9]. Divine glory: ‘I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.’ Lev 16:2; ‘the LORD rides on a swift cloud’, Isa 19:1. Note the Father’s appearance at the Transfiguration - Lk 9:34-35. A cloud has no form that can be copied as an idol.
- *Rainbow on head* – note ‘there was a rainbow around the throne’ Rev 4:3. Christ comes as the fulfilment of the covenant. The promise of God to fulfil his purposes; his Lordship over creation (Gen 9:13-15).
- *Face like sun* – ‘His eyes like a flame of fire’ Rev 1:14. Cf. Dan 10:6. Eternity (Ps 72:17, 89:36), everlasting life, holiness. Spiritual light and life. Christ is the sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2). [In Rev 12:1 the church is represented as a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet – to show the church is the same elect body as the people of God under the law, the light of the moon which is the reflected light of the sun not yet risen. The consummated church in the glory has no need of the sun since Christ is its light (Rev 21:23).]
- *Feet like pillars of fire* – ‘His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace’ Rev 1:15. The rule of God (feet - Ps 8:6, 110:1); the rule of divine judgment (fire – Gen 19:24; Ps 11:6). Fire and brass symbolise judgment.
- *Roars like a lion* – Rev 5:5, the Lion of Judah. Kingly majesty. The prophets speak of the Lord roaring (i.e. in judgment) Amos 1:2, 3:8; Joel 3:16; Hos 11:10 etc.
- *Thunder answers him* – cf. Jn 12:27-33. (See later.)

### Descent from heaven

Demonstrates Christ’s power, glory and Lordship. His descent guarantees the fulfilling of the covenant. The descent of the Lord is to save his people and to dispense judgment on the reprobate. Later chapters of Rev explain this in more detail. This chapter forms a basis for them.

Notice this constant repetition of salvation for the elect on the one hand and judgment for the wicked on the other. God’s decree must fully represent his attributes, thus there is glory for the elect (representing God’s mercy, grace, love) and there is hell for the wicked (manifesting God’s wrath, justice, holiness). This theme is common in Scripture, e.g. Ps 1, which sets the theme for all the Psalms.

- *The little book* – The Gospel, the word from heaven. The book was open, i.e. this does not refer to a future movement such as the Reformation, but to the proclamation of the Gospel from John’s time onward.
- *Sea and land* – sea = primitive peoples, uncivilised nations, ungodly men (Ps 65:7, 93:3-4); land = cultivated land, civilised society, kingdoms of Earth (Ps 46:10, 67:2). Jesus’ dominion and message spans both. The later beasts come from the sea and land (Rev 13) but they are under Christ’s feet, who has rule over the sea and land. The coming persecution is under the dominion of Christ’s control. The whole world, and the beasts that arise from it, is under Christ’s judgment.

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."

Thunder is, with one exception, only mentioned by John in the NT. John was named by Jesus, son of thunder with his brother James (Mk 3:17). James was the first apostle to be killed, John the last apostle to die. They span the apostolic period.

The seven thunders are the seven last plagues (judgments) explained as vials (AV) or bowls in c16. The command not to write down the message of the thunders symbolises delay; i.e. there was a long period of time between the giving of the vision to John and the time of the outpouring of final judgment.

**5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven**

**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,**

**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.**

*Mystery of God* –the witness of the Gospel, which is the expression of the mystery of divine wisdom. The apostles were stewards of this mystery and its details (1 Cor 4:1). The mystery is based upon: a) Christ within the person; b) the person then expresses Christ through his character (Eph 3:9-10). God's wisdom produces a holy people united with Christ. This is the fulness of the eternal purpose (decree). **'The riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:27)**

Here Christ, the fulfiller of the decrees, promises that he will complete the decrees, fulfil his eternal plan. He will bring forth the bride of Christ – a people united with him.

For info on Christ swearing by God, see Heb 6:13-18. It emphasises the certainty of what God promises. No angel could swear this oath. Christ guarantees the fulfilment of the divine purpose.

All prophets testified to the plan and purpose of God and directed attention to the end of all things in final judgment when the mystery is completed.

**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."**

**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."**

**10 Then I took the little book 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.**

*Sweet / bitter* -The word of the Gospel brings sweetness and life but it also has a bitter edge since Christians are called to suffer on the Earth. The church has a bitter-sweet testimony. It is sweet to the taste but the consequences of it are tribulation in this life.

*Eat* – the Gospel must be personally experienced before preached. Jn 6:53ff. cf. Ezek 2:8-3:3; Jer 15:16. The prophet is identified with the message he proclaims. The explanation of eating the little book is seen in the testimony of the two witnesses in the next chapter. Note that John is the only person to record Christ's words that his disciples will know peace but also tribulation (Jn 16:33). The heart of Revelation is the suffering church.

11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

16:3 "And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

The testimony of the church, the preaching of the Gospel, is to many people of all nations, implying a long period of time. The testimony of the two witnesses is not in one city for 3½ years (as in Futurism and Literalism e.g. Dispensationalism). It continues for a specified period of time known by God and not disclosed to us [But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. Matt 24:36] This period is given different specifications in Revelation, viz: 42 months or 1260 days or time, times and half a time. These are equivalent but they are not meant to be taken literally but are a deliberately indefinite measure of time. This is to show that the suffering and testimony of the church is not haphazard but follows a divine schedule. It is an indefinite period (time) which is lengthened (times) but also cut short (half a time). Before the final trumpet (judgment there is a significant gap; but God is in control. This is to assure the church that there is an appointed end to her trials.

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