

Hymns: 33 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder      34 When We All Get to Heaven  
Thy Word

Scripture: Psalm 119:97-106; 19:7-11

Big idea: Sweet and Bitter Word of God

Today, we're taking a welcome break from the waves of judgment upon the earth to witness the apostle John's commission to write the remaining portion of the book of Revelation. But before we do, let's get our bearings and briefly recap what we've covered in the book of Revelation so far:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is just that. The apostle John describes events centered around Jesus Christ as He is in glory. The account includes letters from Jesus to seven representative churches encouraging, instructing, and correcting them. Jesus then calls John in the spirit to the place of God's throne in heaven where he sees cherubim, other angels, elders, God the Father, and God the Son.

John describes Jesus as the only one worthy take a seven-sealed scroll from God the Father and begin to open it. Each seal unleashed a judgment. The first four presented by the white, red, black, and pale horse signifying the conquering Antichrist, war, famine, and death respectively. Many who trust the LORD during this time called the Tribulation will be martyred.

Opening the seventh seal kicks off the trumpet judgments. The first four trumpet judgments include – devastating destruction of one-third of sea life, water purity, ships, sun, moon, and stars. The fifth and sixth trumpets unleash demons from the earth which torment and then kill one-third of mankind.

That brings us to our passage for today. Just as Revelation chapter seven gave a parenthetical break before the Lamb opened the seventh (last) seal, so here before the seventh (last) trumpet judgment the story pauses.

Revelation 10

*[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:*

In the interest of time, we will stop with that verse and pick up the rest as we do our deep dive. Let's get started.

*[1] And*

Even though this narrative proceeds directly from Chapter 9, it pauses before that seventh trumpet sounds. Interestingly, not just the first verse, but every verse of this chapter starts with *And* except verse seven.

*I*

The apostle John.

*saw*

John directs our attention to what he sees.

*another mighty angel*

The word *another* indicates John saw an angel of this type before. Where did he see it?

Revelation 5

*[2] And I saw a strong  
or mighty*

*angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to  
loose the seals thereof?*

*come down from heaven,*

Carefully notice the wording here. John had been in heaven since Revelation 4:1. Now, he says the angel came down from heaven. The natural perspective here places John back on earth. As we shall see, by verse 9 John had moved back to earth.

The first mighty angel was just there before the throne of God with no indication from whence he came. Here, we're explicitly told this one came **down from heaven**. Notice how he was described with four characteristics:

*clothed with a cloud:*

That's a pretty strange description. Where else do we find clouds in Revelation?

Revelation 1:7 *Behold, he [Jesus the Lamb] come[s] with clouds...*

Revelation 11:12 *And they [God's two witnesses] ascended up to heaven  
in a cloud;*

Revelation 14:14 *...upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man...*

Clouds emphasize that he came from heaven and through our atmosphere. We will have that same traveling ability when we receive our new bodies.

*and a rainbow was upon his head,*

A rainbow symbolizes beauty, color, as well as God's covenant to Noah and all the earth.

Where else is a rainbow mentioned in Revelation?

Revelation 4:3 *...there was a rainbow round about the throne...*

God's throne projects majesty, so that's another symbol that works here.

*and his face was as it were the sun,*

The face of this angel was so bright John couldn't look at it.

Revelation 1:16 refers to Jesus Christ *...his countenance was as the sun...*

*and his feet as pillars of fire:*

From head to toe, this mighty angel looked the part. Even his feet glowed.

Recall the similar description of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:15:

*...his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace...*

While so many of these metaphors sound like the description of the glorified Christ, we know here they actually describe a mighty angel as we shall see when we reach Revelation 10:6 in today's study.

[2] *And he had in his hand a **little** book **open**:*

Recall the former mighty angel lamented seeking one to take and open the seven-sealed scroll in God's hand (Revelation 5:2). This **book** is not that book but a small one, not sealed but open, in the angel's hand.

*and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,*

This picture likely symbolizes the message encompasses the whole earth.

[3] *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth:*

According to ChatGPT, the roar of a lion matches the amplitude of a rock concert or a chain saw. This angel spoke with exceedingly strong volume.

*and **when** he had cried,*

Here we have a time marker. At the moment the angel spoke so loudly, what else happened?

*seven thunders uttered their voices.*

Thunder can be even louder than a lion's roar. John started this section of *sight* and *sound* with *sight*. Here he transitions to deafening sound in the form of intelligible speech. What is the source of these thunderous voices? We're not told. From the context, we can infer these voices (plural) are distinct from the voice of this mighty angel as well as from the voice from heaven in the next verse (Revelation 10:4). Note this, another reference to the number seven, can mean actually seven or can signify completeness. So far we've encountered seven:

1. churches (Revelation 1:4)
2. Spirits (Revelation 1:4)
3. golden candlesticks (Revelation 1:12)
4. stars (Revelation 1:16)
5. seals (Revelation 5:1)
6. horns (Revelation 5:6)
7. eyes (Revelation 5:6)
8. angels before the throne of God (Revelation 8:2)
9. trumpets (Revelation 8:2)
10. and now thunders (Revelation 10:3)

Let's see if we can narrow down the possible source of these seven thunders.

*[5] And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices:*

*[6] ... in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts*

...

Recall these four beasts positioned in the midst of the throne are cherubim representing all creatures of God's creation.

*[7] ... full of eyes ... and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

"full of eyes" speaks of knowledge.

They praise the Lord continually.

#### Revelation 6

*[1] And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.*

The voice of just one of the four beasts sounds like **thunder**.

While God the Father sits on the throne (Revelation 19:4), the Lamb is said to be in the midst of the throne (Revelation 7:17), and God can speak with thunder (John 12:29), God does not praise Himself. That leaves the four creatures as the most likely candidate as the source of the seven thunders. While four is not seven, since seven in Revelation can signify **completeness** rather than a literal count, the seven thunders could represent the **complete** thunderous voice of the living creation represented by the four living creatures (Revelation 5:13).

*[4] And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices,*

These seven thunderous voices completed their message. What did they say? Hold that thought. We'll answer that question before we finish with this very difficult verse.

*I*

John continues to witness these events.

*was about to write:*

He received the messages from the thunders. Notice how John continued to faithfully record his experience. But this time he had his mission diverted. By whom?

*and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me,*

Whose voice is it? Likely this voice differs from that of the mighty angel and from the seven thunders.

We know the One in heaven Who directs the unfolding of this great drama is Jesus Christ. Also recall from:

#### Revelation 1

*[17] And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*[18] I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*[19] **Write** the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*

In chapter 1 we have Jesus directly commanding John to write. Here, the command involves writing as well – but with a twist.

**Seal up** those things which the seven thunders uttered, and **write them not**.

As He told John to *write* in chapter 1, could it be that **He** tells him **not** to *write* here? Perhaps, but there's some evidence that this unspecified voice from heaven could actually be an angel. How do we know that?

In Daniel 12:9, a man of very similar appearance (Daniel 10:5-6) told Daniel to **seal up** the words of that prophesy. We know that the man who spoke to Daniel cannot be the preincarnate Christ because in Daniel 12:7 he speaks of swearing by the eternal one.

So the authoritative voice from heaven in our verse could be God the Father, God the Son, or an angel – perhaps the one given the job to show John all of these things back in Revelation 1:1.

And what message came with the seven thunders? John understood them and could have written them in this prophetic book of Revelation which indicates these forbidden words likely involve future events and perhaps judgments. Beyond that though, we have nothing else to go on. As you can see this verse is indeed exceedingly difficult.

*[5] And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth*

We saw this that *mighty angel* introduced to start this chapter (Revelation 10:1-3) with the small open (not sealed) book in his hand.

*lifted up his hand to heaven,*

The striking similarity to the angel in Daniel 12 continues as this angel also makes an oath. We still see this practice today when people take oaths of office or to give testimony in court.

*[6] And sware by him that*

*liveth for ever and ever,*

God only is immortal (I Timothy 6:15-17)

*who created **heaven**,*

God is the Creator (Genesis 1:1)

*and the things that therein are,*

*and the **earth**,*

*and the things that therein are,*

*and the sea,*

*and the things which are therein,*

This verse excludes the angel taking the oath from being Jesus Christ because if he were Christ, He would swear by Himself (Hebrews 6:13) rather than the things He made as we see here.

*that there should be time no longer:*

The correct interpretation of that idiom in Greek means that **the wait is now over**. God will delay final judgment no longer.

*[7] But in the days*

This marks a specific time in the future.

*of the voice*

This voice refers to the sound of the trumpet

*of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound,*

The seventh and final trumpet judgment will begin at the sound (not quite yet). See Revelation 11:15.

*the mystery of God should be finished,*

The book of Revelation reveals Christ in His glory in a way previously unseen (a mystery), and how His rule shall commence.

*as he*

The antecedent of this *He* is *God* in the previous phrase.

*hath declared*

Where did God declare this mystery?

In the Old Testament and the Gospels.

*to his servants the prophets.*

Who were His servants the prophets?

Those Old Testament prophets – especially Daniel – spoke of these times but not in the detail found in the book of Revelation. Of course, Jesus spoke of this time as well.

*[8] And the voice which I heard*

John has heard many voices. Which one speaks now?

***from heaven***

sp[o]ke []to me ***again***,

That voice back in Revelation 10:4 instructed him **not** to write. We could not determine the identity of the speaker.

*and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which stand[s] upon the sea and upon the earth.*

From this, we do learn that the source of the voice from heaven cannot be the angel with the open little book in his hand.

*[9] And I went unto the angel,*

John responds obediently to the voice from heaven. He is able to approach this angel standing on the sea and earth. That puts John back firmly back on earth with the angel.

*and said unto him,*

John speaks to the angel.

*Give me the little book.*

John obediently requests the little open book from the angel.

*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;*

Regardless of the consequences, John ate the book.

*and it was in my mouth sweet as honey:*

*and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.*

*[11] And he*

the mighty angel

*said unto me,*

John

*[Y]ou must prophesy again*

John completed **phase one** of this book. This commission for **phase two** completes the book of Revelation.

*before **many***

Other places where this list appears in Revelation refer to *all* rather than *many*.

*peoples,*

*and nations,*

*and tongues,*

*and kings.*

So what does this eating, sweetness, and bitterness mean? We see a scene like this another time in scripture in:

Ezekiel 3

*[3] And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.*

*[4] And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.*

In each case the words are the words of the LORD that the prophet is charged to proclaim. While the word of the LORD is sweet, the pain of His judgments is bitter.

### **Application**

For each of us, God's word is truth; it purifies, directs, teaches, and corrects (II Timothy 3:16). We too are charged with sharing His precious words as we proceed through our life's journey (I Peter 3:15; Colossians 3:16).

### **Benediction**

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).*