

When God Breaks His Silence

Scripture: Revelation 10:1–11

Code: 66-35

It's our great privilege to return to our study of the book of Revelation, chapter 10. I want you to open your Bible, if you will, to that tenth chapter.

I couldn't count how many people through the years have asked me why God allows sin to run wild, why God allows sinners to prosper and succeed, why God allows Satan and his demons to deceive and to destroy. That is an age-old question. It's been asked since the very beginning.

And it is a puzzle, I think, that finds a spot in everyone's heart, in everyone's thoughts. If God is there and He is holy, why doesn't He stop all the carnage, all the corruption, all the confusion? If God loves His people, why does He allow them to suffer?

When will God destroy the wicked? When will God halt Satan's enterprise? When will Jesus come and make the world the way He wants it? When will the righteous be avenged and the wicked punished? To put it in the words of the prophet, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Men have been crying and crying and crying for God to intervene. All the pain and all the horror and all the disease, the destruction, the lies, the deceptions of the world; and they accumulate and they get worse and worse and worse; and we continually ask, "When will God speak? When will God break His seeming silence?"

Well, the Lord has promised that the day will come when the mystery of His silence will be broken; and that day is connected to the seventh trumpet. Please notice in verse 7 of chapter 10, a starting point for us: "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets."

There is coming a day, and that day is in the time of the seventh angel blowing the seventh trumpet, that the great mystery of a supposedly silent God will end. All the counsels and all the purposes of God concerning men and the world will be consummated. Christ will come. The kingdom will be established on earth. Satan will be halted, bound in chains, and delivered to a prison; and with him, his demons. Righteousness will rule, knowledge will fill the earth, Christ will be King, and God will speak.

At that time, the Bible tells us, the curse on the earth will be lifted. The desert will blossom like a rose. Life will be long. Enemies in all strata will become friends. Holiness will prevail. And the last of all mysteries will be revealed.

Sin with all its carnage, broken hearts, broken friendships, broken dreams, broken hopes, broken marriages, broken families, broken towns, broken cities, broken nations will all be healed. Tears, blood, sweat, sorrow, and death will find their proper place without despair. And all the mockers who

said, “Where is God?” the agnostics, the atheists, the unbelievers who scoffed and said, “Where is His coming?” will be silenced. Those, like the Jews at the foot of the cross who sarcastically said, “Where is your God to deliver you?” will go stone silent. The thousands of thousands of years of sin, death, prevailing false teachers, lies, murders, thefts, Christians being maligned and martyred will be over.

And what signals this? The seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet will introduce it. In chapter 11, look at verse 14: “The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven saying, ‘The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.’” The seventh trumpet signals the reign of Christ.

But before that seventh trumpet is blown – and we have already heard the sixth trumpet in chapter 9. But before that seventh trumpet is blown, an interlude takes place, and that interlude is chapter 10. It’s an interlude for John to get a grip on what is being revealed to him, and for us as well. There is coming a day when the seventh angel blows; a moment will come when there will be no more delay. It says that at the end of verse 6: “There shall be delay no longer.” Jesus Christ will come. But before the blowing of that last trumpet – by the way, which incorporates the seven-bowl judgments – John is given this interlude.

Now to have an interlude before this final trumpet shouldn’t surprise us, because there is a certain kind of similarity to all these septenary judgments, all these judgments of seven – seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls – and they’re all laid out the same way. They are laid out in divisions of four, followed by three. There were four seals, and then they were followed by three; and there was definite distinction between them. There were four trumpets somewhat similar, and then there were three dissimilar; and there will be that same kind of division in the bowls, as we shall see later.

The last three are always separated from the first four. And then in each case, between the sixth and the seventh, there is an interlude; we’ve already seen that. Between the sixth and seventh seals, there was the interlude of chapter 7. Between the sixth and seventh bowls, there will be the interlude of Revelation chapter 16, verses 13 to 16. And here, between the sixth and seventh trumpets, there is an interlude that begins in chapter 10 and runs all the way down through chapter 11, verse 14.

In each case, the interlude that comes before the final judgment – whether the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, or the seventh bowl – is intended to encourage and comfort God’s people in the midst of the fury of God’s judgment. It’s a gasp for breath in which God can comfort His people who having gone through the first six of each of these are feeling the heat and the fury of judgment. These interludes are to remind God’s people that God is still sovereign, His people are still remembered, and will be ultimately victorious.

Now as we come to chapter 10, we find ourselves in the longest of the interludes, the interlude between trumpet number six and trumpet number seven. When number seven blows, in it are contained the seven bowl judgments; and I believe they come very rapidly, in rapid-fire succession. Chapter 15 verse 1, seven angels who have seven plagues; and these are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

So we have already seen that in the seventh seal were the seven trumpets. Now we see in the

seventh trumpet is the seven bowls of rapid-fire judgment, the final judgments ending with Christ's return. And I believe they come very rapidly – and we'll see more about that when we study them specifically.

But we're looking at the interlude, as I said, chapter 10, verse 1, down to 11:14. And its purpose is to remind all, including those Christians alive at the time these judgments hit the earth, that the kingdom will come. I mean, it's going to look so black and so bleak they will have gone through all of these seals, they will have gone through the first six trumpets, and it could easily appear as if the whole universe is disintegrating, and they're going to get caught up in the fury of it all, and they're going to perish with all the rest. And so there is a respite here to remind them that God is still sovereign, they are still His people, He knows who they are, and they are going to triumph. Hell will not triumph. The world by now, as you remember, from the sixth seal is literally engulfed in demons that have been belching out of hell itself. Sin has reached proportions never before imagined in human history. And in the midst of this hellish invasion of demons and sin, Christians need to be comforted that all is still in God's control.

We ask the question, don't we, even today with the sin that's rampant all over the world, "Is God still in control?" And they will ask it then for sure. And here comes the answer in this text. This is a divine intermission to show that God is still in control, and He will triumph. He will act in victory. He will take control, destroy the wicked; and He will bring His kingdom into which the righteous will enter. Now that's the general overview of this section.

As we approach chapter 10, I want us to look at this chapter from the standpoint of its uniqueness. It is a very unusual chapter. And as I was trying to come up with a way to outline it, what kept coming back to mind was that it's such an unusual chapter; so I just took that word and made it sort of the major hook to hang everything on. It is a chapter with five unusual features. There is an unusual angel, an unusual act, an unusual answer, an unusual announcement, and an unusual assignment – the sum of which means it's an unusual chapter.

Let's look, first of all, at an unusual angel, verse 1 and first part of verse 2: "And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book which was open." Now this is an unusual angel, and I want to spend a few moments just letting you know who this is, or how to understand him.

When John says, first of all, "and I saw," do you remember he has said that several times? It's a familiar phrase in revelation used to mark new visions or new features in the progress of a vision. So here we're taking a turn. He is seeing something new.

Following the vision of the trumpets in which he has seen and heard the blowing of the sixth trumpets, John now sees something new. It's a turn in the vision introducing something heretofore not seen. And what is it? Another strong angel. That is to say it is not one of the trumpeting angels. They were identified for us back in chapter 8 as the seven angels, verse 2, who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. This is not one of them. This is not the seventh angel. This is another strong angel, not one of the seven trumpeting presence angels that blow the trumpet judgments.

Now as an interesting note, many commentators feel that this is Jesus Christ. Since you may run across that in your study of Revelation, let me comment on it. I do not agree with that interpretation for a few reasons, and I'll share them with you.

The word "another" here is *allos* in the Greek, or *allos*. It means "another of exactly the same kind as the rest of the angels," "another identical angel." If it were Christ, it wouldn't be right to use *allos*, because if you were going to call Christ an angel, it certainly would not be true that He was an angel just like all the rest of the angels, because all the rest of the angels were created. And He is uncreated, as the eternal God.

So if it were to refer to Christ, instead of saying another, using the word *allos* or *allos*, it would use *heteros*. That is "another of a different kind." And that word would need to be used to set Jesus apart from the rest of the angels, though He might appear in something of the supernatural power that angels have. He would be an angel of another kind, another of a different kind, not the same kind, completely different than the angelic beings that He Himself created. He is not just another of the same kind of angel. So the use of that word *allos* would lead us to believe that this is an angel of the same kind, as the ones who are blowing trumpets; they are created beings. This then would be a created being, not Christ.

Furthermore, when John identifies the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation, he's always clear to give Him an unmistakable title. After all, this is the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the book, that's what it's to do; and he would not serve his own purpose if he revealed Christ in a veiled way. And this would certainly be a veiled revelation of Christ. Nowhere in Revelation, therefore, is Jesus Christ called an angel. Where He is revealed it is to be clear of whom it is written.

Furthermore, it is very strange to think of the Lord Jesus Christ making the oath that the angel makes in verses 5 and 6. The angel stands on the sea, lifts his hand in the air to swear, and then makes an oath. Very strange to see the Lord Jesus Christ making some kind of an oath like that.

Then another point: another angel, another strong angel, in fact, clearly not Christ, appears elsewhere in the book of Revelation; and we know that that one is not Christ, and he is also called another strong angel. So there's no reason to assume that here you have Christ if there is elsewhere another strong angel who is not Christ. Well, those are just some things to think about if you run into that issue.

One other thought, too, comes to mind. Verse 1 says this strong angel comes down out of heaven. If this were Christ, we've got a problem here, because we've got another coming of Christ. You understand? So you'd have His first coming, His second coming would be here, and His third coming would be later.

It is best to see this as another strong angel. Such angels appear in chapter 5, chapter 7, chapter 8, chapter 18; no reason to make this Christ. It could be Michael. It could be Gabriel. You can read in Daniel chapter 10, Daniel chapter 12, Jude 9, Revelation 12 about those mighty angels. Michael, for example, whose name means "who is like God," would certainly fit the role of a strong angel.

And angels can have the kind of splendor that this angel has. Look at it. It says he comes down out of heaven, he's clothed with a cloud; the rainbow is upon his head, his face was like the sun, his feet

like pillars of fire. Those are the kind of things that make some folks think it must be Christ. But there are some angels who had that kind of glory. One of them would be very well-known to you, and that would be the angel Lucifer, who before his fall was arrayed in that kind of glory.

Listen to Ezekiel 28, “Take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus saith the Lord God,’ – and here going behind the king of Tyre to Satan who’s inspiring him, the Scripture says regarding this, this fallen angel, - “You had the seal of perfection, you were full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald, and the gold; the workmanship of your settings and the sockets was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.”” There’s the kind of glory that can be associated with an angelic being. So it is not uncommon to see them in the kind of glory that is described here in Revelation chapter 10, verse 1.

Further in Daniel chapter 10, verse 5, here is an angel described as a certain man dressed in linen. His waist was girded with a belt of pure gold, his body was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his voice like the sound of a tumult. Here is this tremendous glory ascribed there as well to an angelic being.

So what you have then, back in chapter 10, is the appearance of a glorious, high-ranking, strong angel; one of the mightiest and most powerful; and he is coming down out of heaven. Now this is in contrast, isn’t it, to all of the demons that have been coming up out of hell.

Let’s look at his garb for a moment. He is clothed with a cloud. The clouds comprise his robe, the very drapery of the sky floats over his mighty shoulders. This is to enhance the power, the majesty, the glory of this person which he has received, of course, from God. This is to make reference, as well, to his coming in judgment. He is definitely an angel of judgment.

Many times in the New Testament the word “cloud” is used of divine appearances related to judgment. And particularly Matthew 24, verses 30 and 31, Christ coming with clouds in judgment. Here comes a cloud-draped angel. Judgment associated with lightning and thunder certainly fits that imagery. So he is garbed in glorious judgment, a judgment angel.

Furthermore, a rainbow was upon his head. This is quite interesting. “Rainbow” in the Greek language is the word “iris, iris.” This was the name of the messenger goddess of Olympus in Greek mythology; her name was Iris. And the word which once identified the splendor of this Greek goddess, the word came to refer to any bright halo surrounding someone. The circle, for example, on the peacock’s eyes, on their tail feathers, was called iris. But primarily the word came to be used of a rainbow.

So here is an angel surrounded by this brilliant refracted light, multi-colored. Remember the rainbow in chapter 4 and verse 3 was an emerald rainbow. Here is another rainbow; no reason to assign just one color to this one. It is a rainbow showing the splendor of this glorious angel.

Perhaps the rainbow along with the garment of judgment is to balance off judgment with covenant. There's a certain sense in which this angel comes representing judgment, but representing promise and hope and covenant by virtue of the rainbow to those who are the recipients of God's mercy. God first gave the rainbow, remember, in Genesis after the flood as His testimony that He would never again destroy the world by water; that was His sign of the promise. And here is a promise rainbow, so that those who are the godly in seeing this vision of the coming of judgment will know that God's promise has not been obviated.

In Malachi, you probably have the best reference to this kind of duality in terms of covenant promise in the midst of judgment. In Malachi 3:16 it says, "Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another; the Lord gave attention, heard it." God had pronounced this judgment, and they were afraid they might get caught in it. "And the Lord had a book of remembrance before Him for those who fear the Lord, who esteem His name. And He says, 'They will be Mine. On the day that I prepare My own possessions, I'll spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. When I come in judgment and the fury of judgment, I'll remember My own.'

"So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. 'For behold,' – chapter 4 says – 'the day is coming, burning like a furnace; all the arrogant, every evildoer will be chaff. The day that is coming will set them ablaze,' says the Lord of hosts, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But as for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I'm preparing,' says the Lord of hosts."

"Yes, there's coming a day," – the day of the Lord – "I'm going to destroy the wicked in the fury of judgment; but I'm going to keep My promise to you." So the judgment angel then is crowned with a majestic halo of a rainbow indicating God's promise to His beloved that they'll not be swept up in the judgment.

Now from his attire we move to his appearance. And John takes us to his face and says his face was like the sun, his face was like the sun. This, of course, speaking of the blazing glory. Chapter 18, verse 1, you see another angel coming down from heaven, an angel with great strength, or great authority; and the earth was illumined with his glory. In other words, he's like the sun, because he comes down out of the sky and it's like daylight.

It's vastly beyond what Moses might have experienced when the glory of God shone on his face, as recorded in Exodus. There's so much glory on the face of the angel in Revelation 18 that it lights the earth as if he were a moon or even a sun. And here you have the same thing; his face was shining like the sun. It was daylight, daylight. That's the radiant glory on the face of an angel.

Now listen, if the face of an angel can be like the sun which gives us such brilliant daylight as we experience today, what must the full face of the glory of God be like? No wonder the Bible says no one can see it and not be consumed, incinerated instantaneously.

His feet, it says, further talking about his appearance, are like pillars of fire. Feet would include his legs. It refers to the unbending holiness of this judgment activity. Here comes a judgment angel, shrouded in the clouds of judgment, with fiery legs and feet as indication of the way in which he is

going to tread out judgment, the result of which will be the incineration of the ungodly, as Malachi says; and the godly will be spared, as the covenant promise of the rainbow indicates, to walk on the ashes of those who have been destroyed. Firm, immovable, stable pillars of vengeance are represented in the legs as he executes the day of the Lord. So here is amazing vision.

And then in verse 2, as we read, the attention of John is directed toward the angel's hand. And in verse 2 it says, "He had in his hand a little book which was open." And, of course, we ask the question immediately, "What is this?"

To answer the question, we need to go back to chapter 5 for just a brief moment, verse 1: "I saw in the right hand of Him" – that is God – "who sat on the throne" – you remember this; in the scene in heaven, God sitting on His throne – "and in His book written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals." And further it tells us, "The strong angel here proclaims with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or look into it. I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book, to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open to the book and its seven seals.'

"And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and He took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures, twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

So here's the book. It was in the hand of God; it was taken from the hand of God by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb. What is it? It was the seven-sealed scroll. What was written in it? The description of the judgments by which God would take back the earth. We suggested that it represented the title deed to the earth. Satan the usurper has possession of the universe now, including the earth. But the day is coming when Christ comes to take it; He's the rightful heir. He's going to take back the earth. That little scroll when unrolled revealed the process by which the Lord Jesus Christ would judge the world and take possession of His own universe.

The book then was the title deed to the earth and its environs. And as those seals were broken one by one, the judgments fell. Now remember, the seventh seal has been broken, and with the breaking of the seventh seal, all the rest of the judgments are visible. When the seventh seal is broken, you can see the seven trumpets, you can see the seven bowls.

Now back to chapter 10, you see in verse 2 that the little book in the hand of the strong angel was open. So he's holding a completely opened scroll. The question comes, "Why is it called a little book?" And I don't want to get into technicality, but it is a question that should be answered.

Why is it called a little book? People say, "Well, maybe it's a different book than the book in chapter 5." I don't think so, and I'll tell you why. Chapter 5 calls the book *biblion*, and chapter 10 calls it *biblion* also in verse 8.

You see the word "book," again in verse 8: "Go take the book." That's the same word: *biblion*. Here in

this verse biblaridion is used, and that just is a diminutive form further describing the same book as a little one – a diminutive form of the word biblion.

It doesn't mean it's a different scroll, it just further identifies it. We shouldn't be surprised that it's to be considered a little book; after all, it was in the hand of God. And in this vision it needed to be made smaller for the sake of symbolism since John was going to eat it. It had to be small enough for John to eat; so in the vision it appears small.

The Greek wording here makes the notion of being open emphatic. It is an open scroll. It is opened, and it remains opened. That must refer to the scroll that we have just been watching be opened.

So here you have a completely unsealed, completely opened book. The final elements are all visible. Everything in the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven judgments is there; it's all visible. Everything yet to come can be seen. And that's why, by the way, in verse 11 John is told to prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings, "You've got to tell the rest of the story."

The final judgments here have been all unveiled, what is to come in the day of the Lord; terrors to redeem God's creation is now known. And so we meet the unusual angel, this great, massive, strong angel holding this little book.

The unusual angel then does an unusual act. Verse 2: "And he placed his right foot on the sea and the left on the land." Now that's pretty unusual. This again would show you the massive proportion of this angel in the vision. He's huge; he can stand on the land and the sea. So the vision that John is seeing was not a vision of normal proportions.

What is the point of all of this? Well, Satan has controlled the earth, the sea; he has been the usurper, the prince of this world; and now God puts His foot down. That's all. He puts his right foot on the sea, his left on the land. Why? Because the earth and all that is in it belongs to the Lord. That's the point. This action then demonstrates sovereign authority in judgment over the whole earth; and it's a symbolic anticipation of what will come in the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls.

Now let me take that a step further. The first series of judgments judge what percentage of the world? One-fourth. The second series judged one-third. Now you get the picture of the angel putting his foot on the sea and his foot on the land, and the judgment is going to be the whole world.

In verse 3, "He cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices." Now this reflects again the awesomeness of the power and the authority of the representative of God. This angel has come to execute God's final judgment. His form is massive, and his voice is as well.

It's interesting in looking at this to go back into the Old Testament – and I'm not going to belabor the point. But a number of Old Testament prophets predicted such a cry would come in the time of final judgment.

For example, Jeremiah 25:29, "For behold, I am beginning to work calamity in this city which is called by My name, and you shall you be completely free from punishment? You will not be free from

punishment; for I am summoning sword against all the inhabitants of the earth,” declares the Lord of hosts. “Therefore you shall prophesy against them all these words. Say to them, ‘The Lord will roar from on high and utter His voice from His holy habitation.’” God is going to roar. Hosea 11:10, Joel 3:16, Amos 1:2, Amos 3:8 – such a cry is depicted in those texts as well.

So here is a glorious, mighty angel, garbed in judgment garb, coming with fiery legs and feet to stamp out the judgment of God. In his hand he has the title deed to do this. It maps out his directions and the course of the judgment which it is to follow. He cries with this loud voice like a thundering lion roaring. And associated with that are seven peals of thunder uttering their voices. And again, as you well know because of our past discussions, thunder is also associated often with judgment. And it does suit well, doesn't it, the fact that his shoulders were garbed with clouds, those clouds carrying the thunder and the lightning of God's judgment.

I keep thinking of 1 Samuel 7:10 when the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines, confused them, and they were routed.

As we saw in chapter 6, verse 1; and chapter 8, verse 5, thunder is a harbinger of judgment. Why seven peals of thunder? Well, seven is the number of completeness, finality, perfection, like all the other sevens in the book of Revelation. So an unusual angel does such an unusual act.

There follows an unusual answer. Look at verse 4: “And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write.” You say, “Why would he do that?” Well, that's what he's been told to do, right? Chapter 1 verse 11; chapter 1 verse 19, God said, “Write. What you see, write.” He always did this. He said, “I was about to write.”

Before he could write, he said, “I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.’” Hmm, John started out to write; the thundering voice of God coming out of heaven said, “Don't do it.”

You say, “Are we sure it was the voice of God?” No, we don't really know who it is. Such thunderous voices from heaven could be from God. Chapter 14, verse 13 says, “I heard a voice from heaven.” Chapter 18, verse 4, you have another voice from heaven. It could be God, it could be Christ, it could be another angel, but certainly the source is God.

The Lord who gave the original command to write is the Lord who now rescinds it, whether speaking Himself, whether Christ speaks, or whether He uses an angel to speak. The point is it's too terrifying, it's too frightening. The nature of the judgment is too fearful. “Don't write it.”

You say, “That's really amazing, because the stuff that he did write is pretty frightening; and the things he didn't write, even more so.” “Seal up, seal them up, and do not write them.”

That's reminiscent, isn't it, of Daniel chapter 8 and verse 26 and 27: “And the vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told; but keep the visions secret. Don't tell people.” Chapter 12 of Daniel, verse 9, he said, “Go your way, Daniel, these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.” There are times when God just wasn't to tell everything. “Don't write this.” That's very unusual; but this was the command of God.

At the end of this book, by the way, in chapter 22, verse 10, the Lord says to John, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." John was told to write in the beginning, he was told to make sure that nobody covered up what he wrote at the end; but this little part he can't write: "Conceal it, don't reveal it."

People inevitably say, "Well, what was it?" I don't know. And God didn't want you to know either; speculation is useless. But that's not unusual dealing with prophetic truth. There's so much we don't know, all kinds of hard things. We do the best we can to comprehend it with the revelation God has given. There are things that we cannot understand. There are things that God has chosen not even to reveal to us, and this falls into that category. I think of Job 37:5. Do you remember this? "God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend."

This restriction is followed by an unusual announcement, an unusual announcement. Verse 5: "And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven." Stop there for a moment. This is a sign of a pledge.

Now here's this angel in this vision. He's got this little book in his hand, and he's standing on the land and the sea, and he's in this glorious imagery. And now he lifts up his right hand, which means the little book is in the other hand.

And this is a sign of an oath or a pledge. This verb that's used here is used technically of raising the hand to swear, like you would do in a court of law, the standard gesture for taking a solemn vow, such as we see in Daniel chapter 12 and verse 7. The hand is lifted toward heaven. Why? Because it is where God dwells. And you're vowing before God that you're going to speak the truth. So the angel lifts up his hand to heaven as if to say before God, "I speak the truth."

And verse 6 says, "And he swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer."

The angel takes a vow, takes a solemn oath. Some people suggest this contradicts Matthew 5:34 and 35 where Jesus says, "Swear not at all," or James, you remember, chapter 5 and verse 12 of James where it says, "Do not swear either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes, your no be no," and so forth.

But this is not wrong to do this. It's not wrong because a holy angel did it. A holy being acting in behalf of the purpose of God would only be swearing as God willed. He is not mortal. He is not sinful. He is not subject of foolish oaths and hasty allegiances. This is a solemn and holy vow before God from one who would only do what was right. Swearing on that level is not wrong, because Hebrews 6:13 says even God swore by Himself. The reason that we are not to swear and take oaths and make solemn pledges before God is because of the folly of our own hearts, and because we don't always know what God's will is, and we can't always perform our vows.

But this angel swears by God who is described as Him who lives forever and ever; that is the eternal God, not bounded by time; who can kill, but never be killed; destroy, but never be destroyed; the living God. And then as always, described as the creator God, the one who created heaven and

everything in it, earth and everything in it, the sea and everything in it: the Almighty Creator, God.

The angel swears. And to what does he promise? The end of verse 6: “There shall be delay no longer.” And here we are, folks, right back where we started. We asked the question at the beginning tonight, “Why doesn’t God break the silence? Why are we so long in waiting for God to do what He’s going to do?” And here comes the answer, “There will be delay no longer.”

Judgment has come. This is the final act. The last plagues of the day of the Lord are at hand, no more delay. The time anticipated in the question of the disciples in Matthew 24:3, Acts 1:6 has now come. The prayers of the saints of all the ages and those under the altar in chapter 6, verses 9 to 11 are now to be answered. All the times that Christians have said, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” are now answered.

This is the end; the last series of judgments is to unfold. And the next verse emphasizes that reality: “There shall be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.”

In the days of the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the finale will come. When the seventh angel sounds, in chapter 11, verse 15 as we read, the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He reigns forever and ever. So we’re on the brink right here. And here in verse 7 he says, “Then the mystery of God is finished.”

Now this is so important. Mystery, *mustērion* in Greek, an important Greek term meaning “to shut” or “to close.” It’s not like an Agatha Christie mystery. It was used of sacred secrets of ancient religions and cults. The mysteries were the most venerated part of ancient religions, the inner secrets that only the elite ever knew.

And the word “mystery” comes over into the New Testament to speak of things that God hasn’t revealed. And the mystery here is the very one we’ve been talking about all night: “Why? Why, God? Why don’t You intervene? When will You intervene? When will You act?”

In the New Testament the word “mystery” then is connected to truths that were so high only God knew them; and He could reveal them, and did reveal them in His own time. They were not revealed until Christ came. They were not revealed until the New Testament was formed. They are secrets kept from people in the past and revealed in the New Testament.

The best text to define that is Romans chapter 16, verse 25: “Now to Him who’s able to establish you according to my gospel in the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but is now manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.”

Now the point there is the mysteries hidden in the past are now revealed in the New Testament. The New Testament reveals many of them: the mysteries of the kingdom, Matthew 13; the mystery of Israel’s blindness, Romans 11; the mystery of the rapture, 1 Corinthians 15; the mystery of lawlessness, 2 Thessalonians 2:7; the mystery of Christ, Ephesians 3; the mystery of Christ in you, Colossians 1; the mystery of godliness, that is God and man one in Christ, 1 Timothy 3:16; the

mystery of God's will, Ephesians 1:9 and 10 – all kinds of mysteries.

And here is the mystery of the summing up of all things in Christ, things in heaven, things in earth, the final consummation. And he says this mystery, although unrevealed, was preached to His servants the prophets. Prophets wrote about it. The Old Testament prophets – and we've gone to many of their texts, and we've seen the promises regarding the final consummation, the final day of the Lord, the final coming of God in flaming fire and judgment, and salvation, deliverance, and kingdom for His people; the destruction of sinners in the establishment of the glorious righteous kingdom on earth. The prophets have been saying that throughout the Old Testament.

Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets." God won't do things that He hasn't revealed. So they saw it coming. Daniel saw it, Ezekiel saw it, Isaiah saw it, Zechariah saw it, Joel saw it; they saw it. But much was hidden and not revealed until the New Testament; and now in the New Testament much revealed here in the book of Revelation.

So the angel says, "It is now time, delay no longer; God is going to act." In Isaiah 11:9 we read, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea."

Now remember, at the time this revelation is read by believers in the future, the earth will be full of satanic enterprises, demons running everywhere, murder, sexual perversion, drugs, sorceries, thefts, all hell dominating human society; men dropping dead, executed by demons, as we saw, massacring each other. And here comes the promise that God is going to step in and intervene. He's going to bring this whole thing to a screeching halt. The delay is over.

Right now we live in that delay. Judgment is held back. But somewhere, somewhere beyond the starry sky there stands a herald angel with a final trumpet in his hand. Somewhere behind the scenes that we can see he is waiting to hear the decree of the Lord God Almighty. There is a day, there is an hour, there is a moment, there is an appointed time when that angel shall sound and the world will become Christ's. The mystery of God will be over, and God will say to Satan, "This is your destruction." God will say to evil, "This is your last dominion." And God will say to demons, "This is your last liberty." And God will say to godless men, "This is your last hope." And God will say to believers, "This is your last suffering."

It's coming. It's coming. It all ends with an unusual assignment, an unusual assignment, verse 8: "The voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, 'Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.' And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, 'Take it and eat it; it'll make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it'll be sweet as honey.' I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. They said to me, 'You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.'"

An unusual angel does an unusual act; there is an unusual answer from heaven, an unusual announcement in verse 7, that the mystery of God is finished; and then an unusual assignment. "The voice which I heard from heaven," again, we don't know whose voice. He says, "Take the book that is in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land, and eat it." It just always thrills me

that John is so involved in the vision; he actually has to go and take the book. John is right there, he's in the vision, and he is instructed to take this book and eat it, because it's going to have a very graphic way of illustrating a proper response to what is going on.

This is reminiscent, by the way, of Ezekiel chapter 2, where the son of man Ezekiel is told to take a scroll that was extended to him written on the front and the back, lamentations, mourning, and woe. Then chapter 3, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat the scroll. So I opened my mouth and he fed me the scroll. And I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth." Almost a parallel text. It's the idea of taking in the word of God.

You say, "Well, what's the point of eating it?" Just to illustrate how sweet it is when someone devours its truth. Why is it sweet? Because like all believers, John is waiting for the Lord to act. Ezekiel, waiting for God to act, when he heard that God was going to act, found it sweet; but when Israel rejected, it became bitter.

So John takes in the word that God is going to act, and it's sweet in his taste, but it turns bitter in his stomach, because he stops to think about what's going to happen. Psalm 119:103 says, "How sweet are Thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" But it's bitter in the stomach.

I think Paul experienced that bitterness in Romans chapter 9. He certainly found the Word of God sweet; but it had a terrible bitterness, because in it came judgment on Israel. And the bitterness ran so deep in the heart of Paul that he could almost have wished himself accursed when he knew what was going to happen to Israel, if only they could be saved.

Even God weeps with tears. He says in Ezekiel, He weeps with tears over the disaster that is coming. And so you have this double effect. John takes it and he eats it. It's sweet; but in his stomach it turns bitter.

When I think about the coming of Christ, it has a sweetness. Doesn't it to you? It means my Christ is glorified. It means He takes over the world, destroying Satan and demons. It means the kingdom comes, sin is conquered, salvation is revealed, Christ reigns. That's sweet. But it also means blood and wrath and vengeance and judgment and hell.

Anyone who loves Christ can sense what John was experiencing here. The blessings of God are sweet. Every message of hope, of blessing, of glory; every message of liberty, salvation of goodness; every promise of heaven is sweet. Every touch of love, every kiss of grace is sweet. But, oh, the bitterness of judgment. And so verse 11 says, "They said to me, 'You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.'"

What does that mean? Warn men. Tell them of the bitter; tell them of the sweet. Tell them what's in the seventh trumpet; tell them what's in the seventh bowl and all the ones preceding it. Tell them to taste the honey and avoid the bitter. He's saying to him, "Repeat what you've heard to peoples and nations, in all languages. That's the call; that's the commission; that's the assignment."

So in this wonderful chapter of interlude there is certainly hope. And the whole message of consummation to us who have asked the question, "How long, O Lord, how long?" is hopeful. Christ will be exalted, the kingdom come, hope realized, sin dethroned, Satan imprisoned with all his hosts,

and the earth filled with righteousness, the righteousness of God and Christ on the throne.

But, oh, the bitterness, the price that sinners will pay. And like John we must preach, we must preach, again, warning people, warning nations in all languages, even people in authority like kings. So an interlude of hope with a serious touch of bitterness, calling us to evangelistic responsibility.

Father, we look to You to give us opportunity in our own day in our own time, to speak Your truth. When we think about what is to come in the future, when we think about what this world will face, it is frightening: the horrors of demons released all over the globe; the reign of terror of Antichrist; sin unleashed, unrestrained; and the ultimate judgment and damnation of the human race. That is bitter. No matter how sweet is the taste of Your glory and Your kingdom, it is bitter to think about what will happen to men and women.

Give us, Lord, the awareness that the assignment given to John is equally given to us: "You must preach; you must prophesy concerning all these things that are going to happen. You must. You must tell people what's coming."

Father, we know, because we don't just have the first ten chapters, we have the whole book of Revelation. It's all here for us, as it was for John in that vision when he could see it all unrolled. Help us, knowing the terror of the Lord, to persuade men. And these things we ask in Christ's name, Amen.

End

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