

Revelation week #23

Revelation 10:1-11

When God breaks His silence

I. Introduction

- a. Read
- b. A question that has troubled God's people throughout history is why God has allowed evil in the world.
- c. The wicked often appear to prosper. Sin seemingly runs wild and unchecked.
- d. Why, people ask, does God not stop all the carnage, corruption, and chaos in the world?
- e. Why does He allow His children to suffer? When will divine justice prevail and the righteous be delivered and the wicked punished?
- f. In the midst of his trials Job complained that "the tents of the destroyers prosper, and those who provoke God are secure. ... Why do the wicked still live, continue on, also become very powerful?" (Job 12:6; 21:7).
- g. The Tribulation martyrs in heaven cried out to God, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10).
- h. All the pain, sorrow, suffering, and evil in the world cause the godly to long for God to intervene.
- i. A day is coming when He will break His silence, a day when all the purposes of God concerning men and the world will be consummated.
- j. At that time, the Lord Jesus Christ will return and establish His earthly kingdom.

- k. He will rule righteously, with “a rod of iron” (Ps. 2:9), and “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).
- l. All the atheists, agnostics, and scoffers who mocked the thought that Christ would return (2 Pet. 3:3–4) will be silenced.
 - i. The times of sin, lies, murders, thefts, wars, and the persecution and martyrdom of God’s people will be over.
 - ii. Satan and his demon hosts will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1–3), unable any longer to tempt, torment, or accuse believers.
 - iii. The desert will become a blossoming garden (cf. Isa. 35:1; 51:3; Ezek. 36:34–35), people will live long lives (Isa. 65:20), and there will be peace between former enemies at all levels of society—and even in the animal kingdom (Isa. 11:6–8).
 - iv. The ravages of sin—broken hearts, broken relationships, broken marriages, broken families, broken dreams, broken people—will be healed.
 - v. Sorrow, sadness, mourning, and pain will vanish like the morning mists before the noonday sun (cf. Rev. 7:17; 21:4).
- m. The sounding of the seventh trumpet, which heralds the imminent return and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, will usher in that long-anticipated day: “Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever’ ” (11:15).

- n. The seventh trumpet will release the seven rapid-fire bowl judgments that immediately precede Christ's return to earth (16:1–21).
- o. But before the seventh trumpet sounds there will be an interlude, which stretches from 10:1 to 11:14, allowing John (and present-day readers) to pause and assimilate the startling truths that have just been revealed to him.
- p. The interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets parallels such interludes in the seal and bowl judgments.
- q. Between the sixth and seventh seals came the interlude of chapter 7; between the sixth and seventh bowls comes the brief interlude of 16:15.
- r. These interludes encourage God's people in the midst of the fury and horror of divine judgment, and remind them that God is still in sovereign control of all events.
- s. During the interludes God comforts His people with the knowledge that He has not forgotten them, and that they will ultimately be victorious.
- t. Believers alive during that time will endure the unimaginable horrors of a demon-assaulted, sin-mad world.
 - i. Like the believers of Malachi's day (cf. Mal. 3:16–17), they will fear being swept away by the divine judgments that are ravaging the earth.
 - ii. God will comfort and reassure them that He has not forgotten them and that He still controls events and protects His own.
- u. Chapter 10 describes the opening events of this interlude preparing for the final trumpet blast.
- v. It does so by describing five unusual features: an unusual angel, an unusual act, an unusual answer, an unusual announcement, and an unusual assignment.

II. **An Unusual Angel.**

- a. Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ² He had a little scroll open in his hand.
10:1–2a
- b. As it does throughout Revelation (cf. 4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1), *eidon* (**I saw**) marks the beginning of a new vision.
- c. Following his vision of the first six trumpets (8:6–9:21), John saw a vision of someone he had not seen before.
- d. This **strong angel** is distinct from the seven angels who sound the seven trumpets.
- e. Noting the similarities between his description and that of Christ in 1:12–17, and that he, like Christ, descends in a cloud (cf. 1:7), some identify this angel as Jesus Christ. But several factors argue against that identification.
 - i. First, the use of *allos* (**another** of the same kind) identifies this angel as one exactly like the previously mentioned trumpet angels.
 1. If Christ were being referred to here, the word *heteros* (another of a different kind) would be expected, since Christ is essentially different from angels.
 2. Christ could not be described as an angel exactly like the other angels, since they are created and He is the uncreated, eternal God.
 - ii. Second, whenever Jesus Christ appears in Revelation John gives Him an unmistakable title.
 1. He is called “the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5), the son of man (1:13), the first and the last (1:17), the living One (1:18), the Son of God (2:18), “He who is holy, who is true” (3:7), “the

Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (3:14), “the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (5:5), the Lamb (6:1, 16; 7:17; 8:1), Faithful and True (19:11), the Word of God (19:13), and “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords” (19:16). It is reasonable to assume that if Christ were the angel in view here He would be distinctly identified.

- iii. Third, other strong angels, who clearly cannot be identified with Christ, appear in Revelation (5:2; 18:21).
 - 1. Since other angels are so designated, there is no compelling reason to associate that title with Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Further, while the preincarnate Christ appeared in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord, the New Testament nowhere refers to Him as an angel.
- iv. Fourth, it is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, could make the oath that this angel makes in verses 5 and 6: “Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and 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.”
 - 1. Since He is God, the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ would swear by Himself (cf. Heb. 6:13).
- v. Finally, this angel came **down out of heaven** to the earth. To identify him as Christ is to add another coming of Christ to the earth unforeseen elsewhere in

Scripture, one that is not in accord with the biblical descriptions of the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:30; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7–8).

- f. Other angels described in Scripture have the same splendor that this angel has. Ezekiel 28:11–15 describes Lucifer’s glorious angelic appearance before his rebellion against God:
- g. Having introduced this powerful angel, John describes his spectacular attire.
- h. He was **clothed with a cloud**, wearing the drapery of the sky over his mighty shoulders.
 - i. That symbolizes his power, majesty, and glory, and the fact that he comes bringing judgment.
 - ii. Clouds are associated with the second coming of Christ in judgment in 1:7; 14:14–16; Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; 14:62; and Luke 21:27.
- i. John also saw a **rainbow upon his head**.
 - i. Here it describes the brilliant, many-colored rainbow around the angel’s head that reflects his glorious splendor.
 - ii. The same word was used in 4:3 to describe the rainbow that encircled the throne of God.
- j. While the cloud symbolizes judgment, the rainbow represents God’s covenant mercy in the midst of judgment (as it did in 4:3).
 - i. After the Flood, God gave the rainbow as the sign of His promise never again to destroy the world by water (Gen. 9:12–16).
 - ii. The rainbow with which the angel is crowned will reassure God’s people of His mercy in the midst of coming judgments.
- k. Moving on to describe the angel’s appearance, John notes first of all that **his face was like the sun** (cf. 18:1).

- i. His brilliant, radiant glory, far surpassing that of Moses (cf. Ex. 34:29–35), lit up the earth **like** the blazing noonday **sun** (cf. 18:1).
 - ii. Yet even that brilliance is but a pale reflection of the Shechinah glory of God, who “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Tim. 6:16), for, as He said to Moses, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” (Ex. 33:20).
 - iii. The same pure glory shone from the face of the exalted Lord Jesus in 1:16.
 - l. John next described the angel’s **feet** and legs as being **like** firm, stable, immovable **pillars of fire**.
 - i. That symbolizes his unbending holiness in stamping out his judgment on the earth, pictured here as **fire** that consumes the ungodly (cf. Mal. 4:1).
 - m. The Little scroll
 - i. The book needed to be made smaller for the sake of the symbolism of this vision, since John was to eat it. The use of the perfect participle *hēne ōgmenon* (**which was open**) emphasizes the idea of the scroll being open; having been opened, it is to remain open.
 - ii. That further identifies it with the now fully unrolled scroll of 5:1.
 - iii. The little book lying open in this unusual angel’s hand unveils all the terrors of divine judgment yet to come.
- III. **An Unusual Act.**
- a. **And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³ and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. (10:2b–3)**

- b. That the angel put one **foot on the sea** and the other **on the land** shows his massive size from the perspective of John's vision.
- c. Since no limitation is given in describing the **sea** and **land**, this action of the angel demonstrates God's sovereign authority to judge the entire earth (cf. 7:2; Ex. 20:4, 11; Ps. 69:34), which He will soon take back from the usurper, Satan.
- d. Paul wrote, "**The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains**" (1 Cor. 10:26).
- e. The angel's act also symbolically anticipates the coming judgments of the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls on the whole earth.
- f. In keeping with his huge size, the angel **cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars**.
 - i. His loud cry reflects the power, majesty, and authority of God.
 - ii. The Old Testament prophets also connect a loud, lion like roaring voice with judgment.
 - iii. Hosea wrote that "the Lord ... will roar like a lion; indeed He will roar" (Hos. 11:10), while in Joel's prophecy "the Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble" (Joel 3:16).
- g. This does not mean that the voice of the angel was incoherent yelling.
 - i. Rather, he was speaking clearly but with great volume to capture attention and cause fear.
 - ii. What the angel actually said is recorded in 10:6.
- h. After the angel **cried out** an amazing thing happened: **the seven thunders sounded**.
- i. **Seven** speaks of completeness, finality, and perfection.

- j. **Thunder** is often a forerunner of judgment in Scripture (cf. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; 1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:14; Ps. 18:13; John 12:28–30).
 - i. Exodus 9:23 records that “Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt.”
 - ii. In 1 Samuel 7:10 “the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel.”
 - iii. Isaiah wrote, “From the Lord of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise” (Isa. 29:6).
- k. These seven loud, shattering, powerful voices cry out for vengeance and judgment upon the sinful earth.

IV. **An Unusual Answer.**

- a. **And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.” (10:4)**
- b. The **seven thunders** did not merely make a loud noise, but communicated information that John **was about to write**.
- c. But before John could record the message of the seven peals of thunder he **heard a voice from heaven** (cf. v. 8; 11:12; 14:2, 13; 18:4) **saying, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders have said and do not write them.”**
- d. Whether the voice was that of the Father, Jesus Christ, or another angel is not revealed.
 - i. The command, however, clearly originated with God—the very One who had commanded John to write (cf. 22:10).

- ii. The reason John was forbidden to record the message of the seven peals of thunder is not revealed.
 - iii. It may be that the judgment they uttered is simply too terrifying to be revealed.
 - iv. Any speculation as to the specific content of their message is pointless; had God wanted it to be known, He would not have forbidden John to write it.
 - e. Daniel also was forbidden to record certain elements of his visions.
 - i. In Daniel 8:26 he was commanded, “The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true; but keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future.”
 - ii. Later he was told, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time” (Dan. 12:9).
 - iii. The apostle Paul was “caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak” (2 Cor. 12:4).
 - iv. There are some truths that God has chosen not to reveal: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29);
 - v. “God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37:5).
 - f. The words of the seven thunders fall into that category. They are the only words in the book of Revelation that are sealed.
- V. **An Unusual Announcement.**
- a. **And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created**

heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷ but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. (10:5–7)

- b. In a solemn act, **the angel whom John saw standing on the sea and on the land** (v. 2) **lifted up his right hand** (the little book was in his left hand; v. 2) **to heaven** (where God dwells)—the standard gesture for taking a solemn vow (cf. Deut. 32:40; Dan. 12:7).
- c. To take such a vow is to affirm before God that one is going to speak the truth.
 - i. That vow indicated that what the angel was about to say was of the utmost importance and truthfulness.
- d. The angel took his vow in the name of **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.**
- e. That designation of God stresses His eternity (as in 1:18; 4:9, 10; 15:7) and His sovereign power in and over every single thing in His creation.
- f. Paul identified God to pagan Gentiles as the source and first cause of the created universe.
- g. He thus answered the most compelling question in the human through the ages—the question of origins.
- h. This identification of God as Creator echoes the praise song of the twenty-four elders recorded in 4:11: “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” The comprehensive statement that

God **created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it** reveals that the scope of God's creative power is all-encompassing (cf. Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11; Pss. 33:6; 102:25; 115:15; 124:8; 134:3; 146:5–6; Isa. 37:16; 42:5; Jer. 32:17; 51:15).

- i. His purpose for His creation will be fulfilled through judgment, renovation, destruction, and recreation.
- j. The specific content of the angel's oath was **that there will be delay no longer**, answering the question of the martyrs, "How long?" (6:10), and the prayers of the saints in 8:3–5.
- k. The phrase **but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound** indicates that the judgment of the seventh trumpet is about to come and that it is not a single event, but covers **days**—indicating a period of time.
- l. This period includes the seven bowl judgments (16:1–21), which would appear to require some weeks or months to unfold.
- m. So the sounding of the seventh trumpet brings the final judgment depicted in the bowls of fury poured out on the earth.
- n. The time of God's patience is seen as having ended; the time for the final acts of judgment is seen as being at hand.
- o. The time anticipated in the disciples' questions recorded in Matthew 24:3 and Acts 1:6 has come.
- p. The prayers of all the saints of all the ages for the consummation of God's kingdom are about to be answered (cf. 6:9–11; Matt. 6:9–10).
- q. When the **seventh angel** sounds, "The kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (11:15).

- r. At that time **the mystery of God** will have been **finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.**
- s. **Mystery** in Scripture refers to truths God has hidden and will reveal in His time.
 - i. Paul wrote: Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is 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. (Rom. 16:25–26)
- t. The **mystery of God** (cf. 1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 2:2) of which the angel spoke is that of “the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth” (Eph. 1:10).
 - i. It is the consummation of God’s plan in bringing His glorious kingdom in Christ to fulfillment.
 - ii. It involves the salvation of the elect and their place in His glorious kingdom and all that goes with that.
 - iii. It includes the judgment of men and demons.
 - iv. The **mystery** previously hidden refers to all the unknown details that are revealed from this point to the end of Revelation, when the new heavens and new earth are created.

VI. **An Unusual Assignment.**

- a. Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your

mouth it will be sweet as honey.”¹⁰ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.¹¹ And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings (10:8–11)

- b. The voice John had earlier **heard from heaven** (v. 4) forbidding him to record the words of the seven thunders spoke to him again.
- c. As he had earlier (cf. 1:17; 4:1; 5:4–5; 7:13–14), John again became an active participant in this vision.
- d. He left the place of an observer to become an actor in the drama.
- e. The voice said to him, “**Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.**”
- f. This third reference to the location of the angel emphasizes strongly the unusual authority he has over the earth.
- g. Then, in a graphic illustration of what a proper response on the part of believers to God’s impending judgment should be, John was told, “**Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.**”
- h. The angel knew what John’s reaction to this truth would be.
 - i. Obediently, like Ezekiel before him (Ezek. 2:9–3:3), John in the vision symbolically **took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it.**
 - ii. As the angel had predicted, in John’s **mouth it was sweet as honey**; but **when he had eaten it**, his **stomach was made bitter.**

- i. The act of eating the scroll symbolized the absorbing and assimilating of God's Word (cf. Ps. 19:10; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1–3).
- j. When John took in the divine word concerning the remaining judgments as the Lord took possession of the universe, he found the words written on **the little book** both **sweet as honey** and **bitter**.
- k. **Sweet** because John, like all believers, wanted the Lord to act in judgment to take back the earth that is rightfully His and be exalted, honored, and glorified as He deserved.
 - i. But the realization of the terrible doom awaiting unbelievers turned that initial sweet taste into bitterness.
 - ii. All who love Jesus Christ can relate to John's contradiction.
 - iii. Believers long for Christ to return in glory, for Satan to be destroyed, and the glorious kingdom of our Lord to be set up on earth, in which He will rule in universal sovereignty and glory while establishing in the world righteousness, truth, and peace.
 - iv. But they, like Paul (Rom. 9:1–3), mourn bitterly over the judgment of the ungodly.
- l. In keeping with his bittersweet experience, John was told, **“You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”**
- m. **Again** indicates John was being commissioned a second time (cf. 1:19) to write the rest of the prophecies God was going to give him.
- n. What he was about to learn would be more devastating than anything yet revealed—and more glorious.
- o. He was to be faithful to his duty to record all the truth he had seen and would soon see.

- p. The prophecies John would receive would relate to everyone everywhere.
- i. So John is to warn of all the bitter judgments coming in the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls.
 - ii. As an exile on Patmos (1:9) he had no opportunity to preach to all nations, but he was to write the prophecies and distribute them, so as to warn all people of the bitterness of judgment to come, and of death and hell.
 - iii. Sinners everywhere may know because John recorded these prophecies that, while judgment is presently restrained, a future day is coming when the seventh angel will sound his trumpet and sin's dominion will be broken, the freedom of Satan and his demons will come to an end, godless men will be judged, and believers will be glorified.
 - iv. This chapter presents an interlude of hope tinged with bitterness that reminds all Christians of their evangelistic responsibilities to warn the world of that day.¹

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Revelation 1–11*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 275–289.