

Introduction

The Big Picture

Revelation 10 ESV

¹ 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. 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. ⁴ 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.” ⁵ 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. ⁸ 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.”

Revelation 10 gives us a pause in the storm. The judgments have been intense. The world is reeling. But before the seventh trumpet sounds, God interrupts the narrative to make three things clear: He is still in control, His plan is on schedule, and His messengers must keep speaking.

This chapter is short, only eleven verses. But it's packed with meaning. It connects the Old Testament prophets to the New Testament church. It links God's promises from centuries ago to the final fulfillment that's coming.

Think of this chapter as a bridge. It takes us from the trumpet judgments to the bowl judgments that come later. But more than that, it reminds us why these judgments are happening. God is wrapping up human history according to a plan He announced long ago. Nothing is out of control. Nothing catches Him by surprise.

Four Main Movements

Here's how the chapter breaks down:

Verses 1-2: The Mighty Angel Appears. John sees an angel coming down from heaven. This isn't just any angel. His appearance is stunning. He's wrapped in a cloud, has a rainbow over his head, a face like the sun, and legs like pillars of fire. He holds a little scroll, and he plants one foot on the sea and one foot on the land.

Verses 3-4: The Seven Thunders Speak and Are Sealed. The angel shouts with a voice like a lion roaring. Seven thunders answer him. John is about to write down what they say, but a voice from heaven stops him. "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

Verses 5-7: The Angel Swears an Oath. The angel raises his hand to heaven and swears by the eternal Creator. He declares that there will be "no more delay." When the seventh trumpet sounds, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, just as He promised through the prophets.

Verses 8-11: John Eats the Scroll. A voice from heaven tells John to take the scroll from the angel's hand. John asks for it, and the angel tells him to eat it. The scroll is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. Then he's commissioned: "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

Why This Chapter Matters

You might wonder why God includes this interlude. Why not just move straight from the sixth trumpet to the seventh? Here's why it matters:

It reassures believers under pressure. The original audience of Revelation faced persecution. They were tempted to think God had lost control or forgotten them. This chapter says the opposite. God's authority spans the whole earth. His plan is moving forward.

It teaches us about revelation. God reveals what we need, but not everything we want. The sealed thunders remind us that some things belong to God alone. We walk by faith, not by complete knowledge.

It prepares us for mission. John's commission to prophesy again applies to the church. We're called to speak God's Word to every nation, even when it's costly or uncomfortable.

It connects Scripture. This chapter draws heavily from the Old Testament. The imagery of the angel echoes descriptions of God's glory in Exodus and Ezekiel. The oath mirrors [Daniel 12](#). The scroll John eats comes straight from [Ezekiel 2-3](#). God's plan isn't new. It's the same plan He's been working since the beginning.

The Halftime Analogy

Imagine you're watching a championship basketball game. Your team is down at halftime. The players are exhausted. The crowd is anxious. Then the coach gathers the team in the locker room. He doesn't panic. He reminds them of the game plan. He shows them film. He adjusts the strategy. He sends them back out with confidence.

That's what [Revelation 10](#) does. The judgments are heavy. The spiritual battle is real. But God pauses the action to remind His people: I'm still the coach. The plan is solid. You have a role to play. Now get back out there.

The Angel's Stance

The angel in verse 2 stands with one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. This is a visual statement of authority.

In the ancient world, the sea represented chaos and danger. The land represented stability and human civilization. By standing on both, the angel declares that God rules over everything. Chaos doesn't threaten Him. Nations don't intimidate Him. All creation is under His feet.

This matters when the world feels out of control. Economic crises, wars, pandemics, political upheaval—none of it surprises God. He stands over it all.

Key Themes to Keep in Mind

As we move into the verse-by-verse study, keep these themes in your mind:

God's Glory: The angel's appearance reflects God's majesty. Every detail matters.

God's Authority: The stance, the oath, the voice—all point to unshakable power.

God's Timing: "No more delay" means His promises are certain. The clock is ticking.

God's Word: Sweet and bitter. Delightful and costly. True prophecy carries both.

Transition to Verse-by-Verse Study

Now that we have the big picture, let's slow down and work through the chapter verse by verse.

Verse-by-Verse Exploration

The Mighty Angel and the Sealed Thunders (Verses 1-4) – God's Majestic Authority and the Limits of Knowledge

Revelation 10:1–4 ESV

¹ 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. 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. ⁴ 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."

Verse 1: The Appearance of the Mighty Angel

John writes, "Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven." The word "another" is important. John has already seen mighty angels in Revelation (see [Revelation 5:2](#)). This one is different, but he belongs to the same category of powerful heavenly messengers.

Is This Angel Jesus? Some Bible teachers believe this angel is actually Christ Himself. Others say it's a high-ranking angel who reflects God's glory. Here's what we know:

The description echoes divine attributes. But Revelation distinguishes between Christ (the Lamb, the rider on the white horse) and angels. The text calls him an "angel," not the Son or the Lamb. Most likely, this is a mighty angel who carries the radiance and authority of God.

Angels in Scripture often reflect God's glory when they appear (see the angel at the tomb in [Matthew 28:3](#)).

The point isn't to settle the angel's identity with absolute certainty. The point is to see that heaven's messenger comes with undeniable authority and glory.

Wrapped in a Cloud: Clouds in Scripture signal God's presence. When God led Israel out of Egypt, He appeared in a pillar of cloud ([Exodus 13:21](#)). When God gave the Law at Sinai, the mountain was covered in cloud ([Exodus 19:16](#)). When Jesus ascended to heaven, a cloud took Him out of sight ([Acts 1:9](#)). When He returns, He will come "with the clouds" ([Revelation 1:7](#)).

The cloud here marks this angel as a messenger from God's throne. He doesn't come on his own authority. He comes from the presence of the Almighty.

A Rainbow Over His Head: The rainbow takes us back to [Genesis 9](#). After the flood, God placed a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with Noah. "I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature" ([Genesis 9:15](#), ESV).

The rainbow also appears in [Revelation 4:3](#), where it encircles God's throne. It represents God's faithfulness, His mercy, and His covenant promises. Even in judgment, God remembers His covenant. The rainbow over the angel's head reminds us that mercy and justice go together.

His Face Was Like the Sun: This description closely matches the vision of Christ in [Revelation 1:16](#), where John sees the Son of Man with a face "like the sun shining in full strength." It also echoes the transfiguration, when Jesus' face "shone like the sun" ([Matthew 17:2](#)).

A sun-like face speaks of blazing glory, holiness, and truth that cannot be hidden. You can't look directly at the sun without being overwhelmed. The same is true of divine glory.

Legs Like Pillars of Fire: Fire in the Bible represents God's holiness, His purifying judgment, and His presence. The pillar of fire guided Israel by night ([Exodus 13:21](#)). God appeared to Moses in the burning bush ([Exodus 3:2](#)). The feet of the Son of Man in [Revelation 1:15](#) are described as "like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace."

Pillars of fire for legs suggest strength, stability, and consuming holiness. This angel stands firm. His presence purifies and judges.

The Little Scroll in His Hand: The angel holds a "little scroll" (Greek: *biblaridion*). This is different from the sealed scroll in [Revelation 5](#), which only the Lamb could open. That scroll was the title deed to creation, the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

This little scroll is already open. It's ready to be read and consumed. We'll see in verses 9-10 that John is told to eat it. The scroll likely represents a specific prophetic message or commission that John must deliver. It's a portion of God's larger plan, focused and ready for action.

Verse 2: The Angel's Stance

"And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land."

This is one of the most powerful images in the chapter. The angel doesn't float above the earth. He plants his feet firmly on it. One foot on the sea, one foot on the land. This is a claim of total dominion.

The Sea: In ancient Near Eastern thought, the sea represented chaos, danger, and the forces opposed to God. The sea is where the beast rises in [Revelation 13:1](#). It's unpredictable and uncontrollable by human power. But God made the sea. He sets its boundaries ([Job 38:8-11](#)). He calms it with a word ([Mark 4:39](#)).

The Land: The land represents human civilization, nations, and earthly power. Kings rule over land. Armies march across it. Empires rise and fall on it.

By standing with one foot on each, the angel declares that God's authority covers everything. No part of creation is outside His control. The chaos of the sea and the stability of the land both belong to Him.

Verse 3: The Lion's Roar and the Seven Thunders

"And called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded."

The Lion's Roar: Lions appear throughout Scripture as symbols of power and kingship. Jesus Himself is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" ([Revelation 5:5](#)). [Amos 3:8](#) says, "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

A lion's roar is unmistakable. It announces presence, authority, and power. When this angel shouts, it's not a whisper. It's a declaration that demands attention.

The Seven Thunders: In response to the angel's voice, seven thunders sound. The number seven represents completeness and perfection in Revelation. We've seen seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets. Now we hear seven thunders.

What do the thunders say? We don't know. That's the point of verse 4.

Thunders in Scripture often accompany God's voice. Psalm 29 describes "the voice of the Lord" as thunder: "The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders" (Psalm 29:3, ESV). At Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings" when God spoke (Exodus 19:16).

The seven thunders are God speaking in power. The content is majestic, complete, and authoritative. But it's also sealed.

Verse 4: The Command to Seal

"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.'"

John's job throughout Revelation is to write what he sees and hears. "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches" (Revelation 1:11, ESV). He's been faithful to record everything: the visions, the judgments, the worship in heaven.

But here, he's told to stop. Don't write this down. Seal it up.

Why Seal the Thunders? The Bible doesn't tell us. But here are some possibilities:

- God reveals what we need, not everything we want. Some knowledge belongs to God alone. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever."
- It teaches humility. We don't control revelation. God does. We receive what He gives and trust Him with what He withholds.
- It builds faith. Walking with God means trusting Him even when we don't have all the answers. The sealed thunders train us to live by faith, not by sight.

Old Testament Parallel: In Daniel 12:4, Daniel is told, "Shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end." Daniel couldn't understand everything he saw. Some things were sealed until the right time. The same thing happens here.

Greek Insight: The word for "seal" is *sphragizō*, which means to close up, to authenticate, or to keep secret. It's the same word used for the sealed scroll in Revelation 5:1. A seal marks something as official and protected.

Application: We live in an age of information overload. We think we deserve to know everything, right now. Social media feeds us endless streams of news, opinions, and

speculation. But God says some things are sealed. Some questions won't get answered this side of eternity. That's okay. Trust Him.

Summary of Verses 1-4

These four verses establish God's majestic authority and the limits of human knowledge. The angel comes in glory, plants his feet on all creation, roars with divine authority, and releases seven thunders. But the thunders are sealed. We get enough revelation to trust and obey, but not so much that we don't need faith. God is in control. His plan is unfolding. And some things remain His secret.

The Oath and the Mystery of God (Verses 5-7) – No More Delay in God's Plan

Revelation 10:5–7 ESV

⁵ 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.

Verse 5: The Solemn Oath Begins

"And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore..."

The angel doesn't move from his position. He's still standing with authority over sea and land. But now he raises his right hand to heaven. This is the posture of taking an oath, a solemn vow.

Oath-Taking in Scripture: Raising the hand to swear an oath was a formal, sacred act in the ancient world. It signaled that what you were about to say carried the weight of ultimate truth. You were calling on the highest authority to witness your words.

In Deuteronomy 32:40, God Himself says, "I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, As I live forever..." Genesis 14:22 records Abraham raising his hand to swear by "the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth."

When you raised your hand to heaven, you were saying, "May God hold me accountable for what I'm about to declare." It was binding, serious, and irreversible.

Old Testament Parallel: This scene closely mirrors Daniel 12:7. In Daniel's vision, he sees "the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever" (ESV).

Daniel's vision concerns the end times, the time of tribulation, and the resurrection. The oath in Daniel assures the prophet that God's timeline is fixed. The same message appears here in Revelation 10. God's plan will finish on schedule.

Verse 6a: By Whom the Angel Swears

"...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..."

The angel doesn't swear by himself. He swears by the eternal Creator. This is the highest possible oath. There is no authority above God. When God Himself swears an oath, He swears by His own name because there is no one greater (Hebrews 6:13).

Him Who Lives Forever and Ever: This phrase emphasizes God's eternity. He has no beginning and no end. Human empires rise and fall. Civilizations come and go. But God remains. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Psalms 90:2, ESV).

The Greek phrase here is *ton zōnta eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn*, literally "the one living into the ages of the ages." It's the strongest possible way to express endless, eternal existence.

Who Created Heaven, Earth, and Sea: The angel grounds the oath in God's role as Creator. He made everything. Heaven, earth, and sea—the same three realms the angel is standing over.

This echoes Exodus 20:11: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them." It also reflects Nehemiah 9:6: "You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them."

Why mention creation? Because the Creator has absolute rights over His creation. He sets the terms. He determines the timeline. He owns it all. When the Creator swears an oath, creation itself is the witness.

Verse 6b: The Content of the Oath – No More Delay

"...that there would be no more delay..."

This is the heart of the oath. The Greek word for "delay" is *chronos*, which means time. The phrase could be translated "there will be time no longer" or "there will be no more delay."

What Does This Mean? Some translations say "there will be no more delay" (ESV, NIV). Others say "there should be time no longer" (KJV). The meaning is this: God's patience has a limit. His timeline is moving toward a fixed end. The waiting is almost over.

Throughout history, God has delayed judgment to give people time to repent. Peter explains this in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (ESV).

But patience doesn't mean endless tolerance of sin. There comes a moment when God says, "Time's up." That's what the angel announces here. The delay is over. The final trumpet is about to sound.

For Believers, This Is Comfort: If you're suffering for your faith, if you've been praying for justice, if you're weary of waiting, this oath is for you. God hasn't forgotten. He hasn't abandoned His plan. The clock is ticking toward the moment when He will make everything right.

For Unbelievers, This Is Warning: If you've been putting off repentance, thinking you have endless time, listen carefully. The angel swears there will be no more delay. The window of opportunity is closing. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Old Testament Echo: Habakkuk 2:3: The prophet Habakkuk complained that God was taking too long to act. God replied, "For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (ESV). God's timing is perfect. When the moment comes, there will be no delay.

Verse 7: The Mystery of God Fulfilled

"...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."

In the Days of the Seventh Trumpet: The oath doesn't say the mystery will be fulfilled *after* the seventh trumpet, but *in the days when* the seventh trumpet sounds. The seventh trumpet (which sounds in Revelation 11:15) ushers in the final phase of God's plan. It announces, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15, ESV).

The seventh trumpet marks the beginning of the end. Everything that follows—the bowl judgments, the fall of Babylon, the return of Christ—unfolds rapidly.

The Mystery of God: What is this mystery? The Greek word is *mystērion*. In the New Testament, a mystery isn't something impossible to understand. It's something that was hidden but is now revealed by God.

Paul uses "mystery" to describe God's plan to unite Jews and Gentiles in Christ ([Ephesians 3:3-6](#)). He speaks of the "mystery of Christ" ([Colossians 4:3](#)) and the "mystery of the gospel" ([Ephesians 6:19](#)). In [1 Corinthians 15:51](#), he calls the resurrection and transformation of believers a "mystery."

Here in [Revelation 10:7](#), "the mystery of God" likely refers to God's entire redemptive plan. It includes the defeat of evil, the vindication of the saints, the establishment of God's kingdom, and the restoration of all things. Everything God has been working toward since [Genesis 3](#) will be complete.

Just as He Announced to His Servants the Prophets: This mystery isn't new. God has been talking about it for centuries. The prophets spoke of a day when God would judge the nations, restore Israel, and bring peace to the earth.

- Isaiah prophesied about new heavens and a new earth ([Isaiah 65:17](#)).
- Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)).
- Ezekiel described the return of God's glory to His temple ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](#)).
- Daniel saw the Ancient of Days and the coming of the Son of Man ([Daniel 7:9-14](#)).
- Zechariah announced that "the Lord will be king over all the earth" ([Zechariah 14:9](#)).

All these threads come together in Revelation. The mystery announced to the prophets is about to be fulfilled. God keeps His promises.

Greek Insight: The word "fulfilled" is *teleō*, which means to complete, to finish, to bring to an end. It's the same root as Jesus' word from the cross: "It is finished" (*tetelestai*, [John 19:30](#)). When the seventh trumpet sounds, God's plan reaches its appointed completion.

Application: God has been writing one story from the beginning of time. Every prophet, every promise, every prophecy points to the same climax. You're living in the final chapters of that story. The mystery is being revealed right now. History isn't random. It's heading toward a moment when God will tie up every loose end.

The Power of the Oath

Why does the angel swear this oath? Why take such a formal, solemn step?

To Remove All Doubt: An oath is the strongest form of assurance. God wants His people to be absolutely certain. There will be no more delay. The mystery will be fulfilled. You can count on it.

Hebrews 6:17-18 explains God's use of oaths: "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement" (ESV).

God cannot lie. When He swears an oath, it's as good as done.

To Strengthen Persecuted Believers: The original readers of Revelation were under pressure. Some faced imprisonment, poverty, and death for their faith. They wondered how long the suffering would last. The oath answers: not much longer. Hold on. The end is in sight.

To Call Unbelievers to Repentance: The oath also serves as a final warning. Time is running out. The opportunity to repent won't last forever. The seventh trumpet is about to sound.

Summary of Verses 5-7

The mighty angel, standing over all creation, raises his hand and swears by the eternal Creator. He declares that time is up. No more delay. When the seventh trumpet sounds, the mystery of God—His entire redemptive plan announced through the prophets—will be fulfilled. This oath assures believers that God keeps His promises, strengthens those who are suffering, and warns those who are delaying repentance. History is not drifting. It's racing toward the moment when God makes all things new.

Eating the Scroll and Renewed Commission (Verses 8-11) – The Sweet and Bitter Word of God

Revelation 10:8-11 ESV

⁸ 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.”

Verse 8: The Command to Take the Scroll

"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.'"

Up to this point, John has been an observer. He's watched the angel descend, heard the seven thunders, and listened to the oath. But now he's called to participate. The voice from heaven—likely God Himself or Christ—speaks directly to John.

The Same Voice: This is the same voice that told John to seal up the seven thunders in verse 4. The voice has authority. When it speaks, John obeys.

Go and Take: John isn't a passive spectator anymore. He's told to move, to approach the angel, and to take the scroll. This is active engagement with God's Word. You can't experience the fullness of Scripture from a distance. You have to receive it, handle it, internalize it.

The Open Scroll: Remember, this scroll is already open. It's not sealed like the scroll in [Revelation 5](#). It's ready to be read and consumed. The message is available. God isn't hiding it. He's offering it.

Application: God's Word is available to us today. The Bible sits on our shelves, on our phones, in our churches. But availability doesn't mean we've received it. We have to "go and take" it. We have to open it, read it, and let it get inside us.

Verse 9a: John's Request

"So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll."

John obeys immediately. He doesn't hesitate or question. He goes to the angel and asks for the scroll. There's something beautiful about this. John is willing to receive whatever God wants to give him, even though he doesn't yet know what it will cost.

The Posture of a Disciple: John models the heart of a true disciple. When God calls, you go. When God offers His Word, you ask for it. You don't negotiate. You don't delay. You respond.

This is the same John who leaned on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper ([John 13:23](#)). He knows intimacy with the Lord. He trusts Him. So when the voice from heaven says "take the scroll," John moves.

Verse 9b: The Angel's Instruction

"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.'"

The angel doesn't just hand John the scroll to read. He tells him to eat it. This is strange to modern readers, but it's deeply rooted in Old Testament imagery.

Old Testament Background: Ezekiel 2:8-3:3: The closest parallel is Ezekiel's calling as a prophet. God tells Ezekiel:

"But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it... Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3, ESV)

Ezekiel's scroll was also sweet as honey. But God warned him that the people he would speak to were "of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart" (Ezekiel 3:7). The message was sweet to receive but hard to deliver.

Jeremiah's Experience: Jeremiah also speaks of consuming God's Word. "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16, ESV). But Jeremiah's ministry was marked by suffering, rejection, and sorrow. The Word brought joy, but the calling brought pain.

What Does It Mean to Eat the Scroll? Eating represents total internalization. It's not enough to read God's Word or hear it preached. You have to take it in, digest it, let it become part of you. It has to nourish your soul and shape your identity.

Psalm 119:103 says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (ESV). God's Word is delicious. It satisfies. It brings joy.

But the angel warns John: it will also make your stomach bitter. The Word of God is a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). It brings comfort and conviction. It announces salvation and judgment. It's sweet to know God's truth, but it's bitter to proclaim it to a rebellious world.

Greek Insight: The word for "sweet" is *glykys*, the root of our English word "glucose." It means sweet, pleasant, delightful. The word for "bitter" is *pikrainō*, which means to embitter, to make sour or harsh. The contrast is sharp. Same scroll, two completely different experiences.

Verse 10: John Eats the Scroll

"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."

John does exactly what the angel said. He takes the scroll and eats it. And he experiences exactly what was predicted.

Sweet as Honey in His Mouth: The initial experience is pure delight. God's Word is good. It's true. It's beautiful. To know the mystery of God, to understand His plan, to see that He will triumph—this is joy.

When you first come to faith, the Word often feels overwhelmingly sweet. You can't get enough. You read the Bible for hours. Everything makes sense. You feel alive.

Even for seasoned believers, there are moments when a verse lands with fresh power, when a truth clicks into place, when the sweetness of God's grace overwhelms you. The Word is a treasure.

But When He Had Eaten It, His Stomach Was Made Bitter: The sweetness doesn't last. As the scroll settles in John's stomach, it turns bitter. Why?

Because God's Word includes hard truths. It speaks of judgment, wrath, and the destruction of the wicked. It calls people to repentance, and many refuse. It demands holiness, and we fall short. It reveals the depth of human rebellion and the cost of redemption.

For a prophet, the bitterness is even sharper. You carry a message that people don't want to hear. You speak truth, and they reject you. You warn of judgment, and they mock you. You love people enough to tell them the truth, and it breaks your heart when they turn away.

Jeremiah experienced this. He said, "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" ([Jeremiah 20:9](#), ESV). The Word was sweet, but the calling was bitter.

The Bitterness Is Not Optional: Notice that John can't have the sweetness without the bitterness. He can't eat the scroll halfway. He can't spit it out when it starts to turn. He has to

take it all in. That's what it means to be a faithful witness. You don't get to cherry-pick the easy parts of God's Word. You embrace the whole counsel of God.

Application for Today: We live in a culture that wants customized spirituality. People want the comforting verses without the convicting ones. They want grace without repentance, blessing without obedience, heaven without holiness.

But God's Word doesn't work that way. If you really take it in, it will be sweet and bitter. It will bring joy and sorrow, comfort and challenge, hope and heartbreak. And that's okay. That's what it means to live under the authority of Scripture.

Verse 11: The Renewed Commission

"And I was told, 'You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.'"

After John eats the scroll, he receives a commission. The word "again" is significant. John has already been prophesying. He's been writing down everything he's seen. But now he's told to prophesy again.

You Must: This isn't optional. It's not a suggestion. John doesn't get to decide whether he feels like prophesying. He has a divine mandate.

The same word appears in [Luke 24:44](#), when Jesus says, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." It's the language of necessity. God's plan requires it.

Prophesy: The Greek word is *prophēteuō*, which means to speak forth God's message. It's not just predicting the future. It's declaring God's truth, whether people want to hear it or not.

A prophet is a mouthpiece for God. He doesn't invent the message. He delivers it. John's job is to write down what he sees and hears, and to proclaim it to the world.

About Many Peoples and Nations and Languages and Kings: This phrase echoes [Revelation 5:9](#) and 7:9, where people from every tribe, language, people, and nation worship the Lamb. It shows the universal scope of God's message.

John's prophecy isn't limited to the seven churches of Asia Minor. It's not just for first-century believers. It's for the whole world. Every ethnicity, every culture, every political structure. Kings and commoners. The powerful and the powerless. Everyone needs to hear.

Old Testament Echo: Jeremiah 1:10: When God called Jeremiah, He said, "See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (ESV). Prophets speak to nations, not just individuals.

The Church's Mission: John's commission applies to the church today. We are called to prophesy—to speak God's Word—to every people group, every nation, every language. This is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). We go into all the world and make disciples.

The scroll is sweet because the gospel is good news. But it's bitter because the gospel includes judgment for those who reject it. We proclaim both. We don't water down the message to make it more palatable. We speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Why Sweet and Bitter Matters

It Reflects Reality: The gospel is sweet for those who believe. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, ESV). But it's bitter for those who reject Christ. "Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36, ESV).

It Shapes Our Witness: When we share the gospel, we should do it with both joy and tears. Joy because we're offering the sweetest news anyone could hear. Tears because we know some will reject it, and the consequences are eternal.

Paul had this heart. He said, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers" (Romans 9:2-3, ESV). He tasted the bitterness of loving people who rejected the gospel.

Practical Illustration: Medicine

Think of medicine that tastes good going down but makes your stomach upset. You know it's good for you, so you take it. You enjoy the flavor. But then the side effects hit, and you feel sick.

That's not a perfect analogy, because God's Word is always good. But it captures the idea that something can be pleasant in one way and painful in another. The Word delights your soul and convicts your conscience. It brings peace and also unsettles you. It comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.

Summary of Verses 8-11

John is commanded to take the scroll from the angel's hand and eat it. The scroll is sweet as honey in his mouth—God's Word is delightful, true, and satisfying. But it turns bitter in his stomach, because proclaiming God's truth involves declaring both grace and judgment, and many will reject the message. After eating the scroll, John receives a renewed commission: he must prophesy again to many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. This passage teaches us that fully receiving God's Word means internalizing it completely, embracing both its comfort and its challenge, and faithfully proclaiming it to the world, no matter the cost.

Conclusion

Revelation 10 delivers a message the church desperately needs to hear, both in the first century and today. Here it is in simple terms:

God is still in control. No matter how chaotic the world looks, no matter how powerful evil seems, God's authority covers everything. The angel's feet on sea and land make this visual. Nothing escapes His rule.

God keeps His promises. The oath in verses 5-7 seals this truth. What God announced through the prophets will be fulfilled. The mystery of God—His entire redemptive plan—will reach completion. You can count on it.

God reveals what we need, not everything we want. The sealed thunders teach us humility. We don't get every answer. We walk by faith, trusting God with what He hasn't shown us.

God's Word is both sweet and bitter. It brings joy and sorrow, comfort and conviction. To truly receive it means internalizing the whole message, not just the parts we like. And to faithfully proclaim it means speaking both grace and judgment.

God commissions His people to speak. John's mission is our mission. We must prophesy—declare God's truth—to every people group, every nation, every culture. The scope is global. The urgency is real.