Revelation 10

The Little Book: Sweet and Bitter

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God holds the end in His hand, and He has sworn by Himself that it will not be delayed forever. Before the last trumpet, His servant has to take the Word inside himself — sweet to receive, bitter to digest — and then go speak it to the whole world.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

REVELATION 10 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning
★ Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

1 And I saw another ⇄ mighty angel ◷ come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and ★ a rainbow was upon his head, and ▲ his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2 And he had in his hand a ⇄ little book open: and he set ▲ his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

3 And cried with a loud voice, ▲ as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, ⇄ seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the ⇄ seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the ⇄ seven thunders uttered, and Green write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And ▲ sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, ▲ who created heaven, and the things that therein are , and the earth, and the things that therein are , and the sea, and the things which are therein , ◷ that there should be time no longer:

7 But in the days of ◷ the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, ★ the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to ▲ his servants the prophets.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the ⇄ little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the ⇄ little book. And he said unto me, Green Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly ⇄ bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth ⇄ sweet as honey.

10 And I took the ⇄ little book out of the angel's hand, and ◷ ate it up; and it was in my mouth ⇄ sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was ⇄ bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Green Thou must prophesy again before ◷ many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ⇄ mighty angel
- **v1** ◷ come down from heaven
- **v1** ★ a rainbow was upon his head
- **v1** ▲ his face was as it were the sun
- **v2** ⇄ little book *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** ▲ his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth
- **v3** ▲ as when a lion roareth
- **v3** ⇄ seven thunders *(every occurrence)*
- **v4** Green Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered
- **v4** Green write them not
- **v6** ▲ sware by him that liveth for ever and ever
- **v6** ▲ who created heaven
- **v6** ◷ that there should be time no longer
- **v7** ◷ the voice of the seventh angel
- **v7** ★ the mystery of God should be finished
- **v7** ▲ his servants the prophets

- **v8** Go and take the little book
- **v9** Take it, and eat it up
- **v9** bitter *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** sweet as honey *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** ate it up
- **v11** Thou must prophesy again
- **v11** many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 10:1 (KJV)

[1]And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

Setting

Six trumpets have sounded, and the sixth ended with men who "did not repent" (9:20–21). Before the seventh trumpet (11:15), God pauses the action. Chapter 10 is an interlude, like the pause between the sixth and seventh seals (ch. 7). John is no longer watching from heaven's throne room; a mighty angel comes down to earth, and John himself is drawn into the scene.

Structure

- vv1–4 — **the strong angel and the seven thunders:** "another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud," with a rainbow on his head, a face "like the sun," and feet "like pillars of fire" (v1). He holds "a little book which was open" and sets his right foot on the sea and his left on the land (v2). He cries out "as when a lion roars," and the seven peals of thunder speak (v3). John is about to write, but a voice from heaven says, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them" (v4).
- vv5–7 — **the oath:** the angel lifts his right hand to heaven and swears "by Him who lives forever and ever," the Creator of heaven, earth and sea (vv5–6), "that there will be delay no longer" (v6). When the seventh angel sounds, "the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets" (v7).
- vv8–10 — **the little book eaten:** the voice from heaven tells John, "Go, take the book which is open" (v8). The angel says, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey" (v9). John eats it, and it is just as he was told (v10).
- v11 — **the commission:** "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

Repeated words

angel (vv1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10); heaven (vv1, 4, 5, 6, 8); sea (vv2, 5, 6, 8); little book / book (vv2, 8, 9, 10); seven peals of thunder (vv3, 4); voice (vv3, 4, 7, 8); bitter (vv9, 10); sweet as honey (vv9, 10).

Contrasts

Things to seal up (v4) ⟷ things to prophesy again (v11). The thunders kept secret (v4) ⟷ the mystery of God finished (v7). Sweet in the mouth ⟷ bitter in the stomach (vv9–10). The long patience of God ⟷ "delay no longer" (v6). One foot on the sea ⟷ one foot on the land (v2) — nothing outside His claim.

Chapter theme (my words)

God holds the end in His hand, and He has sworn by Himself that it will not be delayed forever. Before the last trumpet, His servant has to take the Word inside himself — sweet to receive, bitter to digest — and then go speak it to the whole world.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 10:6 (KJV)

6 And ▲ sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, ▲ who created heaven, and the things that therein are , and the earth, and the things that therein are , and the sea, and the things which are therein , ◷ that there should be time no longer:

Who is the strong angel? (v1)

Many readers see Jesus here: the cloud, the rainbow, the face like the sun and the feet like fire all echo the glorified Christ of 1:15–16 and the throne of 4:3. Guzik disagrees. He notes that angels are never clearly identified with Jesus in Revelation or the rest of the New Testament, and he leans toward Michael, because of the parallels with Daniel 12, where a heavenly figure swears an oath with hands raised toward heaven (Dan 12:7). Either way, Barclay says the angel "has come from the very presence of God." He carries heaven's glory. The rainbow points back to God's promise after the flood (Gen 9:13); mercy is still in the picture as judgment draws near.

Feet on sea and land (vv2–3)

Walvoord says the stance "indicates complete authority over the entire earthly situation." Clarke: his power "was universal." The roar like a lion fits the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5) and the God who "roars from Zion" (Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2). The little book is probably not the same as the sealed scroll of chapter 5; Guzik takes it as a shorter portion of God's plan that John must now receive and record. Walvoord notes that its contents are "nowhere revealed in Revelation."

The sealed thunders (v4)

This is the only thing in Revelation John hears and is forbidden to write. Guzik connects the thunders to the "voice of the LORD" of Psalm 29 and refuses to guess their content. Walvoord: "there are secrets which God has not seen fit to reveal to man at this time." Guzik counts this a lesson in humility for anyone who builds prophetic charts with confidence; Morris warns against acting as if everything has been revealed (Deut 29:29).

"Delay no longer" (vv5–7)

The KJV's "time no longer" does not mean time ceases; the word *chronos* here means the time of waiting is over. God has been patient (2 Pet 3:9), but the angel swears by the eternal Creator that the end is now set in motion — Guzik: "absolutely no turning back." The "mystery of God" is something that can be known only when God reveals it. Guzik takes it here as God's whole plan of the ages brought to completion, and possibly the answer to why God has allowed evil to run so long. Walvoord ties it to the Old Testament promises of God's kingdom on earth (Dan 2:44; 7:27). When the seventh trumpet sounds, the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord (11:15).

How to read the interlude

Guzik reads Revelation as future, in sequence, with chapter 10 a real pause before the final trumpet. Historicists have tied the angel and the little book to events in church history (often the Reformation and the open Bible); idealists see a timeless picture of how the church receives and proclaims God's Word in every age. All agree on the core: God's plan will be finished, and His servants must take in His Word and speak it.

Sweet and bitter (vv8–11)

John is told to *take* the book — the Word is offered, but he must reach for it. Eating the scroll echoes Ezekiel (Ezek 2:8–3:3) and Jeremiah (Jer 15:16). Johnson: eating it "symbolized the reception of the Word of God into the innermost being." Swete calls revelation "bitter-sweet": it discloses mercy and judgment both. It is sweet to know God's Word and see His victory; it is bitter to know what is coming on a world that will not repent. Mounce (in Guzik) sees the bitterness as the ordeal believers must pass through before final triumph. Then the commission: "prophesy again" — not to one empire or only to the church, but to "many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (v11). Chapter 11's two witnesses will show what that costs.

Word study (Greek)

- **strong — *ischyros* (G2478):** mighty, powerful.
- **angel — *angelos* (G32):** messenger.
- **cloud — *nephelē* (G3507):** a cloud; often the sign of God's presence (Exod 13:21; Acts 1:9).
- **rainbow — *iris* (G2463):** rainbow, as around the throne (4:3).
- **little book — *biblaridion* (G974):** a small scroll.
- **thunder — *brontē* (G1027):** thunder; the voice of God's power (Ps 29:3).
- **seal up — *sphragizō* (G4972):** to seal, to keep secret.
- **swore — *omnyō* (G3660):** to take an oath.
- **delay / time — *chronos* (G5550):** a span of time; here, the waiting period.

- **mystery — *mystērion* (G3466):** a secret known only by God's revealing it.
- **finished — *teleō* (G5055):** to complete, bring to its goal.
- **preached — *euangelizō* (G2097):** to announce good news.
- **eat — *katesthiō* (G2719):** to eat up, devour.
- **bitter — *pikrainō* (G4087):** to make bitter.
- **sweet — *glykys* (G1099):** sweet.
- **prophesy — *prophēteuō* (G4395):** to speak forth God's message.

Cross-references

Gen 9:13–16; Exod 13:21; Deut 29:29; Ps 19:10; Ps 29:3–9; Ps 119:103; Jer 15:16; Ezek 1:28; Ezek 2:8–3:3, 14; Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; Dan 12:4–9; Joel 3:16; Amos 3:7–8; Matt 24:14; Rom 16:25–26; Eph 3:3–9; 2 Pet 3:9; Rev 1:15–16; Rev 4:3; Rev 5:1–5; Rev 11:15.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 10:7 (KJV)

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Command to obey — "Take it and eat it."

The Word is held out to John, but he has to go get it and swallow it (vv8–9). Reading about the Bible is not eating the Bible. I'll stop skimming and chew on one passage today until it gets inside me. That's what I want for the men I disciple, too — not a verse on the wall, but the Word in the gut, where it has to be when the craving comes at 2 a.m.

Sin to confess — wanting to know more than God has said

John was told to seal up the thunders (v4). I confess I'm often more curious about what God hasn't told me than obedient to what He has. I spend energy on charts and dates and speculation while the plain commands go undone (Deut 29:29).

Warning to heed — the delay will end

God's patience is real, but it is not forever (v6; 2 Pet 3:9). Every man who thinks, "I'll get right with God later," is betting on a delay that has been sworn to end. I need to say that plainly — to myself first, and then to the men I serve.

Promise to trust — "the mystery of God is finished."

God will finish what He started (v7; Phil 1:6). The questions I can't answer about suffering and evil will not stay open forever. For the man in a prison cell or a halfway house who feels his life is one long delay, God has not lost the thread. His plan will be completed, and those who are His will see it.

Example to follow — John, who ate the bitter book and still went

The Word was sweet to him and then bitter, and God still said, "You must prophesy again" (v11). Telling men the truth — about sin, about judgment, about Christ — is sweet and bitter for me too. I'll follow John: take it in, feel the weight, and speak anyway, with love.

Worship

The angel swears by "Him who lives forever and ever," who made heaven, earth and sea and everything in them (v6). Nothing in all of it is outside His claim. I worship the Creator who keeps His word and finishes His plan.

Prayer

Lord God, Creator of heaven and earth, thank You that Your Word is sweet as honey. Make me hungry to take it and eat it, not just read it. Keep me humble about what You have not revealed, and obedient to what You have. Give me courage to speak the bitter truth with Your sweet grace to the men You've put in front of me, before the delay is over. Amen.