When God Breaks His Silence
Revelation 10:1-11

It is not uncommon for someone to ask: “Why does God allow sin to prevail? Why does He allow Satan to deceive and destroy? When will God put an end to all the corruption and confusion in the world? If God is all He claims to be—all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present—why has He remained silent for so long and let Satan run amuck over society?

When God is silent, He is angry; I never want to reduce God to a human level, though God did that Himself in the person of Jesus Christ; however, have you ever been so angry that you just walked away and said nothing? You just took some time to cool off? Maybe that is what God does; His silence reveals His anger until He finally takes action; then too, God is very patient and longsuffering.

In the days when the Gentile nations were holding up the rebuilding of the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, God tells the Gentile nations to be silent; He is angry; He calls for the Jews to sing because He is going to give them a great future once their Messiah comes (Zechariah 2:10); but He tells the Gentile nations: “Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation” (Zechariah 2:13); why is God so angry? It is for the nations’ sins and for their treatment of His people Israel; the command for silence was the lull before the storm (see Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7).

The Lord promised a day when His silence will be broken; that day is when the seventh angel finishes blowing the seventh trumpet that will sound throughout the second half of the great Tribulation; that trumpet sound is the third of the three “woe” judgments; but those judgments do not come until we get to chapter 16 in our study; once the final “woe” is finished the great mystery of a silent God will end and all the councils and all the purposes of God concerning men and the world will be consummated; Christ will come; His kingdom will be established on earth; Satan will be cast into a bottomless
pit; truth and righteousness and justice will prevail and Christ will be King over the whole earth.

At the same time, God’s curse over the earth will be lifted; the desert will bloom like a rose; broken hopes, broken dreams, broken families, broken lives, broken friendships will be healed; all the mockers who tell us, “Where is His coming?” will be silenced!

What signals this? The sound of the seventh trumpet; we don’t read about that trumpet sound until chapter 11:14; the sound of the seventh trumpet is cause for celebration in heaven, but a time of great woe for those unbelievers on the earth.

The text reads: “The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever?’ And the twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshipped...’” (Revelation 11:14-16).

What was the message in their praise? They are grateful that God is no longer silent; they are thankful that He will come to earth and He will reign over the earth; that His wrath will consume the angry nations; and that He will reward His servants and prophets and all who fear Him (see 11:17-18). There is hope for the believer in the sound of the final trumpet, but it’s “woe” to those who believe not!

As we begin our study of chapter 10, it is an interlude between the sound of the sixth and seventh trumpet; we have seen these interludes before; between the sixth and seventh seal there was a pause in the action; its purpose is to give hope to the believer after the devastating effects of the first six seals; here again in chapter 10, after the horrors of six trumpets blasting judgments on the earth, there is another pause of hope; this interlude comes before the full effects of the seventh trumpet are felt which is the third and final “woe;” once the seventh trumpet does sound there is poured out on the earth seven bowls of wrath; these interludes are like a gasp of breath in which God can comfort His people in the midst of the fury of His judgments; these interludes are to remind people that God is still sovereign, His people are still remembered, and they will ultimately be victorious.
As we begin our study of chapter ten, it is the longest of the interludes and it comes between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpet; it takes in all of chapter 10 to the end of chapter 15; while the seventh angel sounds his trumpet in 11:15, we don’t see its effects until chapter 16.

The Appearance of the Mighty Angel (10:1-4)

The presence of another angel... “I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven...” (10:1a); John has a vision of another mighty angel; this is not one of the trumpeting angels but another strong angel; some see this angel as Jesus Christ, but I do not agree; Jesus is never referred to as an angel in the New Testament; but another reason I do not believe this angel is Jesus is that this angel is referred to as “another” angel; the word in Greek is *allon*, which means “another of the same kind;” if Jesus were the angel, the word translated “another” should be *heteros*, which means “another of a different kind.”

The book of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus is exalted above the angels; Hebrews says, “For which of the angels did He say: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You?’” And again I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?” (Hebrews 1:5); then again He says, “Let all the angels worship Him” (Hebrews 1:6). Jesus is worshipped by the angels! He is superior to them all for He is the Son of God; so we must conclude this angel is another one of God’s mighty angels that has been sent on a mission from out of heaven; he comes straight from the presence of God and from the Risen Christ.

The particulars of his appearance... “He is clothed with the cloud, and a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire” (10:1b).

1. His clothing reveals his glory... “He is clothed with a cloud...;” The clouds comprise his robe, the drapery of the sky floats over his mighty shoulders; clouds become a symbol of the glory of God’s presence; it was the psalmist who said that God is the One “who makes the cloud His chariot” (Psalm 104:3b); this angel is moving through the sky on the chariot of God; his presence and his glory accompany this angel in his mission.

2. His crown of a rainbow reveals his promise of hope... “…and a rainbow was on his head...;” the word rainbow in the Greek language is *iris*;
the goddess messenger in Greek mythology was named Iris; this word came to represent the splendor of this Greek goddess and came to refer to a halo surrounding someone; this angel is surrounded by a rainbow colored halo which will show off the beauty of this angel.

However, we are used to identifying a rainbow with God’s covenant promises; this angel comes to offer hope in the midst of a critical situation about to happen once the seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet; you will remember after the great Flood in the days of Noah, that God gave the sign of the rainbow to Noah that never again would He destroy the earth with a flood (Genesis 9:11-17); so this angel with the rainbow on his head is a messenger of promise to the godly that though judgment is coming, God’s promises will never be obliterated; He will honor His Word to His people.

3. His countenance reveals his radiance… “His face was like the sun…;” this angel comes from the presence of God and his face is shining like the sun; remember when Moses came down from Mount Sinai carrying the two tablets that contained the Ten Commandments having been in the presence of God? The text says “the skin of his face shone” and he had to put a veil on his face to speak to the people for the people were afraid to come near him (Exodus 34:29-35); when we get to Revelation 18:1, we will meet “another angel, coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory;” so this angel too has a face that shines like the sun; he came from being in God’s presence.

4. His constitution reveals his swiftness to bring judgment… “and his feet like pillars of fire;” not only does this angel come to announce hope to the godly, but to announce judgment to the ungodly; his fiery feet speak of judgment and that judgment will be the incineration of the ungodly; the prophet Malachi says the godly will be spared to walk on the ashes of those who have been destroyed (Malachi 4:3); firm, stable pillars of God’s vengeance are represented in the legs and feet of this angel as he executes judgment.

The possession of the little book… “He had a little open book in his hand…” (10:2a); we ask, “What is this little book?” it is called a book because it is the Greek word biblio, where we get the word Bible; however, the same word in the Greek is used to speak of the seven sealed scroll in the right hand of the Father who sat on the throne and only the Lamb was worthy to take that scroll and break open its seals and reveal its contents (5:1-7); therefore, there are
those who teach this “little book” in the hand of the mighty angel is that same scroll in the hand of the Lamb of God and a reason why they believe this angel is Jesus.

Since we believe this angel is not Jesus, and only Jesus is worthy to open the seals and reveal the contents of the seven sealed scroll, we believe this “little book” is not that scroll; whatever the little book is, it is open for John to see; the Greek wording here is emphatic—the little book is open and remains open.

While this little book is not the scroll in the hand of Jesus, could it contain the judgments found in the seven sealed scroll? Could all the final elements of history now be made known to John from this little book—the seven seal judgments, the seven trumpet judgments, the seven bowl judgments? In verse 11, John is told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.” John has just seen in this open book everything that is going to happen during the great Tribulation; he is to proclaim to all the world the judgments that are yet to come; how might he do that? We will see a little later in our study, but first let’s get back to this strong angel holding this open little book.

The place where he is standing... “...he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land... (10:2b); this angel must be of massive proportions in John’s vision; he can stand on land and sea.

What is the point? Satan has controlled the earth and the sea; he has been the prince of the world, the usurper, but now in this massive angel, God puts His foot down; he puts his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth; God is taking back His creation; as the psalmist wrote, “The earth is the LORD’s and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters” (Psalms 24:1-2); the action of the angel to put one foot on the sea and another on the earth is to demonstrate God’s sovereign authority in judgment over the whole earth; it is a symbolic anticipation of what will come when the seventh trumpet sounds and the seven bowls of wrath are poured out on the earth; this little book is God breaking His silence!

Let's put all this in perspective; the first series of judgments from the fourth seal revealed one fourth of the earth was affected (6:7); the second series of judgments in the sounding of the sixth trumpet affected a third of mankind
(9:15); now, with this massive angel putting his feet on the sea and on the earth, it suggests all the earth will be affected with what is to come.

_The power of his voice..._ “...and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices...” (10:3); when the angel spoke, it was like the roar of a lion, it was like the sound of seven peals of thunder all breaking the sky at once; it was an unmistakable sound that John would never forget.

_The privacy of his message..._ “Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them’” (10:4); there was a message in those seven thunders; and we learn elsewhere in Revelation that thunder is a harbinger of judgment (6:1; 8:5); John was ready to write down what he heard from the powerful voice of the angel, but another voice from heaven tells him not to do so.

What John does write is pretty frightening, but how much more so must be that which he is told not to write; he is told to “seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered;” it is reminiscent of Daniel who was told that the morning and evening visions he had were true but they were to be kept secret for they refer to many days in the future (Daniel 8:26-27); again, he was told to seal up the words which he heard for they were meant for the end times (Daniel 12:9); God told Jeremiah, “The anger of the LORD has not turned back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly” (Jeremiah 23:20); there are times when God does not want us to know everything because we just cannot handle it; there are things God has sealed up where it will only be understood in the end times; in other words, the accomplishments of science and the unfolding of history in the end times will make some prophecies understandable, that people living earlier in time will not understand.

For now, John is told not write down what he has heard in the seven peals of thunder, however, when we come to the end of Revelation we read of an angel who said to John: “Do not seal the words of this prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand” (22:11); maybe after all, the message in the seven peals of thunder were recorded but only to be understood in the last days.
The Announcement of the Mighty Angel (10:5-7)

_The swearing of the mighty angel..._ “The angel that I saw standing on the sea and the land raised up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer” (10:5-7).

The angel who now holds the little book in his left hand, lifts his right hand as a pledge to the Creator of the universe; he is making a vow to God and he is vowing to speak the truth; while both Jesus and James said we should “swear not at all” (Matthew 5:34-35), or as James put it, we should not swear either by heaven or earth or with any other oath, but let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no” (James 5:12); that is, we should be known for telling the truth so that no swearing is necessary.

Yet, this angel is making a vow to God; as a holy angel he is acting on behalf of God and declaring that he will only do what is right; his ministry is so serious that he is pledging to God to be a faithful servant and do what he is asked to do.

_The speech of the mighty angel..._

1. Concerning the _decision_ to delay no longer... “…there should be no more delay...” (10:5b); here is the answer to the question, “When will God do something about evil?” The question of the martyrs in heaven is now being answered; these martyrs from out of the great Tribulation who were praying under the altar, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (6:10); now they get the answer they want to hear.

There had been delay in God’s judgment so that the lost would have more time to repent (2 Peter 3:1-9); as to the answer to the martyrs’ prayer, it was one of delay; they were told, “they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed” (6:11b); evidently that number of martyrs is filling up and there will be no more delay.
2. Concerning the *days* of the seventh trumpet... “...but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished...” (10:7a);

What happens when the seventh trumpet sounds? When we go to chapter 11:13 we read, “Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever!'” That is the mystery connected with the seventh trumpet; what is about to be revealed is the end of evil; there will be the destruction of godless sinners and the kingdom of God will come to earth and Christ shall begin His eternal reign.

There are many mysteries revealed in the NT; a mystery is that which was hidden in times past; the NT reveals the mystery of Israel’s blindness (Romans 11); the mystery of the rapture (1 Corinthians 15); the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3); the mystery of Christ in you (Colossians 1); the mystery of godliness—that God and man are one in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 3); the mystery of God’s plan to solve the problem of evil; in 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul writes of the mystery of lawlessness; he says that evil will increase until the world is ripe for judgment (vss. 7-12); that is what the mystery of the seventh trumpet is all about; evil has increased to the point that the world is ripe for judgment and the solution is the destruction of the wicked and the coming kingdom of God to earth!

3. Concerning the *declaration* given to the prophets... “...as He declared to His servants the prophets” (10:7b); it is true that the prophets knew something of Christ’s coming earthly kingdom; they saw it coming; Daniel saw it, Isaiah saw it, Joel saw it, Zechariah saw it, they all saw it; but much was hidden as to the details and they are now being revealed to John; the mystery of lawlessness and how and when God will deal with it is no longer a mystery! It comes when God can no longer put up with the increased evil on the earth and it comes with the sounding of the seventh trumpet.
The Assimilation of the Little Book by John (10:8-11)

The command for John to eat the little book... “Then the voice that I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, ‘Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.’ So I went to the angel and said to him, ‘Give me the little book.’ And he said to me, “Take and eat it....” (10:8-9a).

John is given an unusual assignment, to take the little book from the hand of the mighty angel and eat it; it reminds me of the story in the book of Ezekiel where Ezekiel fell on his face when he saw the likeness of the appearance of the glory of God; he was told to stand on his feet and God would speak to him and fill him with His Spirit; God was calling him to be a prophet to Israel; he was then handed a scroll written on both sides with lamentations and woes and then told to eat the scroll; Ezekiel opened his mouth and ate it and it was sweet as honey (Ezekiel 2-3).

What was the purpose of Ezekiel eating the scroll? The scroll contained the Word of God and if you are going to speak and write the Word of God you must be filled with the Word of God; it was then Ezekiel set his face to do the will of God; this was like Jeremiah who said: “Your words were found and I ate them, and Your word to me was the joy and the rejoicing of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16); it was Jesus who said, “Men shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4); so John, like Ezekiel and Jeremiah before him, is commanded to eat the little book which contains the Word of God.

The consumption of the little book... “‘Take it and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.’ Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was a sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter” (10:9b-10).

The Word of God is both sweet and bitter; it is sweet to know there is forgiveness for sin; it is sweet to know that God is sovereign and in control when we think of a world out of control; it is sweet to know that God has a plan to deal with evil; it is sweet to know that Christ is coming back again; when David wrote of the word of God he said, “How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psalm 119:103).
But once John consumed the Word of God it gave him a stomach ache; it was bitter to his stomach; God’s word is only bitter to those who know Him not; and while there is rejoicing in heaven because God has broken His silence as He will be dealing harshly with sin and with the Antichrist and the False Prophet, yet, when the seventh trumpet sounds, the events that come from that seventh trumpet will be bitter to those living on earth at that time; God’s judgments and wrath will be poured out in seven bowls of wrath before the Lord comes in all His glory; we must never forget: God’s Word is both sweet to the taste but bitter to the stomach.

*The call to prophecy to the nation*… “And he said to me, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings’” (10:11); John has seen in the open little book that was in the hand of the mighty angel all the events of the great Tribulation as well as the coming of the Lord; He was told to take the book and eat it; Chuck Missler wrote: “Taking and knowing God’s Word is not enough. Assimilation is essential.”

John, by eating the little book, has assimilated the Word of God; now he is told to prophecy its message to the whole world; how did he do that? He gave us the book of Revelation; a book that has been read around the world by paupers and kings alike; it has been a blessing to those who know the Lord for it is sweet to the mouth, but a book that is bitter to the stomach to those who know not Christ; it is a book that tells us the silence of God will be broken and in the end God will deal with evil—and deal with it harshly; but He will also bring victory to those who are the overcomers and that victory is in the coming of Jesus Christ! Amen!