

The Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll **(Revelation 10:1-11)**

The future events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ will include three series of seven judgments—seven Seal Judgments, seven Trumpet Judgments, and seven Bowl Judgments. These judgments will increase in frequency and intensity as the end approaches. John describes these judgments in sequence, but at times interjects additional information that makes those final days more comprehensible. Through a number of interludes we become more aware of those future events. Revelation 10:1-11 presents one of these interludes, a vision about a mighty angel and a little scroll. Through this interlude we're reminded that God's plan for this world will be fulfilled just as He promised. We can trust God because Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is Lord.

The mighty angel—the Lord's righteous judgment on this world will be accomplished (10:1-4).

In the Lord's revelation to John there appeared a mighty angel whose message is one of divine authority over the world.

John saw a mighty, glorious angel descending from heaven (10:1).

John states that he saw in his prophetic visions "another mighty angel." This angel was similar to, though distinct from, an angel he'd seen previously in his visions (Revelation 5:2). Angels are often attributed with great strength. This particular angel also displayed a glorious appearance. He descended from heaven and was clothed with a cloud. Clouds often refer to the glory of God, so it's not surprising that an angel coming from the presence of God would be arrayed in such a way. This angel also had a rainbow above his head, a reminder of God's merciful promise to preserve the earth in the face of worldwide judgment (Genesis 9:13). In spite of future judgments God will preserve His people and restore the world He created. The mighty angel's face radiated like the sun and his feet shone like pillars of fire. This is truly a glorious angelic being. Because of this glorious description some commentators have identified this angel with Jesus Christ, but Jesus is never referred to as an angel in the New Testament and this angel is compared to another similar angelic being. This mighty angel, coming from the presence of God, will reflect the glory of God in his appearance and mission.

The mighty angel was holding a little scroll and planted his feet on the land and the sea (10:2).

In the hand of the mighty angel was a little scroll. Unlike the sealed scroll in Revelation 5:1, this scroll was already open indicating that its message would transpire without delay. The prophet Ezekiel received a similar scroll that announced impending sorrow (Ezekiel 2:9-10). The little scroll in the hand of the mighty angel may have contained a similar message. The mighty angel, having descended from heaven, stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. This stance reveals authority over the entire earth. The mighty angel, as God's representative messenger, thereby declared the Lord's universal authority.

The mighty angel cried out in a loud voice that prompted the seven thunders to speak (10:3).

The mighty angel demonstrated his divinely-appointed authority not only by his stance but also with his voice. He cried out in a loud voice that resembled the roar of a lion. Other prophets compared the voice of God to the roar of a lion (Hosea 11:10; Amos 3:8), so the mighty angel's voice revealed a powerful message from God. When the mighty angel shouted, "the seven thunders" also spoke with their own voices. Again, God's voice has been compared to the sound of thunder (Job 37:5; Psalm 29:3; John 12:28-29). The "seven" thunders likely refer to the completeness of God's thunderous declaration regarding the final judgments on the earth.

A voice from heaven instructed John not to write what the seven thunders said (10:4).

The actual content of the message of the seven thunders remains a secret. John had prepared to write the message of the seven thunders, but a voice from heaven—probably that of the Father or the Son—instructed John to "seal" what the seven thunders said, that is, to refrain from writing what had been revealed. The prophet Daniel received prophecies about the future with a similar charge to seal these prophecies until their appointed time arrived (Daniel 12:4, 9). Paul likewise received revelation that he was forbidden to share (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). God tells us just what we need to know at the time we need to know it. But there are many aspects of God's plan that remain a mystery. What isn't a mystery is the fact that God will accomplish His righteous judgment on the earth. This He has revealed for all to know.

The mystery of God—the Lord's grand plan for this world will be fulfilled (10:5-7).

While some aspects of God's plan remain a mystery, other elements have been revealed for our instruction and reverence. God has revealed that He has a plan for this world and this grand plan will be fulfilled.

The mighty angel swore a solemn oath that there would be no further delay (10:5-6).

John's attention returned to the mighty angel and his powerful message. This angel, whose feet stood on the land and the sea, lifted his right hand to heaven as a way of signifying a solemn oath. In order to affirm the veracity of his message the angel swore by the one who lives forever and ever, the one who created the heavens, the earth, the seas, and everything in them. God Himself was the witness to the angel's declaration. This declaration was simple. "There will be no more delay!" Some translations say, "Time will be no more," but this declaration doesn't refer to time as we know it, the cessation of time in favor of eternity. Instead it means that time had run its course, that the time of Jesus' return was ever so near. The martyrs around the throne in heaven had asked, "How long?" (Revelation 6:10). The declaration by the mighty angel answered that question. There would be no more delay. The Lord Jesus Christ had already displayed great patience and grace. The time had come for His return.

The mighty angel declared that the mystery of God will soon be completed (10:7).

The mighty angel explained his declaration by connecting the rapid race toward the return of Jesus Christ with the sounding of the final Trumpet Judgment. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet “the mystery of God will be fulfilled.” A mystery in Scripture refers to divine truth that is revealed according to God’s timetable. The mystery of which the mighty angel spoke had been proclaimed as good news by God’s “servants and prophets,” so this particular mystery has been known since the days of the Old Testament. The fact that the angel used the word for “good news” means that this mystery has positive ramifications for God’s people. It refers to the arrival of God’s kingdom on earth. The ancient prophets foretold this event and now there would be no further delay. God’s kingdom would come with the second advent of Jesus Christ. The Lord’s grand plan for this world will be fulfilled in His time and in His way.

**The little scroll—the Lord’s bittersweet
word will continue to strengthen His people (10:8-11).**

The Lord’s righteous judgment will be accomplished and His grand plan for the world will be fulfilled. The message in the little scroll, therefore, anticipates these events and served to strengthen John as a messenger of these truths. God’s Word, though in many ways bittersweet, still strengthens God’s people today.

The voice from heaven instructed John to take the little scroll from the hand of the mighty angel (10:8).

At this point a voice from heaven spoke “again” with John, hinting that this was the voice of God (compare verse 4). The voice instructed John to approach the mighty angel, the one whose stance spanned the sea and the land, and take the open scroll from his hand. To approach such a glorious being must have been a frightening experience!

The mighty angel told John to devour the little scroll, warning that it would be sweet in his mouth but turn bitter in his stomach (10:9).

John obeyed the voice from heaven, approached the mighty angel, and requested the little scroll. The mighty angel instructed John to take the scroll and devour it. The scroll would become bitter in John’s stomach although it would be as sweet as honey in his mouth. Ezekiel received a similar command to eat a scroll that was sweet to the taste and thereby absorb its contents to declare to others (Ezekiel 3:1-3). Jeremiah found that God’s words were a delight to him in the midst of suffering (Jeremiah 15:16). David described the commands of God as sweeter than honey (Psalms 19:10; 119:103). God’s Word is sweet to His people even when it contains harsh messages of judgment because we value God’s holiness and justice.

John took and devoured the scroll and it was indeed sweet in his mouth but turned bitter in his stomach (10:10).

John did as the mighty angel said. He took the little scroll and devoured it. It indeed tasted as sweet as honey in his mouth. But in his stomach it became bitter. The truth of God's Word is a delight to His people. However, God's judgment is a bitter reality. Just as John would find courage and strength to continue his ministry through the words of the little scroll, so we can renew our strength through God's Word—devoured and obeyed!

John was instructed to continue to prophesy about many people, nations, tongues, and kings (10:11).

Having devoured the little scroll, John now received a renewed commission. The source of the voice (literally "voices") that spoke to him at this moment is unclear, but this was certainly a message from God. John was to continue to prophesy about "many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." Having already received so many powerful images of God's future judgment it's understandable that John's resolve as a prophet may have weakened. Therefore, God bolstered John's courage by impressing on him the need to continue his prophetic work. While dire disasters had already been revealed, even more difficult days were yet to come "without delay" as the return of Jesus Christ drew near. Jesus is coming again. The Lamb is Lord. God's plan for this world will be fulfilled just as He promised. We can trust God because Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is Lord.