

Unlocking Revelation

The Bittersweet Book

Revelation 10 is another interlude, or break in a sequence of events. This time it is a break, to the sequence of the seven trumpets. Something significant is about to happen in the period of history which follows the sixth trumpet. It is so significant that John is told not to write, but to eat up what he hears.

A Mighty Angel

The first picture we see is “a mighty angel” (Revelation 10:1). The word “angel” in the Greek denotes more than just a literal angel. It means one who is sent to “bring tidings; a messenger or pastor” (see *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, #32).

This means that there are occasions in Revelation when the word “angel” denotes a “pastor” (see Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Also in the prophetic book of Daniel, Christ, the “Son of Man” is represented as an “angel” (Daniel 3:25, 28; Revelation 1:13). And earlier in Revelation He is symbolized as an angel, though He is *not* a created being (see Revelation 8:2-5; John 1:1, 14).

It is the same in Revelation 10. The “mighty angel” represents Jesus, symbolized as such because He is coming as a “messenger” to “bring tidings.”¹ Here are some reasons why this “messenger” represents Christ and not a literal angel:

1. The angel comes “down from heaven clothed with a cloud” as Christ is pictured as doing (see Numbers 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:4).
2. “A rainbow is upon his head” as when Ezekiel sees the “glory of the Lord” (Ezekiel 1:28).
3. “His face was as it were the sun” as Christ’s (see Revelation 1:16).
4. “His feet as pillars of fire” as Christ’s (see Revelation 1:15).

¹ When comparing the appearance of the “certain man” in Daniel 10:5, 6 with the “Son of man” in Revelation 1:13-16 and the “mighty angel” in Revelation 10:1, it becomes clear that these verses are describing the same being, Jesus Christ. We should not conclude from this that Christ is a created being or angel but rather that He, being the Son of God and thus God in the person of His Son, is also a “mighty” messenger between heaven and earth. This is consistent with the Greek rendering for “angel” and with other descriptions of Christ in the Bible where Jesus is identified as “Michael” the “great prince” which stands up for His people (Daniel 12:1; 10:13, 21). The angels of heaven are called “His angels” and He is called the “arch” or chief angel (Revelation 12:7; Jude 1:9; compare John 5:27, 28 with 1 Thessalonians 4:16). Yet this does not make Him a created angel, just like the President is “commander in chief” of the armed forces and yet is not an enlisted soldier. Revelation also uses the “angel” terminology to picture Christ ministering before God in behalf of the saints (Revelation 8:3-5). Christ is represented in numerous symbols; i.e., a shepherd, bread, manna, messenger, which do not detract from His Deity but rather give insight to His ministry in behalf of mankind.

Stephen was stoned, signaling the rejection of the gospel by the Jews as a nation. Before His departure Christ had told His disciples to go first to the house of Israel (see Matthew 10:6; 13:46). After the stoning of Stephen the early church was “scattered abroad” and went “every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Placement Endorsed in New Testament

The apostle Paul adds his endorsement to the placement of this time prophecy when he says, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time [set or proper time] Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6, words in brackets from the Greek definition).

And again, speaking of Christ’s great sacrifice in our behalf, he says, “Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time [set or proper time]” (1 Timothy 2:6; words in brackets from the Greek definition).

Christ rebuked the Pharisees because they boasted to have great knowledge yet did not “discern this time [set or proper time]” prophecy as it applied to the coming of the Messiah (Luke 12:56; words in brackets from the Greek definition).

Speaking to false christs and religious teachers bearing false messages, Jesus warned that many would come saying, “the time draweth near” (Luke 21:8). The word *time* is the same word “set or proper time,” as used in the previous verses. Christ’s warning speaks of those who would try to remove the placement of Daniel’s prophecy to the future.

The Sanctuary to be Cleansed

So far we have covered the first 490 years of the 2300-day-for-a-year prophecy. There remains 1810 years from 34 A.D. Counting down 1810 years, we come to the year 1844, the time when the sanctuary was to “be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14).

What happened in 1844—one of the greatest religious awakenings recorded in history? It started with a baptist preacher by the name of William Miller. He and others in various countries began to preach a message based upon the prophecies of Daniel. The central focus of Miller’s preaching was the 2300-day-for-a-year prophecy which he first believed would end around 1843. The accuracy and simplicity of his messages awakened multitudes. Even infidels were converted by a fulfillment of a day-for-a-year prophecy predicting the fall of the Ottoman Empire (see Revelation 9 study).

William Miller made only one mistake. The common view held among Bible scholars of his day was that the sanctuary was the earth. Therefore He taught and believed that Christ was to come to the earth at the conclusion of this time period to cleanse it by destroying sin and taking His faithful home to heaven with Him.

After some minor disappointments and recalculations, the final date was set for October 22, 1844. Thousands were anticipating the advent of their Lord. Crops went ungathered, fields were left unplowed. All who had heard and believed this wonderful message awaited the promise with sweet expectation. As morning turned to evening and then to midnight gloom, a bitter disappointment came upon even the most hopeful. Thus were

fulfilled the words of prophecy, “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” (Revelation 10:10).

The little book was the book of Daniel, once sealed but now open. Its prophecies had been prayerfully studied by multitudes of Bible students and scholars throughout the world. The message was sweet in their mouths, but the disappointment was bitter to the stomach. Only a small handful of the thousands who had believed remained faithful to the message. “What had gone wrong?” they wondered, while their former brethren betrayed the truth and the world mocked them. They were soon to find the key which would unlock this heavenly message.

The Sanctuary in Heaven

“And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God and the altar, and them that worship therein. . . . And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament” (Revelation 10:11; 11:1, 19).

God’s people had misunderstood the temple to be cleansed. They had fallen into bitter disappointment, but now they were encouraged to rise from the ruin and obscurity of humiliation. They were to bring their mental faculties to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and awaken to the true understanding of the sanctuary to be cleansed.

God had a temple in heaven which was to be cleansed. The close of this prophetic period, the longest in the Bible, pointed to the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven in connection with God’s professed people on earth.

Christ could not come, would not come until the entire world, “peoples, and nations and tongues, and kings” had been given an opportunity to realize that now, in the courts of heaven, we have a faithful high priest (see Hebrews 8:1); that He is “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:2); that He died for our sins on Calvary’s cruel cross to purchase forgiveness for all; that He stands now as our “Advocate” in the courts of heaven with the power of His blood to cleanse the sins of the “whole world” (1 John 2:1, 2).

A Closing Thought

And so the message of Revelation 10 is Jesus Christ and Him crucified for our sins. It is a message that not only brings to light His atoning blood shed for all mankind two thousand years ago, but also points to His priestly mediation in the heavenly sanctuary now. His great sacrifice made in our behalf is available for the chief of sinners who will accept Him as Substitute and Surety, as Savior and Lord. May this be your desire through His grace. Amen.



“Certain man” lifts up hands “unto heaven” (Daniel 12:7).	“Son of man” lifts “hand to heaven” (Revelation 10:5).
“Certain man” “sware by Him that liveth for ever” (Daniel 12:7).	“Son of man” “sware by Him that liveth for ever” (Revelation 10:6).
“Certain man” gives several “time” prophecies (Daniel 12:7, 11, 12).	“Son of man” says “that there shall be time no longer” (Revelation 10:6).

The fact that the mighty messenger goes through the same motions in Revelation 10 as He does in Daniel 12 makes the connection between the two sections of Scripture undeniable. The climax of His motions in Revelation 10 is the announcement that an end has come to the time prophecies during which the book of Daniel would be sealed to our understanding. Now the book of Daniel “stands” in its “lot” or place of destiny to bear its message to the world at the end of time (Daniel 12:13).

The conclusion of this parallel is tremendous. The “little book” that is “open” in Revelation 10 is the only one that was ever closed or “sealed”; it is the little prophetic book of Daniel. The book of Daniel was sealed for a certain amount of time, now there is “time no longer.” The prophetic time periods come to an end. According to what Daniel was told, we have come to the “time of the end” when many would “run to and fro” in the Bible, and “knowledge” of his visions would “be increased” (Daniel 12:4).

Therefore the mighty messenger of Revelation 10 stands upon “land” and “sea,” rather than just “waters of the river,” indicating a much broader proclamation of the message is now to be given (see Revelation 10:11).

The increase of knowledge in the visions of Daniel is enhanced through combining Daniel and Revelation together. These two books discuss many of the same subjects, using some identical symbols, and thus they complement each other.

The Seven Thunders

The central focus of Revelation 10 is the “little book” that is described as being “open” (Revelation 10:1, 2). It reveals a message, symbolized as the “seven thunders,” which “a voice from heaven” tells John not to “write” (Revelation 10:3, 4). In verses 8-10 the “little book” is mentioned again. This time John is told by the same “voice” “from heaven” to “take” the little book and “eat it up” (Revelation 10:8, 9). Though we are not told directly what the “seven thunders” are, if we follow the logical sequence we can come to a pretty good conclusion.

1. The “seven thunders” are a message from a “little book” that was sealed and is now open (Daniel 12:4; Revelation 10:2, 4, 8-10).
2. They are a message that was not to be understood by John writing it out, but rather by experience, by taking the book and eating it (Revelation 10:8-10).
3. The message of the seven thunders was going to be a “bitter,” “sweet” experience (Revelation 10:9, 10). (This is probably the reason why John was not to write it out, for a bitter experience denotes a test of faith. Therefore the people who experienced this test were not to be told about it ahead of time.)

4. The message of the seven thunders was a bittersweet experience which was to be preached again before “many peoples, and nations and tongues, and kings” (Revelation 10:11). Therefore it was a very important message that was to be shared with our world.

It makes sense to conclude that the “seven thunders” were not just an accidental slip of the tongue. It is mentioned not just to be sealed up and forgotten. God purposed to reveal an important truth to us.

Thunder is a symbol of the voice of God or a message from God (see John 12:28-30; Job 40:9). And seven is a number that indicates completion or perfection as in Genesis when God completed or finished His work on the seventh day (see Genesis 2:1-3). Given this symbolism and the chapter context, it would be safe to conclude that the “seven thunders” have a close connection with “the mystery of God” that “should be finished” before the seventh trumpet sounds (Revelation 10:7).

The Bible says that this mystery of God is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26-28). Therefore the seven thunders reveal a *message from God* that is to *finish* the work of God upon this earth. What is this message?

Time No longer

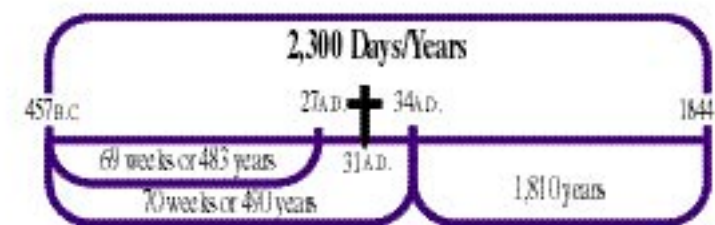
Another clue to unlocking this vital message of Revelation 10 is found in understanding the phrase, “time no longer” (Revelation 10:6). Some Bible translations may render this passage, “there will be no more delay” (Revelation 10:6, NIV). However, “time” is the preferred translation because it is consistent with other renderings of the same Greek word in the New Testament.¹

The Greek word *chronos* being translated as “time” also gives added indication to the linkage of this chapter with Daniel 12 and the prophetic periods. These prophetic time announcements of Daniel 12 link up with Daniel 8 and the taking away of the daily (see Daniel 8:10-14; 12:11, 12). Daniel 8 speaks of a prophetic time period of “2300 days” (Daniel 8:14). Once we understand this time prophecy and where it fits in history, we can find the meaning of the bittersweet experience.

The 2300-Day Time Prophecy of Daniel

This time prophecy of the 2300 days is the longest prophetic time line in the Bible. It so clearly reveals the first coming of Christ that in some schools of Jewish thought its study is forbidden. Yet we will find that, while it is long and somewhat drawn out, it is both simple and compelling in its understanding. Daniel, to whom the vision was given, had difficulty understanding it (see Daniel 8:27). So he prayed earnestly for understanding and God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel further enlightenment. This insight is found in Daniel chapter 9 (see Daniel 9:21-27). Therefore we will study both Daniel 8 and 9 in connection with this 2300-day time prophecy.

¹“The key Greek word involved is *chronos*....*Chrono* is translated ‘time’ in some thirty places in the New Testament, as in Matthew 2:7, ‘what time the star appeared’ and Luke 1:57, ‘the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered.’ *Chronos* is rendered ‘delay’ only once, in the passage that we’re looking at” (*God Cares*, pp. 304, 305).



Another principle of prophetic interpretation that will help is the “day for a year” principle (see Ezekiel 4:6, margin; Numbers 14:34). (The history of the “church of Smyrna,” their “ten days” of “tribulation,” historically being ten years, helps to confirm this “day for a year” understanding. So does our study on Revelation 9.)

The day-for-a-year principle applies to the 2300-day prophecy for a number of reasons which we will consider as we move through the prophecy.

The Seventy Weeks

In Daniel 9 the angel Gabriel broke the 2300-day prophecy down into smaller time frames marked off by various events. The first portion of time marked off is seventy weeks which were allotted for the children of Israel to “finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Daniel 9:24).

$$\begin{array}{r} 70 \text{ prophetic weeks} \\ \times 7 \text{ days in a week} \\ \hline 490 \text{ prophetic days} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{r} 490 \text{ prophetic days} = \\ 490 \text{ literal years} \end{array}$$

In the next verse of Daniel 9 Gabriel gives Daniel an important key to the placement of this prophecy. He informs Daniel that the prophetic time prophecy will start, “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25).

The seventh chapter of Ezra records the most comprehensive of several decrees given in relation to this prophecy. According to accurate historic records, King Artaxerses issued this decree in 457 B.C.

With this starting point Gabriel now unfolds with amazing accuracy the most important history ever to be considered by mankind. It is a prophecy depicting the time of Christ’s baptism by John, the length of His public ministry, His death on the cross and the ultimate rejection of the gospel by the Jewish nation. All are revealed over 500 years in advance.

Messiah the Prince

From the going forth of the decree, 457 B.C., “unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks” (Daniel 9:25). This is a total of 69 weeks or 483 prophetic years.

Counting down 483 years from 457 B.C. brings us to 27 A.D. This was the very year that Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan. The word “Messiah” in Daniel 9:25, 26 means “anointed” one (see *Strong’s* #4899). When Jesus was baptized

$$\begin{array}{r} 7 \text{ prophetic weeks} \\ (60) \text{ threescore prophetic weeks} \\ + (2) \text{ two prophetic weeks} \\ \hline 69 \text{ prophetic weeks} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 69 \text{ prophetic weeks} \\ \times 7 \text{ days in a week} \\ \hline 483 \text{ prophetic days} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{r} 483 \text{ prophetic days} = \\ 483 \text{ literal years} \end{array}$$

the Holy Spirit descended upon Him to anoint Him for His work as our Savior (see Acts 10:38). It was just after His baptism that Jesus was recognized as “the Messiah, which is being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).

In Mark 1:15 Jesus said, “the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” The “time” Jesus pointed to was the fulfillment of the 483-year portion of the 2300-day-for-a-year prophecy that pointed to the very year of His baptism and the start of His public ministry.

Shall Messiah Be Cut Off

“Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself” (Daniel 9:26, NKJV). This prophecy predicts the death of Christ for the sins of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was innocent, yet He offered Himself freely for our sins (see Isaiah 53:5).

“He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week” (Daniel 9:27). This verse points to the new covenant “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,” was then “confirmed unto us by them that heard Him” (Hebrews 2:3; see also Titus 1:3).

“In the midst of the week, He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Daniel 9:27). It was 3 1/2 years into this last week of the seventy weeks allotted to Israel that Christ was to be cut-off. That is, in the middle of the seventieth week of the time prophecy, Christ would give His life for the world. When this time had come Christ said to His disciples, “Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, the Master saith, My *time* is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples” (Matthew 26:18).

It did not happen sooner, though plans and attempts were made to take Christ’s life earlier in His ministry. In this way Christ confirmed the day-for-a-year prophetic principle and its application to this prophecy of the 2300 days. That is why He said, “My *time* is not yet come” (John 7:6). And again, “My *time* is not yet full come” (John 7:8).

It is important to note that each of the uses of the word *time* in these texts mean, “set, or proper, time” (see *Strong’s* 2540). Each one of these texts is confirming the application of the 2300-day-for-a-year time prophecy that was set or properly established by God through the angel Gabriel in Daniel 8 and 9.

“In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Daniel 9:27). When Christ was crucified in 31 A.D., “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Matthew 27:51). This signified the end of the sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary service.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people” (Daniel 9:24). This takes us from 457 A.D. down to 34 A.D. In 34 A.D.