

Revelation

*Part Twenty-Six
The Mystery Finished
(Revelation 10:1-7)*

With Study Questions

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I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. ² He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his left foot* on the land, ³ and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴ 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." ⁵ The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶ 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, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, ⁷ but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets (Revelation 10:1-7).

Introduction

The world, the flesh and the enemy are in continual assault upon the church. One of the means by which this takes place is by convincing the church that their prime directive is one of social justice. Pulpits are hijacked, and the gospel is slowly displaced by an emphasis on current cultural needs or trends (some biblical, some not).

History is littered with churches that have displaced the gospel altogether in their efforts, not to bring us to heaven via the blood of Christ, but to bring heaven to us via Christless, human movements and political maneuvering. An older term for this was *Liberation Theology*. John Frame offers a brief and valuable definition:

The theology of liberation is a combination of Marxist philosophy with certain biblical motifs. It argues that we

should reconstruct the whole of Christian theology by seeing it through the “axis of the oppressor and the oppressed.”

Anyone who has their ear to the ground regarding certain movements in today’s culture and churches, will certainly find this familiar. Feminist issues, racial movements, gender controversies abound, and the world means to do something about it! And preferably without Christ (or, at least a sidelined, or redefined Christ). The advocates of these movements are convinced that they are on the right side of history and that the world will be a better place if they have their way.

In one respect, they might be filling a gap—that vacuum that nature abhors. Certainly, there are issues in every culture. Certainly, the church (or more specifically, Christ) should have an answer. And He does!

We are studying a letter written at a time when human rights were a fantasy. Racism was at its worst. Women were often considered property. Slavery was normal. What is the true, Christian answer?

I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire (Revelation 10:1).

Like many figures in Revelation, there is much speculation regarding who **this “mighty angel”** might be. It can’t be said with absolute certainty, but the description leads us to conclude that it is Christ Himself. The “Angel of the Lord” is a common description for the preincarnate Christ in the Old Testament.

Add to this **“His face like the sun...His feet like pillars of fire”** are taken almost directly from the description of Christ in the first chapter (Revelation 1:14-16). **“Clothed with a cloud”** and **“a rainbow on His head”** also lead us to conclude the divine nature of this angel (Psalm 104:3; Revelation 4:3).

We are given the image of this Angel descending from heaven, as if John is now viewing this from the vantage point of earth. We are told this is a **“mighty angel”**. There is nothing casual about this **“coming”**. Let us recall that when John beheld Christ with these described this way in chapter one, his response was to fall **“at His feet as dead” (Revelation 1:17)**.

The glory of Christ, even as an advocate, yields a holy fear. In this chapter, we see His glory in His judgment. Let us take heed, it is a great indictment against a people, when it is said of them, **“There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:18).**

He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land (Revelation 10:2).

We are now introduced to a new source of prophecy, a **“little book.”** We will get into more detail regarding this little book in our next message. For now, let us recognize that God has chosen to communicate through a book. So many times, in His instruction and chastisements, Jesus opens with **“Have you not read” (Matthew 12:3; 19:4; 21:42; Mark 2:25; 12:10).**

There is an objectivity to the written word that protects us. It is with great wisdom that the Westminster Confession teaches, regarding God’s self-revelation, that God...

...for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same (the same being His self-revelation) wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.¹

More about this book in another message, but this portion of the text does tell us that this angel, holding this book, sets **“his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land.”** This angel is a colossal figure. The image we’re getting is of a more international prophecy, which will be given. That it’s a separate prophecy, and international, is indicated when John is told,

And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” (Revelation 10:11).

¹ WCF, 1.1.

At the time of this writing, the church was miniscule. But reading a passage such as this should lift our hearts in the knowledge that there is a God heaven, and He towers over the affairs of men on earth. The angel now speaks.

...and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴Now 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" (Revelation 10:3, 4).

These words are clearly designed to convey a sense of power. The voice of a "**lion**" with the response of "**seven thunders**". These seven thunders, whoever or whatever they are, utter a message which John was about to write. Then a voice from heaven (clearly a good voice) tells John to "**seal up**" the things uttered and do not write them. Clearly, John has more content. But this should be a lesson for those who overly interpret and seek to convey things not given.

When it comes to the knowledge of God, there are things that we do know, things that we don't know and things that we can't know.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29).

Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty (Job 11:7)?

We should take great comfort in knowing we serve a God who is incomprehensible. Modern dictionaries define *incomprehensible* as unintelligible, leading us to conclude with the definition of nonsense. But what it actually means is not "able to be contained." If something is comprehensive, it includes everything. There is no book, or any created thing, that can contain the fulness of God. And I would not trust my soul with any entity I, as a limited, fallen creature, could get my arms entirely around.

Yet this passage is not addressing what we are incapable of knowing. John seems to know it. But what God has determined we should not know. Paul, it would appear, had a similar experience when he was caught up into paradise and heard things **“that cannot be told, which man may not utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4).**

Contained in that passage is Paul’s testimony of a **“thorn in the flesh”** that Paul had pleaded with God to leave him. God’s response was, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).** When God does not give us the answers we want or the deliverance we desire, it seems to be His way of drawing us to Himself. But now we read a message that we are to know.

The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶ 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, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer (Revelation 11:5, 6).

That Christ would **“swear”** (take an oath *omosen*) is for the benefit of us and our insecurities. It is His way of underscoring the certainty of that which is said. We see similar language used in Hebrews that solid nature of His promise to the **“heirs of promise.”**

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things², in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us* (Hebrews 6:17, 18).

What is this current oath regarding? **“That there should be delay no longer.”** Delay of what?

When the martyrs prayed that God would bring His justice, they asked, **“How long, O Lord” (Revelation 6:10).** They were given **“white robes”** symbolic of their approval before God through the blood of Christ, then they were told, **“rest a little longer” (Revelation 6:11).** In

² Calvin says: “What God says as well as what he swears is immutable. (Ps. 12:6; Numb. 23:19.)”

chapter eight we see that prayer beginning to be answer when the **“smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God”** and **“the censer, filled...with fire from the altar”** was thrown **“to the earth”** in judgment (Revelation 8:3-5).

Now we are told that the delay of this vindication would be delayed no longer. Something was about to **“be finished.”** So, this oath is given, as we shall see, in anticipation of the **“seventh angel”**.

...but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets (Revelation 10:7).

The seventh angel (seventh trumpet) doesn't sound until the middle of the next chapter (Revelation 11:15). What we are learning here is that in the **“days of the sounding of the seventh angel”** the **“mystery of God would be finished.”** What is this mystery?

Again, speculations are numerous. The word “mystery” is seldom used in the Old Testament (unlike so much of Revelation, which has over 500 allusions to the Old Testament). In the New Testament is used quite regularly. There are number of ways it is used. It is used to describe the gospel in general terms (Ephesians 6:19, 20. Paul uses it regarding marriage (Ephesians 5:32) and the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

But the majority of the time, the word is used to describe how the gospel includes the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:3-6; Colossians 1:27; 1 Timothy 3:16). We underestimate the amount of ink used, especially by Paul, to convince the church that we are **“one new man” (Ephesians 2:15)** in Christ.

Racism, as it is commonly called, is not unique to the modern era. Historically, it was much worse than today. Among many of the peoples of the world, if you were not part of their tribe, you wouldn't even be considered human. Jews, Gentiles, whether referred to as Samaritans, Greeks, Egyptians, etc. hated each other. They would take longer routes from one place to another to avoid each other. And when these people came to faith, they carried their contempt into the church.

Let us ask ourselves what would be happening in the church in order for Paul to write these words:

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands –¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained in ordinances*, so as to create in Himself one new man *from the two*, *thus* making peace,¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:11-18).

Would it be possible for any Christian to walk away from this message thinking there is anything at all promised by God to them and not to the believer sitting next to them? Yet we have created, and popularized, a system that does exactly that. The wall of separation, of which Paul writes, is being rebuilt by those who seek to place Christians (or non-Christians for that matter) who are of one ethnicity in an entirely different category, based upon their ethnicity.

If this difficulty was within the church, how much worse outside the church!! The Jewish priests had bowed the knee to Caesar (John 19:15), crucified Christ and were now killing His followers. They refused to acknowledge that the promise of God was a promise which extended itself to all peoples, nations and tongues.

God would answer the prayers of the saints, bringing the New Covenant church to the fulness of the mystery (a church of all nations), while at the same time, halting the hatred and persecution that by all observation would have halted the Great Commission. God has made a promise. And He is the true Promise Keeper.

Questions for Study

1. Discuss some of the various ways the world, the flesh and the enemy seek to hijack churches (pages 2, 3)?
2. How has God chosen to communicate with us? Why is this advantageous for us (page 4)?
3. Talk about the knowledge of God and our access to it. How is God's incomprehensibility a good thing (pages 5, 6)?
4. What do you suppose God is doing when we don't get the deliverance we desire of the answers we want (page 6)?
5. Why would Christ swear an oath (page 6)?
6. Verse six says "that there should be delay no longer." Delay of what (pages 6, 7)?
7. How does the gospel truly answer all of the cultural problems in which we find ourselves surrounded (page 8)?