

He's Standing Right Before You

Recognizing and Caring that Christ Stands Before You

Revelation 10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.

² He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

³ and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

⁴ And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven

⁶ and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay,

⁷ but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

¹⁰ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

¹¹ And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

(Revelation 9:12-21)

Christ *Before* You

There's an old morning prayer often attributed to Patrick of Ireland, part of it goes, “*Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me...*” It's the prayer of a true Christian. A Christian's heart's desire is Christ.

A while back, some friends of mine were discussing a piece at *The Gospel Coalition*. It was called, “*What Do You Mean When You Talk about Christ in the Old Testament?*”¹ The article seeks to apply Jesus' words to the disciples on the Emmaus road that Old Testament is about him. It does so to an intended Christian audience that, like the author herself in earlier years, couldn't make sense of what the Lord was talking about.

After posting the article to a pastor-group I'm in, one friend asked us, “*While helpful, anyone notice what's missing?*” Without batting an eye, another responded, “*Ha—yeah ... Christ in the Old Testament!*” To which the other said, “*Exactly.*” It begs the question. How can a Christian, theologically conservative at that, write an entire piece on Christ in the Old Testament and ... miss Christ in

¹ Nancy Guthrie, “What Do You Mean When you Talk about Christ in the Old Testament?” *TGC* (May 31, 2011), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-do-you-mean-when-you-talk-about-christ-in-the-old-testament/>.

the Old Testament? I promise you, this is not what was set out to be done.

On the positive side, the piece talks a lot about—to use the words of the prayer—**Christ behind us** or perhaps **ahead of us**. That is, in the OT, **Christ was there in prophecy, typology**, and so on. Those pointed forward to his coming. We might say it has **Christ beneath us** or **above us** in things like **analogies** and **promise-fulfillments** from the OT. Again, the idea is that wherever we look we can see something of Christ's coming works in the NT. The piece implies that the readers have **Christ in them**, or at least that they will learn that they need to have Christ in them. That's why God gave the law, for example, to point us to our need for him.

But there is one glaring preposition missing: **Christ before us**. By this I refer to Christ literally being present right there in front of the OT saints. As in, he's actually personally standing right in front of them. He's there. They know him. They see him.

This is not just a problem that people have in the Old Testament. There are many who did not see or understand Jesus in the Gospels, **and we will come back to that later**. But it isn't just there either.

If Jesus were standing in front of you, would you recognize him? **Would it matter?** It seems an obvious answer. **“Of course!”** we all proudly affirm. Would you? Revelation 10 provides a fascinating and in my mind important glimpse into how the answer to this question isn’t always so cut and dry. **But wow, is it important.**

There is a person who appears in **Rev 10:1** “from heaven.” He appears to John’s eyesight. He sees him, though he does not talk to him. He calls him “another mighty angel.” John is a man who himself knew the incarnate Christ personally. He does not say who this angel is, which I find fascinating. It’s a bit of a mystery, at least on the surface. There is a rigorous academic debate over the identity of this angel. To put it simply, **some say this angel is Jesus Christ.** This is perhaps the oldest view that we have.² But many others disagree.

² “He signifies that that mighty angel who, he says, descended from heaven, clothed with a cloud, is our Lord, as we have above narrated” (Victorinus of Petta, d. circa 304). “In this angel the person of our Savior is indicated” (Tyconius, c. 330–390). “He sees the Lord Christ coming down from heaven” (Primasius, fl. 550–560). Speaking of the Angel of Daniel 10, who is the angel of Dan 12, who I will show is the same angel at Rev 10 we read in Hippolytus, “In the first vision he says, ‘Behold, the angel Gabriel was sent.’ Here, however, it is not so; but he sees the lord, not yet indeed as perfect man, but with the appearance and form of man, as he says: ‘And, behold, a man clothed in linen’” (Hippolytus, *Fragments on Daniel* 24). This would be the earliest of all the fathers at 222–245 AD. Tertullian (*The Chaplet XV*) does not seem to have taken this view, but it is inconclusive and he was not expositing the text, so he wasn’t interested in doing exegesis. More recently, The Geneva Study Bible, Matthew Henry, John Gill, Herman Hoeksema, George Ladd, Meredith Kline, Greg Beale, Kenneth Gentry, and many others. Kline (*Images of the Spirit*, 84) is a good example. “Revelation 10 may be cited as just one further passage identifying Christ as the Old Testament Angel. The Glory-Angel figure introduced there in the role of covenant witness is one

One puts it the disagreement generically, yet frankly. “There is ... no reason to suppose that the author had any particular angel in view.”³ This particular scholar, writing in a major Evangelical commentary series, raises the idea that perhaps it is Gabriel. But he doesn’t even entertain the thought that it could be Jesus.

Leon Morris raises the point directly saying, “Some (e.g. Stoffel) have identified him with Christ...” Yet he concludes, “but this is not justified.” He gives several reasons, including the most common one in the literature, “Christ is never called an angel in this book (let alone ‘another angel’).”⁴ That, of course, begs the question. If this were Christ here, then he *would* be called an angel, wouldn’t he? He brings up the interesting point that “this angel is not accorded divine honours. He is not worshipped, for

and the same as the heavenly figure described in Daniel 10:5ff. (who appears also in Daniel 8:16 and 12:6ff.). Now, Daniel 10:5ff., along with the Daniel 7:9ff. vision of the Son of Man and Ancient of Days, stands behind the depiction of Christ as the incarnate Glory in Revelation 1:10ff. From this set of relationships it appears that the Book of Revelation made use of the figure of the Old Testament Glory-Angel in the same idiomatic way that it used numerous Old Testament prototypes to set forth the incarnate Lord Jesus. And it is also evident from all of this that the theophanic Angel was indeed a pre-incarnation manifestation of Christ.”

³ David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 557.

⁴ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 135. On this point see also R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 259; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 201.

example.” Most curiously, he says noting vs. 6, “The swearing of an oath ‘by him who lives for ever and ever’ (v. 6) does not look like an action of Christ.” And he is not alone here. Another well-known scholar adds to this some very strong words, that this would be “highly inappropriate for Christ.”⁵

I find it strange to steadfastly, unyieldingly, and sometimes even obstinately declare that a person is not Christ while so many others say that it is. Why would someone do that? Do you suppose there could be ramifications for one’s conclusions? I do and today I want to tell you why I think it is Christ and why I think it matters.

Revelation 10 and Its Context

Revelation 10 is part of the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The sixth trumpet has just sounded, and it is also called the second woe, because in it a third of mankind is killed by horrible demonic entities sent at the Lord’s command to be lying creatures that deceive those who do not have the seal of the Holy Spirit because they willingly rebel against the Lord in their blatant (and often religious) sinfulness against him. Now, like the opening of the sixth seal which had a rather long excursion discussing

⁵ Mounce, 201.

the 144,000 and the worshiping church in heaven before the opening of the seventh seal, we enter into a rather long excursion which begins with this angel coming out of heaven with a scroll which is followed by **two witnesses** who are sent by God before the seventh trumpet is blasted (**Rev 11:15**; cf. **10:7**).

Sixth Seal (6:12-7:17)

Men in terror of God's wrath

Angel stops the catastrophe and seals 144,000

Eschatological vision of church worshiping in heaven

Sixth Trumpet

Angels kill a third of mankind (9:13-21)

Angel comes out of heaven in a cloud with a book (10:1-11)

John given rod to measure temple—two witnesses (11:1-13)

The passage itself is a **highly complex working of repeating themes**. These make it possible to view ch. 10 from **three perspectives**, each with its own central idea. The **first** is **vv. 1(2)-8**. This begins and ends with a scroll. A voice from heaven speaks, and the angel who has descended swears an oath. This swearing "**by him who lives forever and ever**" is the central portion of these verses:

- A. Revelation 10:1** Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ² **He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,**
- B.** ³ and called out with a loud **voice**, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.⁴ And when the seven thunders had **sounded, I was about to write**, but **I heard a voice from heaven saying**, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."
- C.** ⁵ And the **angel** whom I saw standing on **the sea** and on **the land** raised his right hand to **heaven**
- D.** ⁶ **and swore by him who lives forever and ever,**
- C¹.** who created **heaven** and what is in it, **the earth** and what is in it, and the **sea** and what is in it, that there would be no more delay,
- B¹.** ⁷ but that in the days of the **trumpet call to be sounded** by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. ⁸ Then **the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again**, saying,
- A¹.** **"Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."**

A **second** section is **vv. 5(7)-11**. This section begins and ends with **prophets**, has the voice from heaven speaking again, and this time the central idea is a **command** for John to take and eat the scroll:

- A. ⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷ but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants **the prophets**.
- B. ⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven **spoke to me again**, saying,
 - C. "Go, **take the scroll** that is open **in the hand of the angel** who is standing on the sea and on the land." ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll.
 - D. And he said to me, "**Take and eat it**; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."
 - C¹. ¹⁰ And **I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel** and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.
- B¹. ¹¹ And **I was told**,
- A¹. "You must again **prophesy** about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

Finally, a **third** section is **vv. 9-11**. This time, the section begins and ends with John being told something. He is told about what the scroll will do to him when he eats it. The central idea focuses in on **John's obedience**. He takes the scroll and eats it:

- A. ⁹ So I went to the angel **and told him** to give me the little scroll.
- B. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will **make your stomach bitter**,
- C. **but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.**"
- D. ¹⁰ And **I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it.**
- C¹. It was sweet as honey in my mouth,
- B¹. **but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.**
- A¹. ¹¹ **And I was told**, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

In this way, the **three main ideas** are the **angel swearing an oath** to God in heaven, **John being commanded** to eat the scroll thereafter, and **John obeying** this command. These are all connected to one another through two related and overlapping theological motifs. One is this **oath swearing**. This is a judicial activity that is directly related to the doctrine of **covenants**.⁶ One swears an oath when a covenant is being cut or confirmed. That oath makes the covenant binding in the courts of heaven and/or earth. The scroll that John is commanded to eat is almost certainly a covenant document. And this command and his obedience to it are his proper **commissioning as a prophet** of God to carry forth this message as one sent from the divine council.

We will look at these as we go along. I only wish to make **one point here**. Men have seen created angles here, including Gabriel. Gill tells us that some have seen men—like Justin the Emperor, the Pope, and even Luther and the Reformers! But my thought is, **if God were not personally**

⁶ For example, “... both of them swore and oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba” (**Gen 21:31-32**). “Because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore ... the LORD you God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant...” (**Dt 7:8-9**). “The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant...’” (**Ps 132:11-12**). “... to show mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore...” (**Luke 1:72-73**). “And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’ This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant” (**Heb 7:20-22**).

present here, then it makes nonsense of this commissioning, because, though they may be and often are present, created beings do not send out prophets. Only God does that. It further makes nonsense of the covenant, because created beings do not covenant with men, not even as emissaries or mediators. While they may be involved, God is always personally present at such events. He commissions. This has profound ramifications for the identity of the Angel.

The Identity of the Angel

“Another Mighty Angel”

Let’s turn to how this Angel is described. “Then I saw another mighty angel...” The word “another” (*allos*) causes many people to think that this is just some other angel, as if it demands that he had to be just like all the other angels that we have seen in the book thus far. Walvoord, for instance, says, “The word another (Gr., *allon*) ordinarily means ‘another of the same kind,’ that is, an angel similar to other angels which have been previously introduced.”⁷ The problem is, that just isn’t what the lexicons say. It really just means, “That which is other than some other entity, *other*”

⁷ John F. Walvoord, “10. The Mighty Angel With The Little Book,” in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1966), <https://walvoord.com/article/268>.

(*BGAD*). It is simply “another angel,” but this says nothing about who that angel is. That has to be determined by what is said about him.

“Comes Down from Heaven”: John’s Language for Christ

What is said about him? To paraphrase Beale, he has attributes that are given only to God in the OT or to God or Christ in Revelation.⁸ This is a hugely important observation that is often unnoticed by those trying to figure out who this angel is. It says that he “comes down from heaven” (10:1). There aren’t many figures that do this in Revelation. This is the first. The next one is in 18:1. It says, “After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.” Great [*megas*] authority is interesting. It reminds me of Jesus saying that he has been given “all [*pasa*] authority” (Matt 28:18). But it is how the earth is made bright with his glory that catches my eye. Beale notices that, “Every ascription of ‘glory’ to a heavenly figure in the Apocalypse refers to either God or Christ (God in 4:9, 11; 5:13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8;

⁸ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 522.

16:9; 19:1; 21:11, 23; Christ in 1:6; 5:12–13).”⁹ The next and last one is in 20:1. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.” Who has the keys to death and hades in ch. 1? Jesus (1:18). It seems that maybe this belief that no other angels in the book are Christ is overstated.

Perhaps the most interesting connection to this descending from heaven is how this is stock language for Jesus in the Gospel of John, which we have seen in every sermon is deliberately paralleling Revelation. Over and over, Jesus is the one who “came down from heaven” (John 3.13; 6.33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58).

“Wrapped in a Cloud”: The Angel’s Deity

Next it says is he comes “wrapped in a cloud.” In ch. 1, we learned that Jesus “is coming with the clouds” (1:8). In ch. 14, “I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man” (14:14). This is taken from Daniel 7:13 where one like the son of man comes on the clouds to the Ancient of Days. This absolutely refers to Jesus. However, the next verse says, “Another angel came...” which strongly implies that the son of man is

⁹ Beale, 892–893.

himself an angelic (heavenly) figure.¹⁰ Importantly, Beale again notices something. “In the OT God alone comes in heaven or to earth in a cloud”¹¹ (see Dt 33:26; Ps 68:32-33; 104:1-4; Isa 19:1). Daniel 7:13 is the only place in the OT where it isn’t Yahweh, but there it is Jesus. So, all are God.

“With a Rainbow over His Head”: His Covenant Mercy

Next it tells us that he comes “with a rainbow over his head” (Rev 10:1). The rainbow is the sign of the covenant in Genesis 9, and we’ve already discussed “covenant” today with the “oath.” In that case, it was the universal covenant with mankind. This bow is very similar to Ezekiel 1 where the prophet also sees the son of man (Ezek 1:26). His appearance is said to be “as the appearance of the rainbow when it is in the cloud” (28). It is also said to be the appearance of the glory of the LORD, which we saw earlier in ch. 18 with the Angel with authority who seems also to be Christ. But this passage in Ezekiel 1 is especially important for the whole eating of the scroll theme that we will look at more specifically a bit later.

¹⁰ See Beale, 523.

¹¹ Beale, Ibid.

“Face Like the Sun” and “Legs like Pillars of Fire”: The Angel’s Glory

Next, it describes the Angel’s face. “His face was like the sun.” Then it describes his legs. “His legs like pillars of fire” (Rev 10:1). Like the others, these two are also closely associated with Jesus—and furthermore, with no created being. The face as the sun language is almost identical language to how Jesus is described in Rev 1:16, and this “exactly reproduces the phrase describing Christ’s transfigured appearance in Matt 17:2.”¹² The legs like pillars of fire is also verse similar to the Rev 1:15 where it says Christ’s feet are “like bronze refined as in a furnace.” Clearly, we are being taken back to the same person that John saw in Ch. 1, which no one denies is Christ. All of these descriptions are found in the first verse of Revelation 10.

“Little Scroll in His Hand”: The Angel’s Covenant Book

Vv. 2-6 are deliberately modeled on one of the angelic beings in Daniel 10-12. In that passage, one of the beings is described “as the likeness of a son of man” (Dan 10:16), the same way Christ is depicted in Daniel 7:13. Because it is Christ! Rev 10:2 begins, “He had a little scroll open in his

¹² Beale, 524.

hand.” Earlier in the book we saw the Lamb take the scroll from the Father (**Rev 5:7**). Some hold that these two scrolls are identical, and there are lot of good reasons to think so that we don’t need to worry about here.¹³ If they are, then this scroll contains none other than **the seals** (and trumpets and bowls) that we’ve been seeing. But I also want to point out that such a scroll is, again, deeply related to **covenant**, in this case probably **the covenant with creation**.¹⁴ Second, this is very similar to **Ezekiel 2:9** when the prophet sees Christ and “**behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.**”¹⁵

This is going to become Ezekiel’s call from God in **the divine council** to be his prophet. “**You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house**” (7). That’s his call. I say the divine council, because that’s the point of **the heavenly imagery** seeing not just God but also the four living creatures and other heavenly beings in Ezekiel 1. This is as Jeremiah says, “**For**

¹³ **Richard Bauckham**, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (New York: T&T Clark, 1993), 257–60.

¹⁴ We saw this idea last time. Gentry and other preterists hold that this scroll would be the “divorce” between God and Israel in its final form which was carried out in 70 AD. But this seems too narrow for the context, especially of the seven thunders, as we will see later.

¹⁵ **Leithart** (398) has the following parallel:

Ezekiel	Revelation
Book from God, 2:9–10	Book from Father to Lamb, 5
Eat book, 3:1–3	Eat book, 10:9–10 ¹⁵

who among [the false prophets] has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word... If they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to the people...” (Jer 23:18, 22). All prophets since Adam have stood in the heavenly council to receive their calling from God. As it says in Job, “Are you the first man (*adam*) who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in the council of God?” (Job 15:7-8).

“Foot on the Sea and the Land”: The Angel’s Absolute Dominion

Returning to the description of the Angel, “He set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land...” (Rev 10:2). This is an expression of **total divine sovereignty**. The sea and land are the totality of earthly things. Having it under his feet expresses dominion. For example, “You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet” (Ps 8:6; cf. 1Co 15:27; Heb 2:8). These feet are **fiery**, which is always metaphorical for judgment of unbelievers in Revelation (24 times). This is like the Exodus where God (i.e. the Angel of the LORD; Ex 13:21; 14:9) came in the pillar of fire to stand in judgment over Egypt, even as he protected his own people.

It is a beautiful picture of the powerful Savior that is rendered meaningless if this person is not himself God.

“Voice Like a Lion” and “Seven Thunders”: The Angel-Word

I want to call particular attention to **vs. 3** in this regard. The Angel calls out “**with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.**” The loud voice is identical to Christ in **Rev 1:15** where it **roars like many waters**. This is the same as the angelic son of man who is described not only as having a voice like the sound of a multitude, but also a face like lightning and legs of burnished bronze).

This voice here is the **voice of a lion**. We have seen that Christ has already been called the **lion of Judah (Rev 5:5)**. The lion’s voice symbolizes **victory (Isa 5:29; Jer 2:15; Ezek 22:25; Amos 3:4)**. He cannot lose this battle. But throughout the OT, it is the LORD himself who roars in a shout of triumph (**Jer 25:30; Hos 11:10; Amos 1:3; 3:8**). No created angel does that. God’s Word-Voice is an omnipotent King.

Perhaps most interestingly of all is that when he calls out, **seven thunders** sound. Now, the next verse tells us that

when the seven thunders had sounded, John was about to write it down, but he heard a voice from heaven—so, obviously not the voice of this Angel—saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down” (Rev 10:4). This voice, as we will see later, is also no created voice. It must be the Voice of either the Father or the Spirit.

The reason for this mysterious command is extraordinary. Some have said that he couldn't write it down because it was, like the revelation Paul received of heaven (2Co 12:4), ineffable.¹⁶ But this isn't the case. John *was* going to write it down. It isn't that he can't; it is that he mustn't. He didn't because he was overruled by the direct command from high heaven.¹⁷ Others have said that God is overruling the voices because he does not intend to go through with these thunders.¹⁸ However, this again is related to the OT, this time to Daniel 12:4-9 where Daniel is told to seal up the book until a later time. In that case, sealing up the book is the opposite of God changing his mind. Rather, it means that this word is certain; the seal keeps people from tampering with it!

¹⁶ Charles, 261-62; Morris, 139.

¹⁷ J. Hugh Michael “The Unrecorded Thunder=Voices,” *Expository Times* (June 1925): 425.

¹⁸ Michael, 424-27.

Dan 12:4-9	Rev 10:4-7
<p>⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."</p>	<p>4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."</p>
<p>⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. ⁶ And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?"</p>	
<p>⁷ And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. ⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?"</p>	<p>⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷ but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.</p>
<p>⁹ He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.</p>	

What's so astonishing to me is that these seven thunders are, apparently, **already known to people**. It isn't that God doesn't want people to know or that he is changing his mind. It is that they are already known, so there's no point. I believe this command actually causes us to go looking for that which is already known.

But why would I say they are already known? Two reasons. First, these are not just “seven thunders” but “**the**” seven thunders. Scholars have pointed out that, the definite article (“the”) appears without explanation. Which seven thunders? The silence suggests that they were known to John’s readers.¹⁹ **THE seven thunders!**

In fact, you have read these very thunders if you have read the Psalms. “The” seven thunders are the specific thunders of Psalm 29.²⁰ Curiously enough, Psalm 29 is an enthronement Psalm, saying, “**The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever**” (**Ps 29:10**). Remember, the Flood was God’s judgment upon the entire world (not Israel) long ago.

In the Psalm, **Yahweh has seven “voices”**:

**³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.**

¹⁹ **John Day**, “Thunders and Lightnings in Psalm XXIX and Habakkuk III 9 and the Identity of the Seraphim in Isaiah VI,” *Vetus Testamentum* 29.2 (April 1979): 145. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1517435?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ac2dfc8a7baea25cbe1a5247e57f7162d&seq=9#page_scan_tab_contents.

²⁰ A hundred years ago, Charles said, “**Wellhausen holds that the strong one is not an angel, but is ‘according to the description Christ or God Himself,’ and that the echoes of His voice are the seven peals of thunder of the Ps. 29.**” He then adds, “**This latter identification is ingenious, but is wholly against not only the present context, but the spirit of later Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic.**” But how is it against anything? We have seen that Charles did not see this Angel as Christ. Yet, if it is Christ, in fact this is exactly what we would expect to see!

⁴ **The voice of the LORD** is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

⁵ **The voice of the LORD** breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ **The voice of the LORD** flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸ **The voice of the LORD** shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ **The voice of the LORD** makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

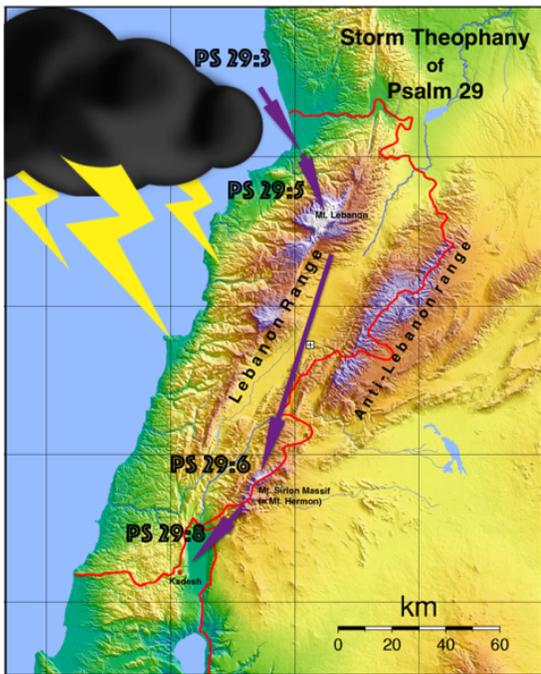
(Ps 29:3-9)

These could be translated as “sounds.” They are specifically said to be “**thunder**.” God is coming in a storm, and the seven thunders form the central point of the psalm:

- A. Give to the LORD glory and strength (1)
- B. Glory due the LORD/the LORD over the waters (repeated; 2-3)
- C. **The seven-fold power and majesty of the Voice of the LORD (4-9a)**
- B¹. Glory/ The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood (9b-10)
- A¹. The LORD will give strength to His people (11)

Now, this psalm also happens to be **an attack against Baal**, who in the pagan stories has usurped the True God, or should I say, the Son of God—Yahweh.²¹ As one myth says,

²¹ The parallel of the Canaanite pantheon to the OT God is father (El) to Father (El). Both are El. Therefore, if Baal is compared, it must be son (Baal) to Son (Christ). Therefore, Yahweh here must be the Son of God.



“Baal sits enthroned, having the mountain as a throne, Hadad (the shepherd) like the flood in the midst of his mountain, the god of Zaphon in the midst of the mountain of victory. Seven lightnings (he had), Eight storehouses of thunder were the shafts of (his) lightnings.” (RS 24.245.1-4).²² That’s Psalm 29,

except Baal replaces Yahweh. Baal has been fighting, and struggling, against his brother Yam (Sea), the Sea-god. But in Psalm 29, there is no struggle for the LORD over the sea. Rather, “Yahweh wields מַבּוּל [the sea] as his tool of judgment against his defiled creation. He is absolutely sovereign over all elements of creation.”²³ (It’s interesting that Daniel 7:13 and the cloud rider is doing the same thing, also against Baal!²⁴)

The seven thunders themselves are, like a storm, a geographical movement from Syria by the Mediterranean

²² Translation in Day, 144, 145. See my sermon on Psalm 29 for much more. <https://www.rbcnc.com/Psalms%20Enthroned%20as%20King%20Forever%20big%20font.pdf>

²³ Michael A. Grisanti, “מַבּוּל (mabbûl), nom. heavenly ocean, deluge (#4429),” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 837.

²⁴ See Michael S. Heiser, “What’s Ugaritic God to Do with Anything?” *Logos*, <https://www.logos.com/ugaritic>.

down over Mt. **Hermon** and finally into the wilderness of **Kadesh**, a southern Canaanite outpost just north of the Sea of Galilee in ancient days. In the song, Yahweh is doing what pagans said Baal did. He does it with ease, for he is the true God. He carries out judgment, not Baal. And in this way, God is actually judging Baal as a usurper in the song, which is why it demands at the beginning, “**Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings** [“sons of God”], ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his Name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness” (**Ps 29:1-2**). Baal is undone.

My take then is that John is commanded not to write down the thunders for at least two reasons. **One**, because the judgment against Baal is at its heart. But God is going to judge Baal and the gods later on in Revelation. Now is not the appropriate time to write that down. **Two**, the entire earth was fully judged in those thunders at the Flood. This will happen in Revelation. But again, we have not reached that part ... yet.

“Swore by Him Who Lives Forever”: Triune God

The final element of this Angel of Revelation 10 is the point that a lot of scholars think is the nail in the coffin

against this being Christ. “And the Angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (Rev 10:5-7). How inappropriate, they say, that Christ should swear by God in heaven!

But, if the previous seven things we have looked at in detail (down from heaven, cloud, rainbow, face and legs, holding the scroll, dominion over land and sea, loud roaring thunderous voice) have not been enough to demand that this is Christ, it is actually **this oath swearing that must seal the deal**. In fact, not only is it appropriate for Christ to swear by God in heaven, we literally see him doing this in other parts of Scripture.

Again, the language here comes from **Daniel 12:7**. He is the angel standing over the waters, who earlier in the book absolutely terrified Daniel (**Dan 8:16**). Who stands over the waters? We saw it in Psalm 29. **Yahweh!** This Angel is the Angel of the LORD. He is Christ.

Both **Revelation 10:6** and **Dan 12:7** originate in **Deuteronomy 32:39-40**. Listen carefully. “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I would and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, *As I live forever...*” How can God swear by heaven? Is heaven higher than God? No. **God is swearing by God.**

But how can he do that? Because Yahweh **the Father** is in heaven and Yahweh **the Son** is on earth swearing. Both are Yahweh. There is more than one Yahweh. But there is only one God! This is the meaning of Hebrews, which is careful at this point not to use “Christ” or “Jesus” or “Father,” but simply “God.” There is only one God. “**For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, ‘Surely I will bless you and multiply you.’ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have**

fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us” (Heb 6:13-18). So of course Jesus can swear by him who lives forever and still be God. Affirming this is at the very heart of what it means to be a Trinitarian!

Two more brief points are worth knowing. First, In Revelation 12, though that Angel is Christ, he is not worshipped by Daniel. As Rev 10 is modelled after Daniel 12, the fact that he is not worshiped by John fits. But he can still be Christ! Second, The fact that the Angel is swearing an oath with a covenant scroll in his hand means that he has come as covenant witnesses against those whom the scroll judges. As we will see next time, this is intimately related to the Two Witnesses that come in Revelation 11.

“Eat the Scroll”: John’s Commissioning to be God’s Prophet

At this point, we can move away from a direct glimpse at this Angel and turn to [John’s commissioning service](#). Yet, as we do, it will be apparent that we have never really left our topic at all. We have two more perspectives that the chapter asks us to look at. The first is [the command he hears](#) to take and eat the scroll. This section begins with the idea

of prophecy. “In the days of the trumpet call to be sounded [that is the seventh trumpet] by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the *prophets*” (Rev 10:7). One of those prophets is most obviously Daniel, whom we have seen this entire passage echoes in Dan 12. The mystery of God, which Daniel was to seal up, which would last for these interesting periods of “a time, times, and half a time” (Dan 12:7), 1,290 days (11), and 1,335 days (12), are close to being fulfilled, which is why certain of these numbers and others related to them are about to be introduced in the Apocalypse.²⁵ Prophecy curiously finishes our chapter like a bookend. “I was told, ‘You must again *prophesy* about many peoples and nations and languages and kings’” (Rev 10:11). The universality of John’s prophetic message is clearly in mind.²⁶

Between these verses about prophecy, John’s divine commission from God comes into sharp focus. John hears a

²⁵ Rev 11:2, 3, 9, 11; 12:6; 13:5; etc. These numbers are introduced immediately after Rev 10 because Rev 10 is modelled on Dan 12, where they originate. We will not deal here with how long those are or when they are fulfilled, but will save that for the appropriate place(s) later.

²⁶ Gentry writes, “John’s prophetic ministry is not over: he ‘must prophesy *again*’ (*palin*), focusing not only on Israel’s judgment but that of the nations who are in collusion with her. He has been concentrating on the judgment of the harlotrous wife (Israel); he must also prophesy the judgment of her partner in adultery (Lev 20:10; Dt 22:24), Nero’s Rome, the empire of nations.” Gentry, vol. 2, 24-25. His focus is still immediately upon 70 AD, but now includes how God judged Rome by bringing so much turmoil upon her at this same time. Again, there is much to commend this view, but here (especially with Psalm 29 in view), there is more here than even Israel and Rome (which represents the nations).

voice from heaven. This is *not* the voice of Christ, but seemingly of the angel who has been representing Christ (see 1:1 etc.), whoever he may be. The voice tells him to take the scroll that is open (it is open now because the seals have been removed) in the hand of the angel “who is standing on the sea and on the land” (Rev 10:8). Go to Christ! “So I went to the Angel and told him to give me the little scroll” (9). John knows his Savior and is not afraid.

The center then says, “And he said to me, ‘Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey’” (9b). Now, Christ is speaking to him. And this is exactly as the OT parallel is with Ezekiel in his commissioning service. “‘Son of man, here what I say to you ... open your mouth and eat what I give you.’ And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it ... on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe [we are in between the second and third woes]” (Ezek 2:9-10).

Then, just like Ezekiel, John takes the scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. “It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter” (10). Ezekiel had the same experience. “Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey” (Ezek 3:2). But

he was told that his prophecy to Israel would fall on deaf ears. They would not listen (6). Bitter words indeed. It is this obedience of Ezekiel to take and eat the scroll as he was commanded which is the focus of **the third way** of looking at the chapter. He was told (**Rev 10:9, 11**). And **he obeyed**. This is also like Ezekiel who was told, “**Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you**” (**Ezek 2:8**). Neither Ezekiel nor John were rebellious. They heard the call of Christ and they obeyed. His sheep hear his voice. They know when he has come near. And they do what he tells them.

Christ the Angel: Who Cares?

At this point, we've come to the end of Rev 10. The introduction of the Angel will serve as a **springboard** for the fascinating events that take place in Rev 11. But I want to end this by returning to my original question. **Would you recognize Christ** if he were to stand before you? We saw last time how the Pharisees, the religious conservative leaders of Jesus' day missed him. They even called him demon possessed! We've seen today that many Christians, scholars even, and good ones at that, many of whom are very

conservative and godly, have in fact not recognized him here.

That is **not the end of the world for their salvation**—because they recognize their Savior in many other places. It is nevertheless troubling. When Christ is given description after description that only belong to God throughout the Scripture, and a person doesn't see that, this is not good. We are talking about something very important here, something **many take for granted that they would never do**, and yet the whole of the Scripture teaches us that in fact it is much more common that people want to think.

For example, John begins his Gospel by telling us, “**He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him**” (**Jn 1:10-11**). This is referring to **Christ in the Old Testament**. The **world** did not know him. No surprise there, even though they still should have. **His own** did not receive him. That's troubling.

During his **early ministry**, his own disciples—men like Philip would say, “**Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us**” (**John 14:8**). Curiously, this is right where our inverse **parallels in John's Gospel** should occur (roughly, **Rev 7-10** parallel **John 12-15**). But there are actually several

more parallels that directly relate to this theme right near this demand of Philip. For example, “Seven thunders uttered their voices ... I heard a voice from heaven” is paralleled in **John 12:28-29**, “A voice came from heaven ... Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered.” The voice of the thunder is God’s voice! Two thunderous voices. Both God. How then can men not recognize this?

Yet, just after this, at the last supper, we read, “So when he had dipped the morsel, He *took and gave it to Judas...* and after the morsel, Satan then entered into him” (**John 13:26-27**). In our passage, “He said, ‘*Take and eat ...*’ and it was in my mouth sweet as honey, but when I had eaten it, in my stomach it was bitter” (**Rev 10:9-10**). Immediately after this we read Jesus tell Judas, “What you do, do *quickly*” (**John 13:27**). This parallels **Rev 10:6**, “There would be *no more delay*.” Finally, the next verse at the Supper tells us, “*Now no one reclining at the table knew*” (**John 13:28**). This is like the thunders, “*Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken and do not write them*” (**Rev 10:4**).

Something terrible is happening here, even in the midst of the great grace of Communion with the living Christ. The Lord of Glory is right in front of them, and they are

blind. (Some are even wicked.) This is like Philip in the next chapter when Jesus tells him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?” (John 14:9).

What is happening? Perhaps it is like Isaiah had told us. “He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa 53:2). Jesus just wasn't what they were expecting. And even with all his miracles, his power, his wisdom ... even his disciples quickly forget or disbelieve or don't understand or get bored or flee. The problem is, they are not seeing Christ before them. He isn't ... glorious enough or exciting enough for them.

Make no mistake, this was a problem for them *even when he unveiled his glory*. It is like Peter in the boat. Jesus comes walking on the water and they think they see a ghost! This is too glorious, too otherworldly! They are frightened. But not proud, self-confident Peter. He would never be like *them*. Is that you Lord? If so, tell me to come out to you.” “Come, Peter” (Matt 14:29). He looked at Christ before him and begin to walk on the water! But when the wind came, he quickly turned his gaze away and was afraid and began to sink (30). The glory didn't help them see things any better.

Or may they don't see him because they are too busy trying to have God their own way. Paul talks about this with regard to the law, for example. “Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, *because only through Christ is it taken away*. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed” (2Co 3:13-16). It is in giving up the self-effort and only then that a person will look to Christ and see the true Glory of God.

This is something that troubled Martin Luther perhaps more than any other thing. Men want God on their terms. Let us speculate our way to him. Our philosophy is so wonderful. Let us look inward to find God. Surely we are all little sparks of the divine. Let us emote our way to heaven with good spiritual religious feelings that give us a Rocky Mountain High. Let us earn our way. Just tell me what you want me to do, pastor. Make it practical or I'm out of here. Jesus isn't practical enough! I know you love to preach Christ, but...

These are **ladders**, ladders that we climb to go up. And they are dangerous. If this is your bent, as Lloyd-Jones would say, “**There is the very real danger that many who are assumed to be Christians, and who themselves assume that they are Christians, are not really Christians at all. That is why the Apostle urges the Corinthians and others to examine themselves, to prove their own selves, to make sure that they are in the faith.**”²⁷

Men and women want their thing. But God hides himself in **foolishness** and puts **stumbling blocks** in our way when we make it about us. Christ *is* the stumbling block and so many trip over him, wanting everything or anything but him. Good things. Religious things. Spiritual things. High falutin theology, sentimental music, twelve steps to a better Christian life. Those things are not bad in and of themselves. But if they are void of Christ—not Christ as a philosopher, Christ as a friend, Christ as an example, but Christ as the one hidden in suffering on the cross for your sins. Christ who has been raised in glory. Christ as the one you want to look at, know, love and obey, then they are traps. Idols. Tongues of men and angels? Prophetic powers? Understanding all mysteries? Even faith to move mountains? Without Love

²⁷ **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, *Romans - The Sons Of God*. I’ve not been able to find the reference to this quote. Someone posted it on Facebook. But he said things like this very often.

they are meaningless. Knowledge puffs up. Love builds up. Not your love. Christ's love for you. Christ is Love (1Jn 4:8). Do you recognize him? Do you see him before you now?

I don't care how **long you've been in church**, what kinds of things you've "done for God," or haven't done. You need to know something. **The mighty angel has come down to us**. Jesus in human flesh has come down out of heaven so that we don't have to go up to him. We can't go up. If you try to go up, you will fall down. If you try to go up, you will not see. If you do not look and see Christ and be satisfied that he, my himself, clothed in the Spirit is enough, what hope have you? I tell you, you have no hope. There is an epidemic in the church today, and it is not the corona virus. It is a stubborn refusal to be satisfied in Christ alone.

The *earthly* life of Jesus is the parallel to the heavenly life of Jesus in Revelation. His **earthly life is the key** to unlocking the heavenly. If you go for the heavenly, but bypass the hidden majesty, you cannot see the heavenly glory. Peter proved it in the water. Philip proved it with his question. It's exactly the opposite of what men think. The glorious angelic Christ is here because Christ incarnate, **the Lamb**, has conquered and won the victory. Now **the Lion** comes to judge those who will not turn and repent of their

sins and idols. He is about to unleash his witnesses of the covenant and judge the world for their stubborn rebellion against him beginning in Revelation 11.

John says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This is his thesis statement, the point of his Gospel. The point of his Apocalypse. This is a glory that is hidden, and until God speaks to you and you hear, it remains so.

He is speaking right now. He is speaking to you. Do you recognize him?

One more parallel in John will show you. Revelation 10 has a counterpart in John 10. “I heard a voice from heaven ... Then the voice which I heard ... spoke ... and said, ‘Go ...’ So I went” (Rev 10:4, 8, 9). In John 10:27 the Lord said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

Christ is right here, before you. He is speaking, to you. The Father sent him. The Spirit is calling. The Living God with face like the sun, legs of fire, wrapped in a cloud, a rainbow over his head, with open scroll in hand. The Lion is roaring. Judgment is coming. Turn from your evil ways, from your refusal to see him as enough. Even if you are a believer and other things are getting in the way—good

things, religious things, but things that cause you to not care about Christ before you this moment, repent.

Hear his voice and come to him. That is what those who truly hear him do. Like John and Ezekiel and others, we are compelled by the Voice. That still small voice. It is enough for me. May Christ alone be enough for you.

Christ behind you.

Christ beneath you.

Christ above you.

Christ *before* you.

Christ in you.

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10:27 “My sheep **hear My voice**, and I know them, and they *follow Me*”

10:4, 8, 9 “I **heard a voice** from heaven ... Then the voice which I **heard** ... spoke ... and said, ‘Go ...’ *So I went ...*”

The War of Light and Darkness on Earth

The War of Light and Darkness in Heaven

12:28–29 “a **voice came from heaven** ... Therefore the people who stood by and **heard** it said that it had **thundered**”

10:3–4 “seven **thunders** uttered their **voices** ... I **heard a voice from heaven**”

Communion on Earth

Communion in Heaven

13:26–27 “So when he had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas ... and *after the morsel, Satan then entered into him*”

10:9–10 “And he said, “Take and eat ...’ and it was in my mouth sweet as honey, but *when I had eaten it, in my stomach it was bitter.*”

13:27 “*What you do, do quickly.*”

10:6 “*there should be delay no longer*”

13:28 “Now *no one* reclining at the table *knew* (except John and Peter)”

10:4 “Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken (to John) and *do not write them*”