

## **Digesting God's Word**

### **Revelation Series #7**

#### **Revelation 10 & 11**

##### **Introduction**

We have seen the breaking of the seven seals. We have heard six of the seven trumpets. And as you enter the 10th chapter of the book of Revelation you expect the blowing of the seventh trumpet. But just as there was a pause between the breaking of the sixth and the seventh seal so there is a time out between the blowing of the sixth and the seventh trumpet.

These parenthetical chapters are not arbitrarily inserted into this apocalyptic drama. These chapters are given to remind us that even in the middle of the most horrible period that man will ever know, God is still in control.

As we get to Revelation chapter 10, we see what the apostle John does. In v.1 John says, **"I saw."** in v. 4 John says, **"I heard."** in v.10 John says, **"I took."** In chapter 11, v. 1 it says John was **given**.

*First, we are told that John saw...*

##### **I. A Stunning Angel**

***"Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion."* (v.1-3a) NIV**

The first piece of information that stands out is that John has changed his location. Notice that the angel was "coming down" from heaven to earth. If John was still up in the throne room, the angel would be "going down" to earth. When exactly John made the trip is difficult to say, and we should not get too hung up on it. It's enough to recognize that John didn't just sit back in his theater seat watching all destruction unfold on a big screen. Instead, it appears that after the initial scenes were carried out in heaven, John was shuttled to wherever he is now.

Immediately we are confronted with a question: **who is this mighty angel?** The description John gives does not lend itself to him simply standing with his toes in the water, unsure if he wants to get wet. This angel was standing on the sea, and he was standing firmly on the land.

All the earth is made up of land and sea. The planting of feet upon the earth and sea is a sign of taking possession. When the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, God made a promise to Joshua. "every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses." (Josh.1:3)

We are reminded in Colossians. 1:16 ***"For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. (NIV)***

Capitalist lands belong to Jesus. Communist lands belong to Jesus. Colonial lands belong to Jesus. From latitude to longitude, from pole to pole, from sea to shining sea; Jesus is coming to take over and reign upon this earth.

This depiction indicates an angel who is massive. His appearance also lends to his grandeur. Much of how he is described reflects the attributes of the Son of God—a rainbow around his head, a shining face, and fiery feet. However, this being is not divine; he is a servant of the divine. Once he is established on the planet, he lets out a terrifying cry. John compares it to a lion's roar designed to get the attention of the entire world.

*John saw a Stunning Angel, and then John heard*

## **II. A Spectacular Announcement**

***...3and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion." When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down." (Rev. 3-4, NIV)***

This mighty angel "cries with a loud voice" (v.3) and gives an announcement that all heaven cannot fail to hear.

His voice sounded as the "roar of a lion." (v.3) I've heard that nothing can compare with the roar of an angry lion in the jungle.

Amos 7:8 says ***"a lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?"***

Experts say that the lion roars when he is about to make his last leap upon his victim, so the roar of the lion may be a sign of imminent judgment.

Then we read, when ***"he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke."***

Seven is the number of completeness which suggests that God has the final say in anything. In psalms 29 we read where "the voice of the Lord goes forth seven times as thunder.

This begs the obvious question: What are the seven thunders? We don't know for sure. Most likely they are angels with a unique message.

***4And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down." (Rev. 3-4, NIV)***

This is a very unusual verse, because Revelation is supposed to be a book of unveiling and uncovering. The Greek word for revelation, apocalypse, literally means "to unveil." The purpose of revelation is to reveal, not to conceal, yet we are told the message contained in the voice of the seven thunders are "off limits."

Before John can write, a voice from heaven says, ***"do not write it down."*** There are some secrets that God reveals to us in His Word, and there are others that He has chosen to keep to Himself. But through the angel's next actions, a mystery of God that had long been hidden is revealed.

***5Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! (Rev. 10:5-6, NIV)***

When God wants to underline the authenticity and the reliability of an action he is going to take, he swears upon himself. Heb. 6:13 says, ***"When God made His promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, he swore by Himself."*** (NIV)

God says enough, there is no longer any delay, the sands of time have run out on a sin-sick, hell-bent, Christ-rejecting, evil-loving world.

***7But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.*** (Rev. 10:7, NIV).

What was taking place in all the nations with the death and destruction was exactly what God had promised would happen to those who turned their backs on Him in rebellion. When the seventh angel blew his trumpet, it would lead to the "mystery of God" coming to its conclusion.

Why was this called a mystery? To understand the "***mystery of God,***" we first need to define the term mystery. A biblical mystery is not like a case that needs to be solved, like in an Agatha Christie novel or a Sherlock Holmes adventure.

Rather, it is a truth that has not yet been revealed. The word "***mystery***" is used 27 times in the New Testament and four times in Revelation. The mystery that had been pronounced long ago through the prophets was now being revealed.

Most likely the mystery is referring to the many Old Testament references to the millennial reign of Christ spoken of in Revelation 20. Glimpses of this 1,000-year reign of the Lord were given to the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and others. Satan's power in the world will come to an end, and the Messiah will take His proper place on His earthly throne.

In theological circles, this revealing of a little information at a time is known as **progressive revelation**. Just as we train up our children by teaching them a little at a time based on their ability to understand, so God has revealed to His people truth as they were able to comprehend it.

Psalm 2:4-6 says, "***The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. 5He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 6'I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.***" (NIV)

God will place His King on His holy hill of Zion, which is Jerusalem. And what about His royal lineage?

Isaiah 9:6-7 says, "***for to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,***

***Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*** (NIV)

From the prophet Isaiah we discover that this king with a scepter will not only rule from Jerusalem but will also sit on David's throne. To rightfully sit on David's throne, he must be a descendant of David. The genealogies of both Matthew and Luke make it quite clear that this is true of Jesus the Messiah.

***On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.*** (Zechariah 14:4).

When we get to Revelation 19, we will see this prophecy of Zechariah come true.

Many other passages of Scripture could be added to the list of progressive revelations. But the mystery of the Messiah King, the Lord of lords, is about to come to pass. But before that happens, there is still more bitterness to endure. What takes place next might have felt to John like déjà vu all over again. He knows that this has happened before; it just hasn't happened to him.

***John saw a Stunning Angel, then John heard a Spectacular Announcement, lastly, we see John take***

### **III. A Strange Action**

***“Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: “Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” 9So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but ‘in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ (vs. 8-9, NIV)***

The voice from heaven is back. This time, rather than prohibiting him from writing, it calls him to a strange action. "Go and take the little book from the angel's hand." Typically, when someone gives you a book, their suggestion to you is to read it. Not this angel. He says to John, "Eat this book."

Now it is one thing to examine a book. It is another thing to eat the book. What does this mysterious action mean? The bible is often described as food. It is called bread (Matt, 4:4), Milk (I Pet. 2:2), Meat (I Cor3:1-2), and Honey (Psa. 119:103).

John is told to eat this book. Now eating is a symbol for receiving knowledge. The pastor is told to "feed the flock" on the word of God.

***Verse 10 says, "I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. "and I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter." (NIV)***

We are told that this is a bittersweet book. Now this book represents the word of God. As you study the bible you will find it both sweet and sour. We read about heaven, which is sweet. But we read about hell, which is bitter. In the bible we see the mercy of God, which is sweet. But we also see the judgment of God, which is bitter.

The bible is sweet because the bible is true. Jesus said, "thy word is truth." (John 17:17) but it is bitter because the truth is not always good news. The bible clearly teaches that the future will be glory for the saint, but grief for the sinner.

But John is also warned that as the book is digested it will be sweet to his mouth, but it will be bitter in his belly, the word of God is sweet. David said the word of God was "***sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.***" (Psalm 19:10)

John ate the book because he knew that sometimes that is what prophets do:

***Ezekiel 2:9-3:3) says, Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, 10which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. Ezekiel 3 1And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel." 2So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So, I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth."***

A scroll was given to Ezekiel, and the prophet had it for lunch. Did the scroll turn bitter after he ate it? Verses 14&15 say, "***So, the Spirit lifted me up and took me***

*away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the river Chebar; and I sat where they sat and remained there astonished among them seven days."*

John ate the book, which symbolized God's message becoming internalized in him. What he would write would not be his own words, but the word of God. The message may seem sweet to those who are safe in the presence of the Savior, but for those facing God's wrath, it would be enough to turn the stomach.

*"I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." (Revelation 10:10-11).*

I believe John had seen enough of God's judgment and did not want to preach or write anymore, but he had to. **The digestion of God's word demands the declaration of God's word.**

There can be no compromise in the pulpit. I must preach both heaven and hell. I must preach mercy, and judgment. God is love, but He also holy.

I want you to see from this chapter that the final message of the bible is gloriously sweet. Jesus is coming again, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.

Removal before wrath is the sweet part of Revelation. But we should ache for those who will go through the tribulation.

As the initial part of this second interlude concludes, we see a shift take place. Up to this point, the focus has been mostly on events connected with the breaking of the seal judgments and the sounding of the trumpets.

But from chapter 11 on, the emphasis moves more to individuals and groups, and we meet folk like the two witnesses, the woman and child and dragon, the Antichrist and false prophet, the harlot, and Jesus returning with His bride.

The two witnesses step forward to take their rightful place alongside the four horsemen and the 144,000. Just who are these two men? Before we can deal with that question, John has some calculations to make.

*John saw a Stunning Angel, then John heard a Spectacular Announcement, we see John take, and as we enter Revelation 11, John is given a...*

### **III. A Specific Assignment**

At this point, we zoom in on one section of Jerusalem, the temple. John was given a reed to measure with and told to determine the size of the temple.

***“1I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. 2But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.”*** (Revelation 11:1-2, NIV).

What exactly is John measuring? There are two Greek words for temple. Hieron refers to the temple proper or the entire complex. The second word, naos, speaks specifically of the Holy of Holies. That is the word used in this passage. The angel wants John to focus on the place of God's presence because the rest has been corrupted by the Gentiles.

The fact that we never are told the findings of John's surveying expedition tells me that the purpose is not so much the size of the temple but the fact that there is a temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation.

John's words about the temple in Revelation 11:1-2 would have been significant, particularly to the Jewish readers. When John wrote this, there had not been a temple for two decades. In AD 70, the Tenth Roman Legion invaded Jerusalem, destroying both the city and the temple. Two thousand years later, there is still no temple in Jerusalem.

In the current political climate, it seems impossible that the Muslim nations around the world would ever allow a third temple to be built on the Temple Mount alongside the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. It will take a man of peace to work out those delicate negotiations—a man like the Antichrist, who

will win the hearts of the world, including the Jews, with his incredible political skills that he will employ to restore their presence on the holy mount.

There will be a temple during the tribulation, and it will play out significantly in the exposure of the true character of the Antichrist.

Now there are some who have tried to spiritualize these verses. They say that the temple here refers to the New Testament church. There are others who believe that it simply refers to all the believers on earth alive at this time. So, it is legitimate to ask, is there a reason to believe that there is going to be a literal temple rebuilt once again in the holy city of Jerusalem? I believe that there is.

A world ruler is going to arise who is the antichrist, he is going to allow the Jews to erect a magnificent temple somewhere in the city of Jerusalem.

At the beginning of the great tribulation, that seven-year period known as "Jacob's trouble" the antichrist is going to make a treaty with the children of Israel. He is going to allow them to rebuild this temple to even reinstitute their priestly sacrifices, and he is going to give them his protections and his approval for the first three- and one-half years.

Now the Jews will readily accept this world ruler and join hands with him for basically three reasons, **first, politically**, they see a chance to restore their nation to prominence and power. **Second, spiritually** because he will let them rebuild their sacred temple. But also, **financially** will they accept him because it will mean money in their pockets.

This third temple is not a new concept to Revelation. The prophet Daniel spoke of a time during the tribulation when temple sacrifices will be cut off (Daniel 9:26-27). Jesus taught of a future temple in the end times during His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15-26). Paul talked about the tribulation temple, writing,

***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thess. 2:3-4).***

**Next week we will meet the Two Witnesses, and I can't wait, but before we go.**

Did you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, "***Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.***" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NIV).

Remember I said that there are two Greek words for temple. *Hieron* refers to the temple proper or the entire complex. The second word, *naos*, speaks specifically of the Holy of Holies.

Which of the two words do you think the apostle Paul used when speaking about your body? It may surprise and even humble you to know that Paul used *naos*, the Holy of Holies.

In other words, your physical body is to be a holy residence in which the Lord dwells. That is why Paul included a cause-effect relationship in his comments, saying that because your body is the Holy of Holies where the living God abides, "***glorify God in your body.***" Are you doing that?

Getting people to be obsessed with the look, size, and feel of their body is a multi-billion-dollar business. You and I are constantly being reminded that our bodies aren't what they could be.

Dolly Parton said, ""If I see something sagging, dragging, or bagging, I get it sucked, tucked, or plucked. It takes a lot of money to look like I do."

The Corinthian Christians were getting it wrong. They did not have a high view of their physical body. They had bought the lie that said you can separate the physical from the spiritual. They claimed the soul was good and the body was evil. If you surrendered your heart to Christ, it didn't matter what you did with your body.

So, gluttony was okay, sexual promiscuity was okay, and satisfying whatever bodily appetite someone had was okay because it wasn't connected to your spirit. Your

body wasn't going to last forever anyway so do with it and to do it whatever you want. They were misunderstanding their freedom in Christ as a freedom **to** sin rather than a freedom **from** sin.

Paul says your value to God is beyond understanding because He bought you with the blood of His own Son. That's what you're worth to Him. So, Paul says the only appropriate response to this tremendous truth is to glorify God. It means to honor, glorify, exalt, or praise. In other words, our body is to be a walking, living, breathing, talking, doxology of praise, honor, and glory to God in everything we do with it. You are to use all of you...all for Him.

Romans 12:1 gives clarity to this. ***"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God-this is your true and proper worship."***

Offer God what? Your body. Why didn't God say, "Offer your spirit?" Because you really can't do anything on this planet without your body. Sometimes people will say to me, "Pastor, I won't be at church next Sunday. But I want you to know that I will be with you in spirit." Do you know what that means? Absolutely nothing. Why? Because it's not possible. The truth is if you are on earth your spirit can only be where your body is.

If you don't think that's true, try that at work sometime. Call your boss and say "Boss, I won't be coming in to work today, but go ahead and pay me because I will be with you in spirit." He will probably tell you that he will be with you in spirit as you take your body and go find another job.

Paul says we are to offer our bodies to God as what? Living sacrifices. God says I want the living body of my son or my daughter; all of you...all for Me.

When you sacrifice something, you give up all ownership. You give up all rights. You give up all possession. In the Old Testament there was no such thing as a partial sacrifice. It was all or nothing. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.