

Un-Revelation: 7 Thunders Mystery Revelation 10

Has everyone been enjoying the study in Revelation? Any one not enjoying it? I know it's a lot, and surely with a crowd this size, in studying Revelation, there are people hungry to figure out all the details, others overwhelmed with all the details, others who just want real life today personal encouragement from the book, and others who are more anxious to connect what we read to events happening today. I hope this morning to somehow meet everyone where they are, and give you something that fits where you are right now. This week has been interesting concerning the conflicts in the Middle East and the attempted linking of these conflicts to the book of Revelation. I don't know if you heard or not, but several news agencies reported this week that over 200 complaints were filed with the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, all basically stating that US Commanders across more than 30 military bases told troops that the Iran war is part of God's plan linked to Armageddon. One commander in particular was alleged to have told the troops that "President Trump is anointed by Jesus to light the signal fire in Iran to cause Armageddon." Let me be very clear, I love my country, but using the book of Revelation as a means to justify secular, political, military operations is a very dangerous thing to do. I'm not making a statement on whether it's right or wrong for the US military to be fighting in the middle east or not, but I am saying that its a very dangerous thing to attempt to use the Bible to justify it. There might be other political reasoning and justifications, but this current war and even future wars, should not be cheered on by followers of Jesus thinking that they're doing a service to God in order to usher in Jesus' return by attacking other people around the world. Let me say it clearly like this, when Christians see people groups around the world as enemies to attack rather than neighbors to love- we are acting in direct opposition to King Jesus.

Just for reference, you can see on your study guide when Armageddon is described in the book of Revelation, it's in chapter 16- here under the chapter 16-18 column- you'll see Armageddon down below at the 6th bowl of wrath, and it is described as demons being released by Satan, the beast, and the false prophet- and these demons perform signs to deceive the kings of the world, and these demons gather the kings of the world together in one last stand of defiance before God, before God's judgement is poured out fully on them and on an entity referred to as "Babylon." So Armageddon is *not* described as nations battling nations, no- it's described as nations *uniting* with nations, in defiance to battle against *God*. This is why it's really important that we know what the Bible says, that we are able to look up and study the details before forming opinions and before getting caught up in things people say that sound "Christian" that are in reality playing into Satan's plan of deception.

In addition to the Biblical description of Armageddon being about nations vs God and not nations vs nations, Babylon historically would have been the area now known as modern day Iraq, not Iran. But even with that being the case, when we get to looking at the description of Babylon in chapter 17, I think it'll be pretty obvious that the name "Babylon" is being used *figuratively*, as a spiritual reference actually connected to a different group of people- not connected to Iraqis, or Iranians. I think when we get there, we'll actually be quite surprised by who the Bible appears to be referring to with the name "Babylon." But I'm going to leave you in that suspense for now. Everybody say "awwww"- awww...

Today we're going to be walking through chapter 10, which describes a very mysterious event, or rather mysterious *events* that God for some reason chose *not* to reveal to us. The details are totally skipped over, but there are a few clues that might help us get closer to understanding at least the nature revolving around what is being said.

But before we dive into it, I want to quickly piggyback off of something that we looked at last week with Pastor Dave. Last week was an outstanding message emphasizing repentance, and before we move on to chapter 10, I want you to note something that I think is worth mentioning that pertains to us forming a Biblically accurate theology. **Verse 21** of chapter 9 says...

Ok, obviously this isn't a full list of all the sins in the world- I think John is just listing some examples of sins that people have been, and are, and *will be* unrepentant of. Now, the New Testament is full of verses that tell us Jesus died for *all* the sins of the world. In other words- every sin out there, can be covered, can be forgiven- but the New Testament also is full of verses telling us the way to *access* that forgiveness is through *repentance*. It's been said many times, but the Biblical word repentance means doing a 180- it's turning from going one way that is stubborn, selfish, sinful, and disobedient to God; and changing directions- turning around a full 180 and instead going to God- surrendering to Him, living for Him, receiving His forgiveness, obeying His ways. And if we *don't* do that act of repentance, then we, at the end of our lives will be held accountable for our sins- Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of the world will *not* be applied to us in that case.

And then I want us all to note that perhaps there are 2 different understandings of repentance we should be aware of. Generally speaking, we often associate the word repentance in describing a single moment in life in which we made the decision to follow Jesus and receive Him as our Lord and Savior- repenting of living only for our own selfishness, and instead humbling ourselves and surrendering to Him as King. But after making that decision to repent before God and receive Jesus as Lord, there still exists opportunity for repentance in our lives. We still mess things up, we still form bad habits, we still react poorly, we let anger get the best of us- whatever it may be- and though we recognize that Jesus has forgiven all our sins because of His sacrifice

and our faith in Him- when we mess up and are convicted by God's Spirit, or our fault is pointed out to us by someone else- we must still respond in repentance. It's not that we have to "get saved" again, or that we must "re-apply" for Jesus' forgiveness, but rather it's a humble confession to the Lord, and to others; admitting our faults, acknowledging the fact that we did receive Jesus' forgiveness back when we made that decision to follow Him- yet we're still very much in need of that forgiveness, and still will be in the future. So a Christian, a follower of Jesus, is one who *has* repented; and one who *continues* to carry with them an attitude of humble repentance, as they strive to obey Jesus more fully in their lives. Alright, my apologies for the long intro, let's dive into the mystery of chapter 10. I'll read it, and then we'll walk back through it. **(10:1-11)**

Ok, before we dive into what is going on here, let's zoom out real quick. We are currently in the cycle of the 7 trumpets sounding- trumpets 1-6 have already been described in chapters 8 and 9, and now we have a brief pause after the 6th trumpet, with chapter 10 here mentioning these *7 thunders* before getting back on track and finishing up with the 7th trumpet described later in chapter 11. Chapter 10 is a little bit of an interlude, just as we saw chapter 7 function as- an interlude that happened after the 6th *seal*. So there's a pause, a different side story if you will, that was inserted after the 6th seal, and now here as well after the 6th trumpet. I think this observation confirms our assumption that with the 7th thing comes finality. With each of the seals, trumpets, bowls- the 7th one of them seems to indicate the very end of time as we know it. And so there's a pause after the 6th thing, in order to feel the full weight of the 7th thing. With the 7th seal- the sky has been rolled up, every mountain removed from it's place, there's trembling before the sight of God, and fire is then dumped out on the Earth. With the 7th Trumpet, as we'll see in chapter 11- it says the *"kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."* And that announcement is

followed by an earthquake and a great hailstorm. The 7th Bowl of Wrath describes the fierce wrath of God falling upon the nations gathered for Armageddon- worst earthquake ever, every island and mountain removed from it's place, 100 pound hailstones, and then a description and lament of the world for the fallen "Babylon." As I've mentioned several times now, it would seem that these three seal, trumpet, bowl cycles all layer on top of each other and the 7th of each are all describing the same last events that take place right before Jesus returns to judge those who reject Him, and set up His kingdom for those who have received Him.

But what we see here in chapter 10, is that there are actually 4 different cycles of 7. In addition to the seals, trumpets, and bowls, there is described here 7 *thunders*. Just as the 7 seals and now the 6 trumpets so far were sounded and John wrote them each down, it appears 7 different "thunders" voiced events that would happen, but when John goes to write what each said, he is told not to describe those events. It's a mystery. We don't have recorded anywhere the events that were prophesied here by the 7 thunders. It's almost weird that they are even mentioned. But there are a few clues mentioned that might help us at least understand the end goal of the 7 thunders, the timing, or at least the general message they are intending to convey.

One clue that is expressly stated is contained in **verse 7**, it basically seems to be telling us that this mystery of the thunders will be finished in the days of the "voice" of the 7th angel- and it's not super clear here in this translation, but the word "voice" is really the Greek verb for sounding a trumpet. Some of the other translations do a better job here, the ESV, NLT, NIV for example translate it something to the effect of "when the 7th angel sounds the trumpet," which is again, more accurate to the original Greek than merely saying when the "voice of the seventh angel sounds." So in other words, when the 7th trumpet sounds, the mystery of the 7 thunders will be finished- the mystery will

be over- it will be fully understood at that time of the 7th trumpet sounding.

Our 2nd clue is contained at the end of that same verse 7, it says after the 7th trumpet sounds *“then the mystery of God is finished, as He announced to His servants the prophets.”* In other words, the mystery of God- the mystery of the 7 thunders that is finished at this time- has already been announced to the prophets previously in the Old Testament. Ok, so what was announced to the prophets previously in the Old Testament? Well, the prophets, no matter who it was, no matter when it was- whether it was Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea etc- all received the same general revelation from God that they proclaimed to the people. And that general message was a message of *repentance*. The overarching, connecting theme of all the Biblical prophets was: repent and return to God, because God’s patience will have a limit and judgement is coming. The 2nd general message that God announced to the prophets, that they in turn announced to the people- was that a special God-sent, King-ruler would eventually come to bring judgment on those disobeying God along with reward for those obeying God. This figure was known in the Hebrew language as: the Messiah. In the New Testament that same Messiah figure is referred to in Greek as the Christ.

Now, applying this overview understanding of the prophets and their message to Revelation 10:7, it does in fact make a lot of sense to say that right before the 7th trumpet sounds, the 7 thunders intent and the prophets’ mysterious message of repentance and Messiah coming to judge and reward will be complete. Everything will be wrapped up upon the sounding of that 7th trumpet. If you flip over on your study guide, you’ll see several verses that describe the return of Jesus along with the sound of a trumpet- Matthew 24, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, Revelation 11- and note that specifically the 1 Corinthians 15 passage says that the rapture will occur at the *last*

trumpet. The Revelation 11 passage says when the 7th angels sounds the trumpet- the 7th being the *last* trumpet in the line of 7 trumpets- when that last, 7th trumpet sounds, it will be announced that the Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Jesus, and the temple in heaven is thus opened.

Again here we see the same type of language seeming to indicate that the 7th thing (in this case the 7th thunder) directly correlates to last events that occur right before Jesus returns bringing final judgment and final reward to earth.

But there's another hidden clue here that gives us a little more insight, something even more specific than just the general understanding that at the 7th seal, 7th trumpet, 7th thunder, 7th bowl everything on earth ends, Jesus returns, rejectors of Jesus judged, followers of Jesus recused and rewarded. This verse 7 mentions the prophets, but there is one prophet in particular that actually used very similar language to describe what sounds like the same angel. Turn with me over to the book of Daniel.

Now before I connect Daniel to Revelation, let's chase a few rabbit trails concerning the book of Daniel. Daniel, along with many from Biblical Israel were taken as exiles to the land of Babylon about 600 years before Jesus was born on Earth. In his book, we read about how Daniel and his friends still followed God and didn't conform to the false gods of Babylon. There we read about Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Daniel's friends) refusing to bow down in worship to their political leader, how they were thrown into a fiery furnace as a result, yet protected through it. We read about Daniel still choosing to pray to God even when the political leader outlawed prayer, and Daniel was thrown into the lion's den as a result, yet God protected him through it. And what happens in the later half of the book of Daniel, in chapter 7, is that God reveals to Daniel some prophecies concerning nations conquering

nations, leading up to a “son of Man” (that would later be Jesus’ favorite nickname for Himself), a “son of Man” ruling eternally over all peoples, nations, and languages.

And in chapter 9 Daniel is really wrestling with Jerusalem currently being destroyed, and his people, the Jewish people, being enslaved in Babylon- and so Daniel is fasting and praying about his Jewish people specifically, and he’s questioning God when would be the timing of their release and restoration, etc. And the answer comes with what is referred to as the 70 weeks prophecy. And basically, long story short, God tells Daniel that when the Babylonians give permission for the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem, there will be a certain amount of time until the Messiah Prince comes. And there’s different ways Bible scholars work out the math, but all are pretty much in agreement that the result of the math is that historically Jesus came at that exact time period that was predicted in Daniel 9. Daniel 9 also predicted that the Messiah would be cut off (which was fulfilled in Jesus’ death on the cross around the year 30), and Daniel 9 also predicted that the rebuilt Jerusalem would be destroyed again (fulfilled in the year 70 with the Romans destroying the temple and Jerusalem). Biblical scholars are pretty much on the same page with each other on all this so far. But it’s verse 27 of chapter 9 that is pretty cryptic and hard to interpret with 100% assurance. It says... **(Dan. 9:27)**

The question is, does the “he” at the first part of the verse refer to the Messiah (which is who the bulk of this passage is referring to), or is it referring to the “prince who is to come,” of the people who destroy the city? What some say is that in this “one week” of verse 27- each day represents a year, so one week = 7 years, and they assume the “he” is referring to the prince who is to come, who is the Anti-Christ, therefore the assumption is that in the end times the Anti-Christ will make a covenant deal with “many” as it says, but that’s typically interpreted as a covenant deal between the Anti-Christ and specifically Israel, but there’s

really not much language here that would indicate that assumption. So they would say that half way through the 7 year period, 3.5 years into the "peace treaty" as they call it, that the anti-Christ would then break the peace treaty, reveal himself as the bad guy, stop the sacrifices in the what I guess would be assumed to a rebuilt Temple at the time, and then all the seals, trumpets, thunders, bowls would start. Or many would say that some of the Revelation cycles of 7 already start during the first 3.5 years.

My personal opinion is that this interpretation requires a lot of assumptions and speculation. I'm ok with this being a guess, but due to the cryptic nature of this verse, and really the cryptic nature of the entire chapter, I think we should be really cautious in assuming this verse points to a peace treaty between an anti-christ figure and an Israel that has rebuilt a temple and is performing sacrifices, and that 3.5 years into it the peace treaty it's broken and the sacrifices are stopped and bad things start happening. We need to be really careful in assuming too much based just on this verse alone, that doesn't seem to have any other verses to clarify it's meaning. I'm kind of curious that perhaps the "he" at the being is referring back to the Messiah Prince, and thus the one week would still represent 7 years, the first 3.5 years being Jesus' ministry before he was "cut off" on the cross, which also put a stop to the need for sacrifices since He was the ultimate Passover sacrifice fulfilling that system, and then the remaining 3.5 years of this Messiah final week prophecy are fulfilled by the 3.5 years of tribulation leading up the *return* of Jesus the Messiah Prince. To me that seems more natural in the context of the passage focus being on the timing revolving around rescue for those who follow Daniel's God, but again, it's pretty cryptic and we should be careful to form any hard conclusions.

But what follows after this, in Daniel chapters 10 and 11, is a very detailed outline of national kingdoms that will arise and fall, leading up to the very end of time as we know it. In Chapter 12, verses 1 and 2,

Daniel describes what sounds like the end, just like Revelation describes, he is told there will be a time of great distress in the world like never experience before, but those found written in the book (that would be the Book of Life mentioned in Revelation 20), those found written in the book would be rescued, the dead will rise- some to everlasting life, others to judgement. And then in verses 5-7, the language is a little awkward, but it sounds pretty similar to the angel description in Revelation 10- the angel is standing above the waters just like the angel in Revelation 10 with one foot on top of land and the other foot on top of the water. And a question is heard asked of this angel, **verse 6** *“How long will it be until the end of these wonders?”* In other words “how long will the “time of distress” back from verse 1 last until everyone who is written in the book is rescued?” And in response to this question, the angel raises his hands toward heaven and swears in **verse 7** that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and then adds *“as soon as they finish smashing the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.”* As mentioned before, the time, times and half a time conveys the idea of 3.5 years- a time being 1 year, a times being 2 years, and half a time being half a year. You add those up and you get 3.5 years, which is confirmed by other places in the Bible that say 1260 days or 42 months for the Tribulation period.

Now, let me chase one more rabbit trail before we connect this angel to the angel in Revelation 10. That’s a very shocking part of the verse that says during this 3.5 year tribulation period the power of the holy people will be smashed. In this context, during this time period, the “holy people” would only mean Daniel’s people, people from the tribes of Israel. Now, if we read pretty much any part of the Old Testament, we’ll find that the tribes of Israel very rarely lived as “holy people” in the sense of how we often in modern times think of “holy righteousness,” but the word holy actually in Bible times referred to the idea of being set apart for God’s purposes, and in that sense, yes Israel was set apart in order to be the vehicle through which God revealed His plan of salvation

available to all people groups. So the power of this “set aside” people group, Daniel’s people, will be broken in the 3.5 year tribulation period leading up to God’s judgement and reward. And this had to have been absolutely shocking for Daniel to hear, the next verse says he heard the words but did not understand. It had to have been mind blowing for Daniel to hear such words- it didn’t make sense. And probably many here today are a little surprised and bewildered as well. I’m not going to spend a whole lot of time today talking about this verse, but I think as we get deeper into the book of Revelation, we will see that individuals *as well as whole people groups*, who do not repent and surrender to Jesus, who instead align themselves with the systems of this world, who reject Jesus and align themselves with the beast, the dragon, the synagogue of Satan- those will face judgement and their earthly power and earthly relevance will be completely smashed.

Ok, so let’s tie this back into Revelation 10. Here in Daniel 12, the angel standing over the waters, raising his hands to Heaven says the time will be 3.5 years. In contrast, Revelation 10, when at that point, right before the 7th angel sounds, when the 7 thunders are completed- the angel says in verse 6: *there will no longer be delay*. The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are giving us time stamps here, basically the hard stuff lasts 3.5 years, and after the 6th wave of bad things happen in that 3.5 year time frame (after the 6th seal, the 6th trumpet, the 6th thunder, the 6th Bowl)- we will know that there is no longer delay- everything wraps up and comes to a close with the 7th trumpet that proclaims the return of Jesus.

Perhaps this is also a bit of a response to those mentioned in the 5th seal, back in **Revelation 6 verse 10**- those killed for their faith in Jesus who will cry out saying “How long, O Lord will You refrain from judging those who live on the earth?” And the answer is that they were to be delayed for a little more time, and now here in Revelation 10 the angel says in verse 6, when *these* things happen, these things will

indicate that there will now no longer be any delay. Time will be up at this point. We still don't have any descriptions, any explanations of the events that the 7 thunders speak of, but we know that the events will be wrapped up together right before the 7th trumpet; *and* we know that the 7th thunders' message points to the message of the prophets: the message of repentance before the coming Messiah judgment/rescue; *and* we know that at that time this message will be finished. It will be complete. The waiting will be over. The mystery of history will be solved.

Then this little scroll, or book, that contains the words of the mysterious 7 thunders, is given to John to eat. It tastes sweet to him, but makes his stomach feel funky. Ezekiel and Jeremiah both experienced "eating" the words of prophecy, the idea being that they consumed, they internalized the words, and God's words are true, they are good, they are sweet- but in John's case it seems that the words, though they were good and true, the effects are really heavy and cause a negative reaction inside upon absorbing their weight. There will be bitterness that arises in connection with these prophecies in regard to those who are alive during this time that is being foretold. For us, as we make connections and begin to understand the book of Revelation better, it's a sweet taste- it's nice to gain knowledge. But in that good experience of gaining knowledge, we have to also absorb the weight of what is being said, and as a result, make sure we are prepared spiritually to endure whatever life difficulties, as this world winds down.

Alright, so we've done some pretty heavy, intense Bible study this morning, perhaps your brain is hurting, attempting to absorb all the details. And I don't want you to leave with your brain hurting, I want you rather to leave with some encouragement that will hopefully be helpful for you here and right now. Often in our lives, as is with the case of the 7 thunders' words, often there are things, answers, reasons, explanations that are sealed and hidden away from our understanding. We don't always know why, but God in His perfect knowledge, at times

does not allow us to see everything that is going on behind the scenes. I invited you church, a few weeks ago, to stand and come forward to join me if you have or are wrestling currently with something you were questioning God about that was hard to understand, that was tempting you to question His goodness. And almost half the church joined me. For some reason, out of His love, or out of His desire to protect us, or to mature us, or to verify our trust in and commitment to Him- God doesn't reveal everything this side of Heaven. There's a certain amount of trust that He wants to call us into.

And here this morning we have a written record in Revelation 10, of God choosing *not* to reveal all of His plan. We did our best to make some connections and get close to what the 7 thunders said will happen, but there's no way to fully do that. The closest we got was us arriving to the understanding that whatever the 7 thunders said, it seems to only last for 3.5 years, and it leads up to the end of time and the return of Jesus. And I think that's how we have to see the mysteries, the things that aren't revealed to us, in this life. We take note that our inability to understand will only last for a period of time. The questioning, the frustration in not understanding why things are the way they are, or the bitterness of not knowing why things happened the way they did- as we wrestle with these thoughts, we have to remind ourselves that there is a time period limit to our frustration. We have to remember that all the things we don't understand- will one day be answered, will become clear, will be resolved in the day when we join Jesus in His Kingdom. And maybe that could also be a very big part of why God *doesn't* always give us all the answers, because He is desiring for us to lean into Him and anticipate with joy the coming day when we will see things as He sees them. So in the meantime, let's dig in deeper, let's seek answers, let's pray for revelation- but place our trust fully in King Jesus as we await His answers.