

REVELATION

Chapter 10

The Angel and the Little Scroll

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.”

10:1–11:14† An interlude of two events: (1) the angel and the little scroll (10:1–11) and (2) the two witnesses (11:1–14). After the gloomy perspective of chs. 8–9, the hope is held out that the opposing forces will not be able totally to obscure the church and her truth. (CSB)

As in the first vision of events on earth (6:1–8:5), so also now in the second earthly vision (8:6–11:19) there is an interlude between the sixth and seventh scenes. In the first earthly vision the interlude (7:1–17) came between the sixth and seventh seals, and it had to do with the protection and comfort of the church in the midst of her sufferings on earth. In the second earthly vision, the interlude (10:1–11:14), placed between the sixth and seventh trumpet-angles, pictures the church in mission and God’s protection of her in that mission. The interlude consists of two scenes. In the first a mighty angel from heaven commissions John to proclaim the prophetic message to all the world (10:1–11). In the second scene John sees two witnesses, who symbolize the Lord (11:3–14). That second scene, which graphically pictures the church in mission, is introduced by a glimpse of John measuring the temple of God (11:1–2). The measuring of the temple, with its worshipers within, assures John that the two witnesses – the church – will be protected by God so as to enable them to carry out their mission. (CC p. 252)

10:1 *mighty angel*. Because this angel is described in terms reminiscent of God’s presence among His people during the exodus (Ex. 13:21), some take this figure to represent Christ. Greek “angelos” can simply mean “messenger.” However, at many places in the OT, “angel of the Lord” does refer to the pre-incarnate Christ. (TLSB)

The first thing that John sees in this first scene of the interlude (10:1–11) is an “angel coming down out of heaven” (10:1). The angel is introduced as “another” angel. The word ἄλλος

“another”) points out that this angel is not one of the seven angels of the churches who have the trumpets, the angels who mediate the second earthly vision and its scenes. While the seven trumpet-angels are mediators of the prophetic message on behalf of the Lord Christ, this angel from heaven has an entirely different role, that of commissioning (or recommissioning) John on behalf of the exalted Christ. (CC pp. 252-253)

The angel is furthermore introduced as a “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) angel (10:1). This is a less common adjective designating one who has might or strength. Only three angels in Revelation are designated as “mighty” (ἰσχυρός): (1) the angel who cried out asking whether there was anyone worthy to receive the scroll and open its seals and by this action introduced the victorious Lamb in the heavenly vision of God’s throne (5:2); (2) the angel here in Revelation 10; and (3) the angel who demonstrates the judgment of Babylon (18:21, who probably is the same angel mentioned in 18:1, where he in a “mighty” voice announces the fall of Babylon, 18:2–3). “Another” (ἄλλος, 10:1) suggests that this mighty angel in Revelation 10 is probably not the same as the mighty angel in 5:2, though both angels have a glorious role, as indicated by their descriptions as “mighty.” (CC p. 253)

In both the LXX and the NT this distinctive adjective “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) often connotes godly strength or might from God, or it describes the might of God himself. Indeed, sometimes the LXX uses “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) in an absolute way as a noun to translate the Hebrew word לַאֲלֹהִים (“God”). The LXX never uses any other word for “mighty” or “strong” (such as μέγας or δυνατός) to translate the Hebrew word לַאֲלֹהִים. Also the LXX never uses “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) to describe any angel. Though the LXX does use “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) to describe both people and things on earth (e.g., Gen 41:31; Num 13:31), it never uses it for any heavenly figure other than God. This usage of “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) for “God” (לַאֲלֹהִים) in the LXX was evidently carried over into the pseudepigraphal literature of Judaism. (CC pp. 253-254)

In the NT “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) appears twenty-nine times, nine in Revelation. As in the LXX it is used as an adjective in reference to things such as the forces of nature (Mt 14:30), for human beings (1 Cor 1:27), and for emotions (Heb 5:7). The comparative is used of Jesus Christ as “mightier” than John the Baptist (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7; Lk 3:16). The adjective is also used for a “mighty man” who metaphorically represents Satan (Mt 12:29; Mk 3:27; Lk 11:21), though Jesus is represented by the comparative form “a mightier man” (Lk 11:22). But it is never used of an angel, in keeping with the LXX. Of the nine times that “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) appears in Revelation, one is in connection with God (18:8); two are in connection with human beings (6:15; 19:18); one is in connection with Babylon (18:10); one with a voice of a crowd of people which is likened to “mighty, crashing” thunders (19:6); three with angels (5:2; 10:1; 18:21); and one with a “mighty” voice of an angel (18:2). Revelation is the only book in the entire Greek Bible which uses “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) to describe or identify an angel. (CC p. 255)

John probably was aware of the fact that the LXX reserved the use of “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) in the heavenly sphere only for God, either as an adjectival description or as an appellation, but never used it for an angel. This stands out even more in light of the fact that the synoptic gospels refer to Jesus as “the mightier one” (ὁ ἰσχυρότερος), the one mightier than John the Baptist (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7; Lk 3:16). In early Jewish literature the word “mighty” (ἰσχυρός) would not ordinarily be used for an angel since that word had been canonized by its theological usage in reference to God. And yet John, alone of all biblical translators and authors, does use such a word for an angel here in Revelation 10. (CC p. 354)

Because the angel here in 10:1 is called “mighty,” some have conjectured that this is a cryptic way of identifying this angel as Gabriel. Gabriel in Hebrew (גַּבְרִיאֵל) does mean “mighty one of

God.” Both the angels Gabriel and Michael appear in Daniel, and some have suggested that as Michael has a role in Revelation (12:7), so also Gabriel appears in a role as the “mighty” angel from heaven here in 10:1. However, John does not recognize this angel as Gabriel. When John does recognize the angel Michael, he will identify him in 12:7. Since Gabriel is well known not only from the book of Daniel but also from the role he played in the birth of Jesus (Lk 1:19, 26), most likely John would have recognized him as Gabriel, and even if not, the angel would have identified himself as such. But since John does not recognize him and since the angel does not identify himself as Gabriel, most likely this “mighty” angel is not that particular archangel. (CC pp. 254-255)

The fact that this angel is called “mighty” does not necessarily mean that this angel has divine power inherent in his own nature and character, though that is a possibility if this angel is identified with God or Jesus Christ. Rather, identifying the angel as “mighty” suggests a *divine-like power* by which and under which he carries out his role on behalf of God. As in the case of Gabriel and Michael, when the divine appellation (ἄξ) is attached to a name, it indicates that that angel has been given certain powers by God and that he is acting under the divine power of God, a power which is not inherently his own. The fact that an angel has the divine appellation ἄξ as a part of his name indicates that he is close to God in the heavenly realm of his divine majesty, and that when sent out by God he acts with God’s power and under God’s authority. While the angel here in Rev 10:1 is not named, “mighty” (ἰσχυρός), which is used in the LXX for the divine appellation, could indicate that he is also close to God’s heavenly glory and acts in his power and under his powerful authority. (CC p. 255)

coming down from heaven – The angel is “coming down out of heaven” (10:1). Heaven is the dwelling place of God (11:19). “Out of heaven” declares that this angel is from God’s holy presence and is sent out by God. In 3:12 and 21:2 “out of heaven” and “from God” appear in apposition, suggesting that to come from heaven means to come from God. Two other times John sees an angel descending from heaven. In 18:1–2 an angel announces in a “mighty voice” the judgment of Babylon, the archenemy of God’s people on earth. This angel appears to be the same as the “mighty angel” (ἄγγελος ἰσχυρός) in 18:21, who throws a millstone into the sea, symbolic of Babylon’s destruction. And in 20:1–2 John also sees an angel coming down out of heaven to bind Satan. In all three cases the angel acts under God’s authority and in his stead. (CC pp. 255-256)

wrapped in a cloud – The angel is “clothed about with a cloud” (10:1). In the OT a cloud is often associated with God, in particular with his presence among his people. In the form of a pillar the cloud indicated God’s presence by which he led and protected Israel in the wilderness (Ex 13:21; 14:19–20; Num 9:17–21). It was through a cloud that God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai and at the entrance of the tabernacle (Ex 24:15–18; Deut 31:15–16). The cloud was also a demonstration of God’s glory (Ex 16:10), in particular when the cloud covered the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–35). In Ezek 10:3–4 a cloud similarly conveyed the presence of God’s glory in and out of the temple. And the cloud is also referred to as a conveyance or heavenly vehicle of God (Ps 104:3; Is 19:1; Ezek 1:4). (CC p. 256)

On occasion a cloud is associated with a heavenly figure who is designated by a term or terms other than “God” or “Yahweh,” but in these cases the figure nevertheless seems to be God or a person of the triune Godhead. In Dan 7:13 in the heavenly court, the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days accompanied by clouds. And in Ex 14:19–20 “the angel of God” is connected with the pillar of cloud by which God protected Israel from the Egyptians, and “the angel of God” (Ex 14:19) is apparently the same as “Yahweh” (Ex 13:21; 14:24). Thus the cloud is associated with both Yahweh himself and the angel of God. (CC p. 256)

This significance of the cloud is carried over into the NT. God speaks to Jesus from a cloud on the mount of transfiguration (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35). Like the Son of Man in Dan 7:13, Jesus, the Son of Man, will come on clouds when he returns to earth in judgment at the End (Mt 24:30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27). A cloud also received Jesus as he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9; cf. 1 Thess 4:17; Rev 11:12). (CC pp. 256-257)

In Revelation “cloud,” νεφέλη, appears seven times, either in the plural or singular, and in every instance for a supernatural purpose. Rev 1:7 says that Jesus Christ will come “with the clouds” (μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν) and everyone will see him, even those who pierced him. In 11:12 the two witnesses, who represent the church in mission, after their resurrection are taken into heaven “on the cloud” (ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ), similar to the Lord’s ascension when a cloud enveloped and removed him from the sight of his disciples. In 14:14–16, at the coming of the Lord Christ, a “white cloud” appears, and the Son of Man is sitting on the cloud and on or from it he executes the “harvest” at the End. (CC p. 257)

Here in 10:1, because the angel is “clothed about with a cloud,” it seems clear that the cloud was not a *conveyance* by which the angel descended from heaven (as it will be at the second coming of Jesus; cf. also Mt 24:30). Nor does the angel *speak* to John from the cloud, as God did to Jesus and the three apostles (Mt 17:5). Rather, the mighty angel is *clothed, wrapped around*, with a cloud as if it were his garment. Here in Rev 10:1, the perfect passive participle (περιβεβλημένον) indicates that *before* the angel descended from heaven, he was “clothed about” with a cloud *by someone other than himself*. That is, he was clothed by God or by another angel under God’s authority and by his command (cf. Zech 3:3–4). Thus the angel came to John not on his own authority but by that of God. (CC p. 257)

Elsewhere in the entire Bible, only God is ever spoken of as having been covered or clothed with a cloud. In Lam 3:42–44 God covers himself with a cloud in order to conceal himself from his people because of his anger over their sins. Nevertheless, a cloud could also be a *majestic covering which exhibits the glory of God*. In Ezek 1:4 the cloud with flashing lightning reflects the heavenly glory of God (cf. Ezek 1:28). Like the pillar of cloud in the wilderness, which was at night a pillar of fire and light (Ex 13:21–22), so also the majestic covering of the cloud, by which God clothed himself, could be a covering of light. The cloud in Ezekiel, with its flashes of lightning (Ezek 1:4, 13), was also connected with a rainbow (Ezek 1:28), and thus all the more was God’s heavenly glory visually exhibited. (CC p. 257)

Other than God, the angel of Rev 10:1 is the only figure in the Bible who is clothed with a cloud. (He also has a rainbow; see below.) In the case of God the cloud can conceal his glory (Lam 3:44) or it can exhibit and display it (Ezek 1:4, 28). In the case of the angel of Rev 10:1 the cloud can be both for concealment and display. The angel’s own person and identity is *concealed* in order to show and emphasize that he is acting not on his own authority, but rather on that of God. The cloud also represents the glory and majesty under which he acts on behalf of God in order to *demonstrate* that his mission is a godly and glorious one. The cloud is thus a token or “heraldic emblazonment” which points to the fact that the angel is a herald and messenger acting directly “within his [God’s] glory and under his authority.” The angel wears the mantle of God as he commissions John to proclaim the message to all peoples (10:11). (CC pp. 257-257)

rainbow. Cf. Eze 1:26–28. The rainbow became a sign of God’s pledge never to destroy the earth again by a flood (Gen 9:8–17). (CSB)

A second identifying mark of the angel is “the rainbow-like halo” (ἡ ἵρις, 10:1). A rainbow-like halo in 4:3 encircled the heavenly throne of God (cf. Ezek 1:28). There the rainbow appears as a reminder of God’s promise to the human race and his creation (Gen 8:22; 9:13–17) and also of his gracious covenant of salvation toward humankind (Is 54:8–9). Does the rainbow on the head of this angel bear the same meaning as a reminder? The rainbow surrounding the throne of God is emerald green in color (4:3). No color is ascribed to the rainbow-like halo of this angel. Whatever the difference in color between the rainbows—if any—the fact that the definite article (ἡ) introduces the angel’s rainbow suggests that it is to be identified with or related to that of God’s throne. *The angel’s rainbow has the same significance as the rainbow that surrounds God’s throne. God has placed on the angel the visible token and sign of his covenant of grace with the human race.* The angel’s rainbow is a reflection of the rainbow encircling the throne of God, and it thus reminds John of God’s merciful covenant by which “he has bound himself to the human race” and his creation. (CC p. 258)

In all of biblical literature only God and the angel of Revelation 10 are associated and adorned with the rainbow, with this visible sign of God’s covenant with the human race. In the Apocalypse of Abraham (10:3; 11:1–3) the angel Iaoel had a headdress or turban that looked like a rainbow; that is the closest parallel in Jewish literature to the rainbow of the angel of Revelation 10. In Mal 3:1 “the angel of the covenant” is mentioned, the angel who is identified as “the Lord” who is to come, whom the people desire and for whom they wait. But the angel of Mal 3:1 does not bear a rainbow. However, both angels are associated with God’s covenant, the angel of Mal 3:1 by explicit statement and that of Rev 10:1 by inference of the rainbow. Therefore there may be a relationship between the two angels. (CC pp. 258-259)

John’s use of the word ἵρις might have led some of his hearers to think of a messenger of the gods in Greek mythology. Iris was the name of a messenger of the gods. In particular this messenger was known as the goddess of the rainbow and was the attendant and messenger of Juno, the wife and queen of Jupiter. When Iris acted as a messenger, she wore a garment of many colors—the colors of the rainbow. When a rainbow appeared in the skies, those familiar with Greek mythology might think of this goddess messenger and wonder whether the gods were sending some kind of message to human beings on earth. Whether John was conscious of this when he used ἵρις (“rainbow-like halo”) is a matter of conjecture. But he is the only translator or author in the Greek Bible (LXX and NT) to use the word ἵρις for “rainbow,” instead of τόξον. If John used ἵρις with knowledge of its pagan mythological background, he did so to make a point. *There is a real and true messenger, not of the former false gods, but of the one true God. That messenger is not the pagan goddess Iris, but rather this angel, who represents the true God and Creator of all life, the God who has bound himself with his creation in a covenant.* For this reason the angel wears the halo-like rainbow on his head. (CC p. 259)

Whatever the reason for John’s use of the word ἵρις, the theological meaning of the rainbow on the head of the angel is clear. The angel in his mission is a messenger of God. He is on a heraldic mission in which he demonstrates and reflects both God’s glory and mercy—God’s glory as the Creator and God’s mercy in his covenant with the human race. And the angel’s mission is one by which this divine glory and saving mercy will be proclaimed and adorned. (CC p. 259)

his face was like the sun – A third identifying indicator is the face of the angel: “his face was like the sun” (10:1). While the cloud and rainbow-like halo demonstrate a relationship with God the Father, the sunlit face suggests a relationship with Jesus Christ, for in 1:16 the “appearance” of Christ as the Son of Man shines like the sun. In the OT this description of a “face ... like the sun” is not encountered. But the skin of Moses’ face shone (Ex 34:29–35), and the Shulammitte is described as “looking down like the dawn, beautiful like the moon, bright like the

sun” (Song 6:10). Also the Aaronic benediction pronounces the blessing “Yahweh make his face shine upon you” (Num 6:25), a thought echoed in the psalms (Ps. 31:16 {MT 31:17}; 67: {MT 67:2}; 80:3, 7, 19 {MT 80:4, 8, 20}; 119:135; see also Dan. 9:17). In the above instances, however, God’s sun-like glory is reflected and/or directed toward individuals. But for God only is the sun used as a symbol of his glory (e.g., Is 60:1–3, 20; Ps 84:11 [MT 84:12]); it is also used as a designation of the messianic figure mentioned in Mal 4:1–2. (CC pp. 259-260)

It is in the NT in particular that this explicit description of a face like the sun is used. In Matthew’s account of the transfiguration Jesus’ face “shone [ἔλαμψεν] like the sun” (Mt 17:2). This indicates that Jesus has God’s radiant glory, to which he will return after his death and resurrection (Mt 17:9; cf. Jn 17:1–5; 2 Pet 1:16–18). In Rev 1:16, when the exalted Christ appeared to John to commission him to write the revelation, his face and appearance were like the sun, thus demonstrating that he is now in glory—a glory that brings light into a world of darkness (cf. Jn 1:4; 8:12; Heb 1:3). (CC p. 260)

The only other figure in the NT whose face is like the sun is this angel of Revelation 10. While other angels are associated with light and glory (Rev 18:1; cf. Lk 9:26; Acts 12:7) and with the sun (Rev 19:17), only the angel here in Revelation 10 has a “face ... like the sun.” There are, however, three stated differences between the exalted Christ’s appearance, which shone like the sun (1:16), and that of the angel. First, 1:16 says that Jesus’ “appearance” (ὄψις) was like the sun. Here in 10:1 only the “face” (πρόσωπον) of the angel was like the sun. This is a marked and possibly also an important difference. Though both words (πρόσωπον and ὄψις) can be used for the “face,” the prime meaning of ὄψις is “appearance,” the whole appearance of a person. Because the appearance is usually focused on the face, often ὄψις is translated as “face,” but with the understanding that the whole appearance is involved. On the other hand, πρόσωπον is used only for the face, though as a figure of speech it can refer to the whole appearance of something that lacks a face, such as the earth (Lk 12:56; 21:35). In Mt 17:2, in his transfigured glory, only Jesus’ face (πρόσωπον) was like the sun, as is the angel’s face here in Rev 10:1. However, because Jesus’ outer garments were “white like the light” (φῶς), Christ’s *whole appearance* was like the “light” of the sun (Mt 17:2). But when the exalted Lord Christ appears to John in Rev 1:16, it is clearly stated (by means of the word ὄψις) that not only his face but also his whole appearance was like the sun. Because only the angel’s face is like the sun and not his whole appearance, *with no hint that his outer garment was like the light but rather with the statement instead that it was a cloud*, the angel is not the light as Christ is. Rather, he reflects that sunlit glory, that light of the exalted Christ. (CC pp. 260-261)

This interpretation is supported further by the second stated difference. Rev 1:16 states that Christ’s appearance “was like the sun when it shines *in its full power*,” in its most brilliant light. In contrast, the angel’s face is only “*like the sun*” (10:1), indicating the sun in its lesser or dimmed light. This suggests an element of comparison, namely, that the appearance and the face of Jesus were brighter than that of the angel. While both the exalted Christ and the angel radiate the glory of God, they do not do so in equal measure. The exalted Lord Christ radiates God’s glory in full strength, because he actually shares in that glory. The angel also radiates that same glory, but in a lesser degree of brilliance, for he is not a sharer of that glory as Christ is. While Christ directly radiates that glory, the angel does so only indirectly by reflection. Christ is the radiant glory of God. The angel is a *reflection* of that radiant glory as it is seen in Christ’s face and appearance. (CC p. 261)

The third difference is that because of the brilliant appearance of Christ “like the sun when it shines in its full power” (1:16), John fell down at Jesus’ feet “as dead” (1:17). He could not possibly stand before the Lord Christ in all of his exalted glory. When Christ appeared on the

mount of transfiguration—a preview of this exalted glory into which he would enter after his resurrection at his ascension—the disciples fell on their faces at the voice of the Father from heaven (Mt 17:6). It was a voluntary falling down, an act of worship. But when Christ appeared to John to commission him to write Revelation, the apostle did not fall down voluntarily in worship. He was knocked down and became “as dead,” so overwhelmed was he by the brilliant glory of the exalted Christ (cf. Jn 18:6). In Revelation 10, however, even though the angel’s face was like the sun, John did not fall down before him, either involuntarily or voluntarily, in awe or in an act of worship. (CC pp. 261)

his legs like pillars of fire. Since the exodus supplies background for this central part of Revelation, this feature may recall the pillars of fire and cloud that guided (Ex 13:21–22) and protected (Ex 14:19, 24) the Israelites during their desert journey. (CSB)

The final thing John notes about the angel’s appearance is that “his legs” were “like pillars of fire” (10:1). No other figure in biblical literature is so described. However, the angel’s legs are reminiscent of the feet of Jesus Christ in 1:15 and of the legs of the angelic figure (the Son of Man) in Dan 10:4–6. In Jewish literature such legs or feet are not unknown. For example, in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah (6:13), a great angel is described with feet of bronze which had been melted in fire. And in the OT, in the Song of Songs (5:15) the male lover is described with legs that were like pillars of marble (cf. Dan 2:31–35). But none of these figures has feet or legs like the angel of Revelation 10. The only pillar of fire mentioned in the Bible is that of Exodus 13–14, the pillar of cloud and of fire by which Yahweh and his angel led and protected Israel in the wilderness. Whatever interpretation can be derived from the brass-like feet of Jesus in Rev 1:15 (such as representing victory and dominance over enemies like death and the grave) or from the symbolism of the pillar of fire in the OT (such as guidance and protection), the legs of this angel suggest a stability and fearful power which cannot be resisted. Perhaps the angel’s legs, like pillars of fire, combine both the symbolism of Jesus’ brass-like feet and of the pillar of fire. Because Jesus is the conqueror of death and the grave, symbolized by his brass-like feet, this angel now (as a result of that victory) is on a mission for God and Christ, a mission that will prevail and be victorious. And just as it was by means of the pillar of cloud and fire that God protected his people at the exodus (Ex 14:19–20), so now this angel’s legs, being like pillars of fire, remind John that, as the mission of the angel is carried out, God will protect and guide his people in that mission. (CC pp. 261-262)

10:2 little scroll. Not the same as the scroll of destiny in ch. 5, since that scroll was intended to reveal its contents and this scroll was to be eaten. Furthermore, the term “little scroll” sets this particular scroll off from all others. (CSB)

In contrast to the sealed scroll introduced at 5:1, this one is open. However, the content of this scroll is never clearly revealed. Even when is commanded to eat this scroll and prophesy its message in vv. 9-11, its actual content remains a mystery. (TLSB)

The angel has “in his hand a small scroll, which has been opened” (Rev 10:2). Though the “scroll” is identified in the Greek as both a “small scroll” (βιβλαρίδιον, 10:2, 9, 10) and a “scroll” (βιβλίον, 10:8), it is probably smaller in size than the seven-sealed scroll (βιβλίον) of 5:1, 4, 8. Also the fact that the seven-sealed scroll of the victorious Lamb controls the entire prophetic message of Revelation, of which the angel of Revelation 10 and his scroll are a part, supports this interpretation. (CC p. 262)

More important than the size, however, are the contents of the scroll and its symbolical role. The exact contents of the scroll are not stated. Of the various suggestions made concerning its

contents, there is general agreement that it is related in some way to the seven-sealed scroll in Revelation 5. (CC p. 262)

The symbolical usage of this “small scroll” helps to determine its possible subject matter, for John is to eat it and then proclaim its contents to all peoples (10:11). Either it contains a part of the larger seven-sealed scroll, or its contents are the same as that of the seven-sealed scroll of Revelation 5. Most likely it is the latter, for as the seven-sealed scroll contained the prophetic message of events to take place from the ascension of Christ up to his second coming, that same message (symbolized now by the scroll of the angel) is given to John to receive (to eat) and then to proclaim to all people. First John was instructed to proclaim the revelation of Jesus Christ to the seven churches, that is, *to all of God’s people on earth* (1:4, 11). The revelation is encapsulated in the seven-sealed scroll (Revelation 5). Now in Revelation 10 John is also to proclaim this same prophetic message, symbolized now by the angel’s scroll, *to the entire population of the earth* (10:11). The scroll of the seven seals at first was unopened; its message was secret until the victorious Lamb received it from God (5:1–5). The scroll of this angel is already opened (ἤνεωγμένον, 10:2, 8, perfect passive participle), signifying that its message is known to John, for it is the same message as that of the seven-sealed scroll. Its contents need not be identified here, for the purpose of the angel’s small scroll is not to give a further explanation of nor to repeat the same message of the seven-sealed scroll, but rather to act as *a symbol of the seven-sealed scroll’s message*. That is, John’s eating of the scroll symbolizes the action of John to take the one prophetic message, to make it first a part of himself, and then to proclaim it to the world. If the angel’s scroll were smaller in size, perhaps it would be because the prophetic message given to the church (the seven-sealed scroll) would contain more; for example, the seven-sealed scroll included the suffering the church would endure and how God would protect and comfort his people (7:1–17). The message (of the angel’s small scroll) that is now to be proclaimed to the world by John and the church, while *in essence* the same as the message that reveals and alerts the Christians as to what is to happen (4:1, the seven-sealed scroll), would *not necessarily* be given *in the same amount of detail*. The proclaimer needs to know the full message of Law and Gospel even if he is to speak to others only a condensed summary of it. (CC p. 263)

It had been opened some time in the past and was still lying open. The open-book nature of this scroll is a clue to its contents, which will be revealed at the end of this chapter (The fourfold description of the earth’s inhabitants emphasizes the universal human audience of the gospel. Jesus’ words to John in verses 9 and 11 are also his words to us: Grow daily in faith as you hear and read the Word of the gospel. Wrestles with the bitterness of soul that is brought on by living the gospel in an unbelieving world. Makes that same sinful world that was the object of my redeeming work you audience for sharing the contents of the scroll. (PBC pp. 104, 107, 108)

right foot on the sea ... left foot on the land. Indicates his tremendous size and symbolizes that his coming has to do with the destiny of all creation (cf. v. 6). (CSB)

Suggests that this angel’s prophecy is of universal significance. (TLSB)

The angel “placed his foot, the right one, on the sea, and the left one on the land” (10:2) while still holding the scroll in his hand. In the OT, “sea” and “land” are elements in a formula that expresses the totality of all things created: the heavens and earth and sea. While the formula is often used in contexts that have in view God as the Creator of all things, including the heavens, here in 10:2 “land” and “sea” focus just on the totality of the earth. The dominance of the angel is shown by him standing on the sea and the land. By straddling the entire earth the angel demonstrates that he—and the mission on which God sent him—will dominate the earth, its history, its people, its present and future—everything. In the biblical writings it is God the

Creator who dominates and controls everything, to whom indeed all life is subject (Ps 146:5–10; 1 Cor 15:25–28; Eph 1:20–22). Now God has placed the land and the sea under the dominance of this angel and his mission. The earth and everything in it are now subject to the angel, not because he is the owner by right of creation, for he swears by him who lives forever and who is the Creator and owner. Rather, God the Creator has subjected all terrestrial life to the angel for the sake of the mission he has given to the angel. God, however, still retains ownership and remains in control. In particular, the angel and his mission dominate the two beasts that come out of the sea and land as pictured in Revelation 13. These two beasts under the direction of the dragon (12:17–13:3) are the great enemies of God’s people and their mission on earth. But for the sake of that mission the angel places his feet on the sea and land, that is, on the two beasts (cf. Gen 3:15; Rom 16:20). (CC pp. 263-264)

The fact that the angel stands astride the entire orb of the earth indicates his gigantic size. His size is not actually mentioned. It is left to the imagination of the reader. But the stature of the angel must have been colossal. In the whole panorama of the biblical writings, there is no other heavenly figure of such colossal size (except, of course, for God, e.g., Is 40:12–18). In both Jewish and Christian imaginative thought, one meets heavenly figures of a giant size, but these are in writings later than the biblical writings. The idea of a very large angel may be based on angels such as the one David saw standing over Jerusalem with a drawn sword (1 Chr 21:16; cf. 2 Sam 24:16–17). That angel stood “between heaven and earth” (1 Chr 21:16). This seems to suggest an angel larger than ones encountered elsewhere by human beings (cf. Num 22:21–31; Josh 5:13–15). In 2 Enoch 1:4–5 two huge angel-like figures whose faces shone like the sun appeared. In the Gospel of Peter (35–40) the two angels at Jesus’ empty tomb are described as being so tall that their heads reached into the heavens; the resurrected Christ was even taller, for his head reached beyond the heavens. Another description of a huge angel is given to us by the church father Hippolytus (ca. A.D. 170 to 236). According to Hippolytus there was a Jewish-Christian sect called the Elkesaites which arose around A.D. 100. Their leader, a certain Elkesai, produced a writing called the Book of Elkesai, in which he described how he had received a special revelation from heaven by means of an angel. This angel was gigantic in size, being ninety-six miles in height. This revelation, given also by means of a scroll (βιβλος), Elkesai wrote down in his book, which is no longer extant. One other description of a gigantic angel is found in the Babylonian Talmud (*Hagigah*, 13b). This angel, whose name was Sandalfon, was larger than his fellow angelic colleagues “by a [distance of] five hundred years’ journey.” When Sandalfon stood on the earth, his head reached into heaven unto the four winged creatures described in Ezekiel 1. (CC pp. 264-265)

These four instances of gigantic angels, found in 2 Enoch, the Gospel of Peter, Elkesai, and the Babylonian Talmud, suggest that there were Jewish and Christian traditions which imagined angelic figures of an enormous size. Such gigantic angels drew attention because of their particular and important missions as they represented God. Whether John knew of these traditions of gigantic angels or not, the colossal angel of Revelation 10 is similar to them. Most likely John did not know of the four gigantic angels just cited, for they may have postdated the writing of Revelation, though the angels of 2 Enoch and of Elkesai are close to Revelation in time. However, most likely John was familiar with the OT example in 1 Chr 21:16. (CC p. 265)

The size of the angel here in Revelation 10 draws attention to the *important mission* for which he has been sent by God. The angel dominates everything on earth. As he stands astride the earth, no power, human or demonic, can push him aside or overthrow him. That is to say, the mission which the angel represents will rule everything on earth, so much so that not even the “gates of hell” (Mt 16:18) can oppose and overcome it. The whole dress and demeanor of the angel also enhances his stature. He comes to John in the majesty and authority of God himself as he stands

in place of Christ to commission John and the church on earth. No one and no power can resist this angel and the mission he represents, the mission of John and the people of God which Revelation portrays as about to commence. (CC p. 265)

10:3 *loud voice like a roaring lion* – The roar of a lion indicates that the angel speaks with the majestic authority of God through his word. The description of the angel’s voice as “loud” or “great” (μεγάλη) is not unique. However, no other figure in Revelation speaks with the voice of a lion, as does the angel here in 10:3, and he does so only once. In the OT God is likened to a lion. In Job 10:16 God’s majestic power is compared to the lion’s prowess as a hunter (see also Hos 5:14; Amos 3:12). In Amos 3:8 the Word of God impels the prophet to speak it just as surely as the roar of the lion incites fear. And the lion, as it stands fearlessly over its prey, is used in a simile of God’s judgment against his unfaithful people (Is 31:4) and as a metaphor for God’s judgment of all peoples on earth, including Israel (Jer 25:30–38). While the lion is used on occasion in reference to mighty men of renown (E.g., Prov. 19:12; 20:2; cf. Gen 49:9; Ezek. 19:1–6), in the OT it is never so used in reference to angels; in the heavenly sphere it is used only of God. In all of biblical literature, only the voice of God (Hos 11:10) and the angel of Revelation 10 are likened to the voice of a lion. (CC p. 266)

It is little wonder that the voice of this angel has been compared to or understood to be “that of the deity.” The lion-like voice of the angel more likely points to the strength, volume, and depth of his voice. There is no other voice that is equal to his, for it is with the voice of God that the angel speaks.⁵⁹ The lion’s voice—like the cloud and rainbow, the angel’s radiant countenance, his legs of fire, and especially his gigantic size—demands attention for the sake of the mission which he will command John and the church to undertake (10:11). It is a mission that will cause all creation to tremble, but especially all people. In the same way that the roar of a lion instills fear and awe (cf. Amos 3:8) and the lion possesses a roar which no human can outshout, *so the mission of John and the church as they speak the message of God will overcome all opposition*. It is a mission that will instill fear because the message is one of judgment—judgment that serves the purpose of repentance if the message is heeded (Jer 25:30–38; cf. Rev 9:20–21; 16:10–11). Thus the importance of the lion-like voice of the angel is not in its content—what the voice says—for the angel speaks no verbal message. Rather, its importance lies in directing John’s attention to the voice which speaks the commands from heaven, “Go, take the scroll,” and “it is necessary that you again prophesy” to all peoples (10:8, 11). (CC p. 266)

seven thunders. In 8:5; 11:19; 16:18 thunder is connected with divine punishment. Here, too, it anticipates the judgment to fall on those who refuse God’s love and grace. (CSB)

As one of the most powerful sounds in nature, thunder is repeatedly associated with God’s voice (cf. John 12:28–29). (TLSB)

When the angel cries out with his lion-like roar, John hears “the seven thunders” speaking “their own voices” (10:3). What are these “seven thunders,” and what is their purpose? Nowhere else in either the OT or NT are seven thunders mentioned. However, the presence of the definite article (αἱ) indicates that these thunders are a specific or familiar entity. It may be that these seven thunders were derived from the fact that in the OT God’s voice was likened to thunder and that his voice could be thought of as sevenfold as it reverberated with its power. In Amos 1:2 God’s roaring voice is likened to thunder. In Joel 3:16 when the Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem, the whole earth and sky will shake and tremble (cf. Is 30:30). And in Ps 29:3 God’s voice is compared to thunder as part of a sevenfold description of the voice of Yahweh with its powerful effect. Whatever the exact source of these seven thunders, it is apparent that they accompany the lion-like voice of the angel *to enhance his stature as a spokesman for God*. The

angel, in commissioning John and the church to proclaim the message, acts under the majestic and authoritative command of God, as if the thunder-like voice of God himself were speaking. John had to listen; he had to act. Perhaps there came to the mind of John the thundering voice of God on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16–19). The term usually translated “thunder(s)” (קֶלֶד, Ex 19:16) literally is the plural “voices, sounds.” According to a rabbinic tradition, God gave the Law at Sinai to Moses through his thunderous voice, which divided itself into seven voices, which in turn were divided into seventy languages, thus demonstrating that the Law was to be spoken to all nations. So now, as John received the message by way of the angel and the scroll, the speaking of the “seven thunders” could suggest that he was to proclaim the message of God to all peoples and tongues. In Jewish tradition the number seven, the number used to symbolize God’s presence through his Holy Spirit,⁶⁴ would also indicate both the holiness and completeness of this God-given message, and thus, by the power of God’s Spirit, this message would be sufficient to accomplish that for which it was sent. (CC p. 267)

Upon hearing the voices of “the seven thunders” (Rev 10:3), John “was about to write” (10:4), either what they were saying or something about the impression they had made on him. Whether the voices were intelligible to John is not stated. The fact that it says he “was about to write” could suggest that he probably did understand what they were saying. If he did understand, it could be that the thunders were about to give to John another sevenfold vision of seven scenes, comparable to the sevenfold visions of the seals, trumpets, and censers. However, that does not seem plausible, for John is instructed *not* to write and reveal what the thunders were saying. It is more likely that, if John did understand the voices of the thunders, they were not revealing any further material that God desired to be included in the prophetic message of Revelation. Rather, they likely were uttering holy things of God’s heavenly glory that were too sacred and beautiful for anyone to hear while still on earth. A third possibility is that John did not understand what the thunders were saying, but rather was about to write down the glorious impression and the holy thoughts about God’s heavenly majesty that the thunders inspired and motivated him to think. Whatever the contents of the voices of the thunders, whether intelligible or not, John’s desire to write what they were saying or inspiring him to think is understandable. For he had been instructed by the Christ to write what he saw and heard (1:1–3, 19). In 10:4 we have the only suggestion anywhere in Revelation that John had pen in hand to write down immediately everything he saw and heard. (CC pp. 267-268)

10:4 Seal up. In Da 8:26; 12:4, 9 the prophecies are sealed until the last times, when they will be opened. What the seven thunders said will not be revealed until their proper time. Cf. the angel’s instructions in 22:10 not to seal the prophecies of Revelation. (CSB)

The prophecy voiced by the seven thunders will apply later, though when is not made clear. (TLSB)

But a “voice from heaven” tells John, “Seal what the seven thunders have spoken, for you must not write those things” (10:4). This voice from heaven could be that of God the Father or Christ, for the entire prophetic message comes from the Father and the Son (1:1–3, 19; cf. 14:13; 18:4). Or it could be the voice of an angel speaking for God and Christ (1:1; 22:6, 16). Most likely it is the voice of God himself, for a similar voice speaks from heaven in 18:4, where clearly it is the voice of God, for it says, “Come out from her, O my people.” Ultimately, this voice must be the authoritative voice of God, for God/Christ alone could command John not to write something which he was hearing, because it was by God’s command that he should write in the first place. Only God could counter an original command which he alone had given. (CC pp. 268-269)

With this voice from heaven and its command not to write and reveal what the thunders were saying, the purpose of these thundering voices becomes clear. It is definitely *not* to give to John a further revelation of events on earth or in heaven. *Rather, their purpose is to enhance and thus make stand out in bold relief all the more the lion-like voice of the angel for the ultimate goal of highlighting the importance of the angel's mission.* The voices thus act as God's imprimatur on the angel's voice and mission. As God once spoke with his majestic, thundering voice at Mt. Sinai, so he once again speaks to John in the presence of this angel in Revelation 10. (CC pp. 268-269)

10:5 *raised his right hand.* A part of oath taking (see Ge 14:22–23; Dt 32:40). (CSB)

Cf. Daniel 12:7, especially due to the fact that the angel swears by “Him who lives forever and ever.” The solemnity of this oath adds gravity to what follows. (TLSB)

The angel astride the earth raises “his hand, the right one, toward heaven” (10:5) and takes an oath, swearing by the living God, who is the Creator of the earth and all life. The overall intent of the oath is to dramatize the certainty and truthfulness of the contents of the scroll in the angel's hand, that is, the message that John is to proclaim to all peoples. In the OT God is sometimes portrayed as swearing—taking an oath—often raising his (right) hand to heaven (Ex 6:8; Is 62:8; Ezek 20:15, 23). Deut 32:40, in the Song of Moses, says that God swears by lifting up his hand to heaven, and he swears by himself because he lives forever. Since God cannot invoke anyone greater than himself, he swears by himself. No one is greater than he because he alone lives forever and is the Creator of all life (Gen 22:15–16; cf. Heb 6:13, 18). (CC p. 269)

When John saw and heard the angel lifting his right hand to heaven and taking an oath by God, he may have been reminded of a similar oath in Dan 12:7, where an angelic, heavenly figure raised both hands to heaven and took an oath by the One who lives forever. That angelic figure dressed in fine linen took an oath to assure Daniel that there would be a completion of the things prophesied to him, a completion within a definite stated time. (CC p. 269)

Similarly here in Rev 10:5–7 the angel takes an oath in order to assure John and all Christians that there will be a fulfillment, a completion of those things revealed by the seven trumpet-angels, as well as of the whole prophetic message of Revelation. In particular, when the events dramatized by the seventh trumpet-angel come to pass, all things will have been fulfilled and completed. For when the seventh trumpet-angel blows his trumpet, then the mystery (τὸ μυστήριον) of God will have been brought to its end, finished (ἔτελέσθη). (CC p. 269)

10:6 *him who lives for ever and ever.* Of special encouragement in a context of impending martyrdom (cf. 1:18; 4:9–10; 15:7). (CSB)

no more delay. The martyrs in 6:9–11 were told to rest for a while, but now the end has come (cf. Da 12:1; Mk 13:19). (CSB)

Previous chapters have hinted that God's final intervention in history might lie in the distant future (cf. 6:10). At this point, however, no such delay is in view. (TLSB)

10:7 *mystery of God.* In apocalyptic thought mysteries were secrets preserved in heaven and revealed to the apocalypticist. Here the mystery is that God has won the victory over the forces of evil and will reign for ever and ever (cf. 11:15). (CSB)

God never reveals all His plans (cf. v 4), only what we need to know most. (Deut. 29:29) (TLSB)

The “mystery” is qualified and interpreted by the following words, “graciously promised [εὐηγγέλισεν] to his own slaves, the prophets” (10:7). That is, whatever were the contents of the mystery, the mystery itself and its completion had been “graciously promised” to the prophets. In 1:20 the seven stars in the Son of Man’s right hand and the seven golden lamps are called a “mystery,” the meaning of which the Lord Christ revealed to John. In 17:5–7 the name of Babylon written on the harlot’s forehead and the harlot herself and the beast on which she rides are called a “mystery,” which again was interpreted for John, this time by one of the censor-angels of the last plagues of God. Here in 10:7 the “mystery” itself is not explained to John in so many words. But by the way it is used in reference to the seventh and last scene in the second vision of events on earth, its interpretation becomes evident. Just as Paul uses the word to refer to the entire plan of God’s saving grace in Christ and the Gospel message which proclaims it (1 Cor. 2:1-2; Eph.. 1:3-10; Col. 2:2-3; 4:2-3; 1 Tim. 3:16), so here in Rev 10:7 the “mystery” is the prophetic message of Revelation, which shows and announces to John the culmination of that Gospel message as it reveals the goal and end result of that saving grace of God in Christ. (CC pp. 269-270)

As it is expressed in Revelation, the “mystery” is the coming about of the kingdom of the cosmos of Yahweh and of his Messiah at the end of the present world (11:15). By means of the seventh trumpet-angel John will see the completion of this mystery of God, when, in his kingdom and that of his Christ, God will rule forever (11:15–19). The prophets of the OT knew of this mystery of God. For example, 1 Pet 1:10–12 says that the prophets of old carefully examined and searched what had been prophetically spoken concerning the Christ, both his suffering and his coming into glory, and they searched for when this would all happen (cf. Is 53; 60:1–6; 63:1–6). It is called a mystery because the plan of God’s salvation and the announcement of it were hidden in former times and kept secret from those of the human race who were the enemies of Christ (Col 1:26; Acts 2:23; 1 Cor 2:6–9). (CC p. 270)

he announced to servants and prophets – When God reveals His plan for the future, He does so by means of His prophets. Not all OT prophecies have been fulfilled. (TLSB)

10:8 John has passively witnessed and recorded events sin 7:14. As the mediator of God’s revelations, however, he is now called to action. (TLSB)

10:9 *Take it and eat it.* Grasp and digest fully the contents of the scroll (cf. Ps 119:103). (CSB)

John again hears the voice which spoke to him in 10:4. This time it speaks not a prohibition, but rather a command to do something. The heavenly voice tells him to take the scroll from the angel, to eat it whole, and to proclaim the prophetic message of God in Christ among all peoples on earth. The image of a scroll was at times used to symbolize a message that was to be received and then announced to others (e.g., Is 29:11; Zech 5:1–4). Tablets and scrolls were used symbolically to assure and confirm the truthfulness and certainty of a message, and that the message could not be destroyed no matter the opposition (cf. Ezek 3:1–9). The action of eating the scroll and digesting its contents is reminiscent of a similar action by the prophet Ezekiel. In the inaugural vision of God’s heavenly glory (Ezekiel 1–3), in which the prophet is commissioned to speak a prophetic message (Ezek 2:3–4), Ezekiel is given a scroll to eat, after which he is to speak God’s words (Ezek 2:9–3:4). When Ezekiel ate the scroll, it was sweet as honey in his mouth (Ezek 3:3), but a bitterness in the stomach is not mentioned. However, a short time later Ezekiel did experience a bitterness in his spirit when he embarked on his mission to proclaim the message of God (Ezek 3:14–15). (CC pp. 270-271)

The symbolical action of eating the scroll in both the cases of Ezekiel and of John suggests that before they proclaim the prophetic word to others, they must first “inwardly digest” it themselves. The message of God that they were to announce must first be heard, internalized, and applied to themselves. As John heard the message for himself and meditated on it for his own edification, it would be both sweet and bitter. The message would be full of sorrow for him and his hearers because of the woes and the judgments of God, for the Law and just pronouncements of God’s anger are never pleasant to hear (Is 6:5; Jonah 1:1–3). The message also brings joy—to the proclaimer himself, as he rejoices in its Gospel comfort, and then the same joy to his hearers (Ps. 19:7-10 {MT 19:8-11}; 119:103-104; Jer. 15:16-17). The forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the suffering and persecution of this evil age, and participation in the reign of Christ on earth and in the new heaven and new earth are part of the scroll’s message too (cf. Rev 7:14–17; 20:1–6; 21:1–22:5). (CC p. 271)

will make your stomach bitter. The message of the little scroll (11:1–13) will involve suffering—the “bad news.” (CSB)

Prophetic messages invariably contain Law and Gospel, threat and promise, judgment and grace. Thus John internalizes this Word of God, it is both bitter and sweet. (TLSB)

in your mouth ... sweet as honey. God’s eternal purposes will experience no further delay—the “good news.” (CSB)

10:11 *again prophesy.* The prophecies following the sounding of the seventh trumpet in 11:15. (CSB)

The whole purpose of the appearance of the gigantic angel and his scroll rings out loud and clear. John must (δεῖ, “it is necessary,” 10:11) proclaim the message of God among all peoples of the earth. No one is to be excluded from hearing the message of God and his Christ. The visionary appearance of the angel is a powerful reminder to John and the churches that they must be engaged in the mission that Christ gave to his church on earth (see Mt 28:16–20). In particular, the angel of Revelation 10 stands in the place of the exalted Christ as John is commissioned, by way of the scroll and the command from heaven, to proclaim the prophetic message. The exalted Lord Christ himself, as the Son of Man, was the first to commission John to receive and then to proclaim the prophetic message (1:9–20). In that first commissioning John was instructed to give the message to the seven churches, God’s own people (1:11). In this second commissioning (or recommissioning) in chapter 10, done through the angel in the stead of Christ, John (and, by implication, the church) is instructed to proclaim the message to the whole human race. First the church is to receive it for her own warning and comfort and hope (1:11; 6:1–7:17). Then the church is to proclaim the message to the world (11:1–13; cf. 8:1–9:21; 15:1–16:21). (CC p. 271)

The way in which the colossal angel takes his stand, then, symbolizes the mission of the church, that is, in particular the power of God in that mission. Just as the gigantic angel astride the earth dominates everything, so now the church in mission will dominate all human life and events and history. As the exalted Lord Christ rules absolutely everything on behalf of God’s people in order to protect them in their faith (7:1–8) and in order to prosper the church in her godly mission on earth (11:1–13), so the angel demonstrates that nothing can stop the church in her mission. As little as any human being or force or any demonic opposition can overthrow this mighty angel, so it is impossible for the church on earth to be destroyed. And as the angel stands invincible, so the church will be triumphant in her mission. No matter what she suffers, even death, the church will carry out and complete the mission given to her by God. (CC p. 271)

The symbolism is furthered by the dress and insignia of the angel. He bears the emblems of God's majesty and glory and those of the exalted Christ, and he is accompanied by the thundering voice of God as he himself roars like a lion. All the divine authority that these descriptive emblems of the angel symbolize is conveyed to the church, so that it can be said of the church that in her mission she is emblazoned with the majesty of God and of the exalted Christ. And as she carries out her godly mission, the church is accompanied by the awesome, thundering voice of almighty God. The angel clearly demonstrates how much God esteems his faithful people on earth as they carry out their most important mission to the world. (CC p. 272)

However, the angel himself is not the authority that commissions and gives the word of command to John to proclaim the message. It is the voice from heaven which gives the command (10:4, 8, 11). While "the voice," ἡ φωνή, is singular (10:4, 8), the command to John is expressed in a plural verb form, "they say" (λέγουσιν, 10:11). If this verb had as its subject the "voice" from heaven (10:4, 8) or possibly the voice of the angel (10:9), one would have expected the singular form (λέγει). The plural verb form suggests several possibilities. It could be a reference to the heavenly voice in 10:4, 8, with the plural suggesting the Trinity (see 1:4–5). It could well be "an indefinite plural or the equivalent of the passive 'it was said' " without any reference as to its source. However, the fact that this form is plural most likely rules out the interpretation that understands this to have been said by the voice of the (one) angel, for he has just spoken to John in 10:9 about how the eating of the scroll would affect him. If the angel were the speaker again in 10:11, it would be most natural for the singular form (λέγει) to be used as it was in 10:9. The most likely interpretation is that the plural form (λέγουσιν) refers to God together with the entire heavenly court of his angels around him. As God (or an angel speaking for him) gives the command to John, the whole angelic court joins in by speaking an affirming word, perhaps "amen" (cf. 5:14). However this may be, *the angel himself is not the commanding authority; that is reserved for God himself*. Rather, the angel is a representation of this commanding authority of God and as such serves as a symbolic affirmation of the importance of the church's mission on earth. The angel is thus a visible imprimatur of God's stamp of approval on that mission. (CC pp. 272-373)

Despite this command to speak, John is not immediately depicted as revealing the content of this little scroll. Instead, he sees additional visions. He will prophesy at God's appointed time. (TLSB)

about. † The Greek construction could mean "for" or "before," as the NIV translates in 22:16: "for the churches." The meaning of this verse then would be parallel to Mt 24:14. (CSB)

Ch 10 John describes his prophetic commissioning. On the one hand, the content of John's prophecy is bitter, for it reveals God's wrath against a hostile world. On the other hand, the Word he brings from God is the sweetest possible message, for it delivers Jesus' salvation to many peoples. • Holy Lord God, I recognize that Your bitter anger over my sins is justified and that I fully deserve Your punishment. Nevertheless, Christ assures me in the sweet Gospel that He has paid for my sins and removed all judgment from me. Strengthen me in this faith. Amen.