



# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 26

Text: Rev. 10:1-7

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1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἀποστόλου Ἰωάννου ἡν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει· καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἃ οὐκ αὐτὸς γινώσκει· 2 καὶ εὐχάρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννου ὅσα εἶδεν. 3 Μακάριος ὁ ἀκούων τῶν λόγων τῶν βιβλίου τούτου καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι οἱ ἀκούοντες· ἡ γέγραμμένα ἐστὶν καὶ ἔρχεται ταχέως.

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**2. What the text means.**

**The Little Scroll, pt. 1**

### Greek NT

### La Biblia de las Américas

### NRSV

### NLT

10.1 Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, καὶ ἡ ἴρις ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός, 2 καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ἠνεωγμένον. καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, 3 καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὥσπερ λέων μυκάται. καὶ ὅτε ἔκραξεν, ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν φωνάς. 4 καὶ ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ἤμελλον γράφειν, καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· σφράγισον ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς.

1 Y vi a otro ángel poderoso que descendía del cielo, envuelto en una nube; y el arco iris estaba sobre su cabeza, y su rostro era como el sol, y sus pies como columnas de fuego; 2 y tenía en su mano un librito abierto. Y puso el pie derecho sobre el mar y el izquierdo sobre la tierra; 3 y gritó a gran voz, como ruge un león; y cuando gritó, los siete truenos emitieron sus voces. 4 Después que los siete truenos hablaron, iba yo a escribir, cuando oí una voz del cielo que decía: Sella las cosas que los siete truenos han dicho y no las escribas.

10.1 And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 he gave a great shout, like a lion roaring. And when he shouted, 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."

10.1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire. 2 And in his hand was a small scroll, which he had unrolled. He stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. 3 And he gave a great shout, like the roar of a lion. And when he shouted, the seven thunders answered. 4 When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write. But a voice from heaven called to me: "Keep secret what the seven thunders said. Do not write it down."

5 Καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος, ὃν εἶδον ἐστῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἤρην τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιάν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν 6 καὶ ὤμοσεν ἐν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, 7 ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἑβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν, καὶ ἐτελέσθῃ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς δούλους τοὺς προφήτας.

5 Entonces el ángel que yo había visto de pie sobre el mar y sobre la tierra, levantó su mano derecha al cielo, 6 y juró por el que vive por los siglos de los siglos, QUIEN CREO EL CIELO Y LAS COSAS QUE EN EL hay, Y LA TIERRA Y LAS COSAS QUE EN ELLA hay, Y EL MAR Y LAS COSAS QUE EN EL hay, que ya no habrá dilación, 7 sino que en los días de la voz del séptimo ángel, cuando esté para tocar la trompeta, entonces el misterio de Dios será consumado, como El lo anunció a sus siervos los profetas.

5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and 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: "There will be no more delay, 7 but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets."

5 Then the mighty angel standing on the sea and on the land lifted his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore an oath in the name of the one who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and everything in it, the earth and everything in it, and the sea and everything in it. He said, "God will wait no longer. 7 But when the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled. It will happen just as he announced it to his servants the prophets."

## INTRODUCTION

Just like with the seven seals, so also here there is a pause or ‘interlude’ between the sixth and seventh items in the two series.<sup>1</sup> A part of this is the similar function of the seventh item in each series, which opens up the next sequence of events described in Revelation.

One distinction here is that this second ‘interlude’ is longer (10:1-11:13) than the first one in 7:1-13. Some common themes overlap the two interludes but mostly they contain different emphases. With the second interlude the reader gets the impression that things are ‘speeding’ up toward the end. This will be re-enforced somewhat with another very long interlude following the blowing of the seventh trumpet in 12:1-14:20 prior to the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath (cf. 15:1-16:21).

In chapter ten, John interacts with a pair of angels much more than has been the case up to this point. Previously he has had a relatively passive role of seeing and hearing, but now he is going to have to eat a heavenly scroll. Fortunately for him it is a βιβλαρίδιον, *small scroll*, (10:2) rather than τὸ βιβλίον, *the scroll* (5:1-5) containing the eternal will of God for human history with seven seals in it.

### 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

Here again a few background issues play a significant role in shaping the outcome of the interpretive process of this passage. And because of the apocalyptic nature of this text, the literary influences are more significant than the historical ones.

#### Historical Aspects:

**External History.** In the history of the hand copying of this passage, only two places with variations in the wording of the passage surface which the editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev ed) considered significant for Bible translation.

In verse four, the copyists attempted to clarify the first part of the sentence ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ἤμελλον γράφειν, *when the seven thunders had spoken, I was going to write.*<sup>2</sup> A major issue centers over ὅτε, *when*, or ὅσα,

<sup>1</sup>“After the sixth angel has sounded his trumpet (9:13–21), the author abruptly inserts two episodes (10:1–11; 11:1–13) that function to delay the sounding of the seventh trumpet in 11:15–18 (just as he delayed the opening of the seventh seal by inserting 7:1–17).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 555.]

<sup>2</sup>{B} ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί (ἤμελλον) γράφειν A C 205 209 1006 1611 1841 2053 2329 2351 Byz [P 046] (it<sup>ar</sup>) vg<sup>(cl)</sup>, ww, st syr<sup>ph, h</sup> arm Andrew // ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί καὶ ἤμελλον γράφειν αὐτὰ 1854 (2344 omit αὐτὰ) ὅσα ἐλάλησαν αἱ

as much as. Either reading, however, does not modify the essential meaning of the text.<sup>3</sup>

In verse six, copying mistakes led to the omission of part of the original text of καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, *and the sea and the things in it.*<sup>4</sup> What is omitted is καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, *and the earth and the things in it*, so that the alternative reading becomes *the heaven and the things in it.*<sup>5</sup> Although the evidence externally favors the longer reading, the internal evidence moves the same direction due to similar phrases elsewhere in Revelation.

As one would expect in surveying the larger database of existing texts for this passage, some nineteen places emerge where variations in the wording of the passage exist. These are listed in the text apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed.) printed Greek New Testa-



ἐπτὰ βρονταί, ἤμελλον γράφειν x it<sup>sig</sup> cop<sup>sa</sup> Origen<sup>dub</sup>; (Victorinus-Pettau) Tyconius Primasius Beatus // ἤκουσα ὅσα ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, καὶ ἤμελλον αὐτὰ γράφειν P<sup>47</sup> (cop<sup>bo</sup>) (eth)

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>3</sup>“Instead of ὅτε (when), several witnesses substitute ὅσα (everything that, whatever). External evidence for ὅτε is impressive. Moreover, ὅσα seems to be an exegetical modification, similar to other interpretive rewritings of the text found in occasional witnesses. The reading in the text is translated in NRSV as ‘And when [ὅτε] the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write.’ REB seems to follow the variant reading: ‘I was about to write down what [ὅσα] the seven thunders had said.’ [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 534.]

<sup>4</sup>{A} καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ P<sup>47</sup> x2 C 1006 1841 1854 2053 2329 2351 Byz [P 046] it<sup>ar</sup> vg syr<sup>h</sup> cop<sup>sams, bo</sup> (eth) Andrew; Beatus // omit (by homoioteleuton?) x\* (A omit καὶ τὴν γῆν ... αὐτῇ) 205 209 1006 1611 1841 2053 2344 it<sup>sig</sup> syr<sup>ph</sup> cop<sup>sams</sup> arm Tyconius Primasius

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

<sup>5</sup>“The omission of καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ by a number of witnesses is probably accidental, caused by the similar beginning (καὶ) and ending (ἐν αὐτῇ;) of the phrases in this verse. The external evidence also favors the longer text, as does the impression that these words are appropriate to the completeness of the formal discourse of the author.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 535.]

ment.<sup>6</sup> As is typically the case, these variations reflect either careless mistakes in copying or efforts to update the language to the text to the form of Greek current to the time of the copyist. The only two significant variations were identified by the UBS editors and discussed above.

Consequently we can exegete the adopted reading of the Greek text in confidence that it was the original writing composed by John.

**Internal History.** The only internal history issue with some background significance concerns the use of βιβλαρίδιον designating the small scroll that this angel held open in his hand (vv. 2, 9, 10). As the above text variation study suggests considerable uncertainty over the spelling of this word surfaces in the manuscripts.<sup>7</sup> What was the difference between a βιβλίον

(chap. 5) and this βιβλαρίδιον (chap. 10)? In reality both words are diminutive forms of βίβλος (masculine spelling). βίβλος has the meaning in the first century of a scroll, while βιβλίον and βιβλαρίδιον<sup>8</sup> the derived meaning of a small scroll. But in so far as the NT is concerned βιβλίον and βίβλος are used interchangeably virtually as synonyms. However, βίβλος from its general use in the first century tends to be favored when some kind of sacred or official document is referenced.

Inside Revelation, the use of this word group is instructive.

**βίβλος:** β. τῆς ζωῆς (book of life), 3:5; (13:8); 20:15 (cf. Phil. 4:3)

**βιβλίον:** β. τῆς ζωῆς, 13:8; 17:8; 21:27; = Revelation itself (τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτον, this book): 1:11; 22:7, 9; 10, 18; βιβλίονη = βίβλος, 20:12; plural βιβλία, 20:12.<sup>9</sup>

ing that is probably original, βιβλαρίδιον, ‘small scroll,’ is a true diminutive (which occurs three times, here and in vv 9, 10), and for each occurrence the variant βιβλιδάριον occurs. A morphological study of diminutive suffixes shows that -ιον = -ίδιον = -άριον = -ίσκος; i.e., these suffixes are semantically identical. Swete (127) and Charles (1:260) are, therefore, incorrect in proposing that βιβλαρίδιον is a diminutive of βιβλάριον. These two variants show that a sequence of three morphemes is involved: -αρ-ιδ-ιον, and -ιδ-αρ-ιον. Swanson has demonstrated that the suffix -ιδάριον is almost entirely classical in attestation, while -αριδιον is almost entirely post-classical (βιβλαρίδιον is attested in two second-century A.D. authors, Hermas Vis. 2.1.3 [MS A reads βιβλιδάριον]; 2.4.3, where MS A reads βιβλιδάρια for βιβλαρίδια [for the textual evidence, see the critical edition by M. Whittaker, ed., *Der Hirt des Hermas* (Berlin: Akademie, 1967)], and Galen 16.5). Using this linguistic criterion, then, βιβλαρίδιον must be the original reading with βιβλιδάριον as a scholarly alternative that would have been archaic in the Christian era (Swanson, JBL 77 [1958] 144–45).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 549.]

<sup>8</sup>Equal in meaning and just alternative spellings to βιβλαρίδιον are βιβλάριον and βιβλιδάριον.

<sup>9</sup>**Rev. 20:11–15.** 11 Καὶ εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ’ αὐτόν, οὗ ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὐρέθη αὐτοῖς. 12 καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκροὺς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικροὺς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. 13 καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. 14 καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. 15 καὶ εἶ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλω τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. 14

**6Offenbarung 10,1**

\* P 2053 M<sup>K</sup> (ἄλλον is omitted)

\*<sup>1</sup> κ<sup>1</sup> 2053 M<sup>A</sup> sa (ἡ is omitted before ἱρις)

\* † την -λην A C pc (τῆς κεφαλῆς is spelled differently)

| txt P<sup>47</sup> κ M

**Offenbarung 10,2**

\* εἶχεν M<sup>A</sup> latt sy<sup>h</sup> (ἔχων is replaced)

\* βιβλίον P<sup>47vid</sup> M<sup>K</sup> gīg vg<sup>ms</sup>; Vic Tyc Prim (alternative spellings of βιβλαρίδιον)

| βιβλιδαριον (κ<sup>1</sup>) C\* 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2344 M<sup>A</sup> al

| βιβλαριον 2329 pc

| txt κ\* A C<sup>2</sup> P 1. 2351 al

\* C (τὸν δεξιὸν is omitted in this ms)

**Offenbarung 10,3**

\* κ\* 1611. 2344 pc (αἰ is omitted)

\*<sup>1</sup> P<sup>47</sup> pc (ἐπτὰ is omitted)

**Offenbarung 10,4**

\* οσα κ pc gīg; Tyc Prim (ὄτε is replaced by ὄσα)

| ηκουσα οσα et<sup>o</sup> et<sup>h</sup> και ημ. αυτα P<sup>47</sup>

\*<sup>1</sup> οσα P<sup>47</sup> κ 2344 (ᾱ is replaced by ὄσα)

\*<sup>1</sup> P<sup>47\*</sup> C gīg (ἐπτὰ is omitted)

\* μετα ταυτα γραφεις M<sup>A</sup> (μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς is replaced)

**Offenbarung 10,5**

\* A M<sup>A</sup> vg syp<sup>h</sup> bo<sup>ms</sup> (τὴν δεξιὰν is omitted)

**Offenbarung 10,6**

\* P<sup>47</sup> κ\* 1854. 2329. 2344. 2351 M<sup>K</sup> (ἐν is omitted)

\* A M<sup>A</sup> (καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ is omitted)

\*<sup>1</sup> κ\* A 1611. 2344 pc gīg syp<sup>h</sup> sa<sup>ms</sup>; Tyc (καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ is omitted)

**Offenbarung 10,7**

\* 2 3 C (alternative sequences for τοῦ ἐβδόμου ἀγγέλου)

| τ. αγγ. του εβ. P47 κ 2344

\* τελεσθη 1854. 2351 M<sup>A</sup> (alternative spelling for ετελεσθη)

\* ε. δ. και P<sup>47.85vid</sup> κ 2329. 2344 pc sa (alternative sequences for εαυτου δούλους with some replacements/omissions)

| δ. αυτου 1006. 1841 M<sup>K</sup>

| txt A C 1611. 1854. 2053<sup>com</sup>. 2351 M<sup>A</sup>

[Eberhard Nestle et al., Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 650–651.]

<sup>7c</sup>Variants: (1) βιβλαρίδιον] κ\* A C<sup>2</sup> 025 1 2351 Andr a b c d e f<sup>-2023</sup> 94 2351. (2) βιβλίον] P<sup>47</sup> Byzantine it<sup>gr</sup> vg<sup>ms</sup> Victorinus Tyconius Primasius. (3) βιβλιδάριον] C\* fam 1006 fam 1611<sup>1611</sup> 2344 Oecumenius<sup>2053</sup> Andreas. (4) βιβλάριον] fam 1611<sup>2329</sup>. The read-

**βιβλαρίδιον:** 10:2, 9, 10.

Clearly βιβλιῶν is used by John here to distinguish this distinctive small scroll that he only mentions here in chapter ten. Very likely in the background here stands Ezek. 2:9-10 (cf. also 3:1-3), where κεφαλὴς βιβλίου (2:9) /



τὴν κεφαλίδά ταύτην (3:1-3) in the LXX translates רָפוּ-תָלַגַּמ from the Hebrew, meaning **written scroll**. That John used βιβλιῶν rather than βιβλίον did bother some copyists (P<sup>47vid</sup> M<sup>K</sup> gig vgmss; Vic Tyc Prim) who substituted it with βιβλίον, perhaps to link 10:2 closer to Ezek. 2:9. From a background perspective, the only distinctive seems to be the size of the scroll as being smaller than the other scrolls mentioned in Revelation.

In the exegesis we will explore the contents of the scroll which provide it with the primary distinction from the other scrolls in Revelation.

### Literary Aspects:

As repeatedly observed thus far in our studies in Revelation, when we began the pure apocalyptic vision material in chapter four, the literary aspects became the dominate background issues needing to be addressed with each passage. The same is true for 10:1-7.

**Genre:** Of course, the broad genre here remains the apocalyptic vision with all of its peculiarities in describing heavenly reality in earthly terminology.

Nothing of a sub-genre unit emerges here with antecedents elsewhere in ancient literature. The closest to this is the 'mighty angel' (ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν; v. 1) who is first introduced in 5:2 (ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν). This second angel is identified as ἄλλον ἄγγελον, **another angel**, signaling that although like the first one in chapter five, he is a different one which is different from the first one. It seems that this first angel (εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς) reappears in 18:21 in destroying 'Babylon,' although one cannot be certain that it is the same angel. But these uncertainties caution against seeing some kind of repeated pattern regarding a class of angels in the heavenly sphere. The adjective ἰσχυρὸς just simply means unusually strong, and thus every angel would qualify as ἰσχυρὸς, but the mission of each of these three angels made this qualification appropriate to mention. Yet all three angels are dealing with a scroll of some kind and this may be an intentional echo in the second and third references back to the first one in chapter five.

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; 15 and anyone whose name was not found **written in the book of life** was thrown into the lake of fire.

304 I saw another angel

strong

This angel in chapter ten exhibits a few of the traits noted in Dan. 12:5-7 but the two depictions contain significant differences as well. John only borrows some traits from Daniel 12 that he considers appropriate to the image being described in chapter ten. The identification by a few commentators of this angel with Gabriel in the Old Testament is pure speculation without any real basis to it.<sup>10</sup>

**Literary Setting:** The literary context is reasonably simple to assess. Rev. 10:1-11 is the first of two units, the second one being 11:1-13, that together form an intrusion into the series of seven trumpets. They interrupt between the sixth and seventh trumpets, thus delaying the blowing of the seventh trumpet. This follows the exact same pattern as the first interlude in 7:1-17 between the sixth and seventh seals. With both the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet function to open the door for the next series of sevens, these interruptions serve to make some important points before proceeding on to the next series.

How closely 10:1-11 and 11:1-13 are linked is unclear and thus debated among commentators. Some potential connecting links such as the use of five terms from the προφητ- stem surface between the two texts: 10:11 & 11:3 (προφητεύειν); 10:7 & 11:10 (προφήτης); 11:6 (προφητεία). This is a much higher frequency than elsewhere in Revelation.<sup>11</sup> But given the distinctive content of the two passages one should be cautious in pulling them very close to one another.

**Literary Structure:** The excessively literal English translation in the block diagram below highlights the internal grammar connections of the passage in order to provide a visual presentation of these inner connections.

<sup>10</sup>"The diction recalls 5:2, 18:21. If Michael is referred to in 8:3-5, it is possible that Gabriel is referred to here. In that case ἰσχυρὸς (= גִּבּוֹר) would imply a play on the name of the angel." [R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 258-259.]

<sup>11</sup>"One link he suggests is that in both 10:8-10 and 11:1-2 the seer performs a prophetic action. This connection is part of the prophecy motif that occurs in both sections: the verb προφητεύειν occurs in 10:11; 11:3; the noun προφήτης occurs in 10:7; 11:10; and the noun προφητεία occurs in 11:6. This is significant in view of the fact that the five προφητ- cognates found in these sections occur only sporadically elsewhere in Revelation (1:3; 11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6, 9). Rev 10:7 specifically mentions the sounding of the seventh trumpet, serving to link this section to 11:15-18, where the seventh trumpet is sounded, and the specific phrase 'his/your servants, the prophets,' occurs in 10:7; 11:18." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 555.]

coming down  
out of heaven  
clothed in a cloud,

and  
305 **a rainbow (was)**  
upon his head

and  
306 **his face (was)**  
like the sun

and  
307 **his feet (were)**  
like pillars of fire.

10.2 And  
308 **he possessed . . . a small scroll**  
in His hand opened.

And  
309 **he placed his right foot**  
upon the sea,  
but

310 **(he placed) his left foot**  
upon the land,

10.3 and  
311 **he cried out**  
in a loud voice  
like a lion roars.

And  
when he cried out  
312 **spoke seven thunders in their own sound.**

10.4 And  
when the seven thunders spoke  
313 **I was going to write,**  
and  
314 **I heard a voice**  
from heaven  
saying:  
**Seal up**  
**the things which the seal thunders spoke,**

and  
315 **these things I did not write.**

10.5 And  
316 **the angel . . . raised his right hand**  
whom I saw stand|ing  
up|on the sea  
| and  
up|on the land  
into heaven

10.6 and  
317 **he swore -**  
by |the One Living  
| forever and ever  
| who created the heaven  
| and  
| the things in it  
| and  
| the earth

and  
the things in it  
and  
the sea  
and  
the things in it,  
that time will no longer be  
but  
in the days of the sound of the seventh angel  
whenever he is going to blow (his trumpet)  
also  
will be fulfilled the mystery of God  
as He announced to His servants  
the prophets.

### Analysis of Rhetorical Structure

The subunits of vv. 1-7 fall into a threefold set of expressions: statements 304 - 311, the mighty angel appears; 312 - 315, the seven thunders shout out; 316 - 317, the mighty angel takes a stand.

As is obvious this special angel is the center of the narrative. He is described, his speaking creates a response, and he swears an oath before God.

### Exegesis of the Text:

The above threefold division emerging from the text itself thus provides the natural way to organize the exegesis of the passage in order to better get at its proper meaning.

#### A. The mighty angel appears, vv. 1-3a

10.1 Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, καὶ ἡ ἴρις ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός, 2 καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ἠνεωγμένον. καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, 3 καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὡς περὶ λέων μωκᾶται.

10.1 And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 he gave a great shout, like a lion roaring.

John's interruption of the series of seven angels blowing their trumpets begins here after the sixth angel had blown his trumpet (9:13-21). As the angel declares in v. 7, the blowing of the seventh trumpet will usher in a special set of declarations and actions by God. Thus John seeks to prepare us for these with the interlude of the mighty angel in chapter ten and the two witnesses in chapter eleven. The pattern is similar to the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals in chapter seven. Its a bit like pausing and catching one's breath before moving on to the next stage.

In addition to the above sketch under [Genre](#)

above, we need to explore in detail the identity of this particular angel.

John signals a new direction with Καὶ εἶδον, and I saw. The frequent repetition of εἶδον and ἤκουσα throughout Revelation not only communicate the appropriate response to some aspect of his vision, but they also function in a literary role to introduce a turn in direction for some aspect of his vision. Also, these two first person aorist verbs mostly define John's interaction with the details of his apocalyptic vision. Once in a rare while he will say something or, like here, attempt to write down notes. But overwhelmingly he just sees and hears what is presented to him out of heaven.

Where was John when he saw this angel? The narrative location of John seems to have shifted from heaven to earth. Signals that point to this are "coming down out of heaven" (καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, v. 1); and "the voice that I heard out of heaven" (ἡ φωνὴ ἦν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, v. 8). But inside an apocalyptic one can "zip" instantly from earth to heaven; back to earth and then back to heaven.

What did John see this time? An ἄγγελον. Most always when John sees an angel in his vision, only minimum detail is provided in order to establish a context for seeing the angel, e.g., each of the seven angels of the churches (chaps 2-3) and the seven angels prepared to blow their individual trumpets (8:2, 6). Any more descriptive detail about the angel grows out of some action or speaking by the angel, e.g., angel's hand holds the incense bowl at the altar in heaven (8:4). If more that one angel is referenced usually the only detail provided is the number (4 angels, 7:1), otherwise just the plural form ἄγγελοι is used.

But this angel in chapter ten receives detailed description in connection with his assignment. Much greater detail is provided here than at any other place in all of Revelation.

#### How does John describe this angel?

a) ἄλλον ἄγγελον, another angel. This angel is different and yet he is similar to others. What is the significance of ἄλλον? Does John mean a different angel



from the one who blew the sixth trumpet? Or, different from the four angels who emerged out of the Euphrates? Both are referenced in chapter nine. Although grammatically this is possible, it seems more likely that this angel is different from the first mighty angel in 5:2: εἶδον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν.<sup>12</sup> Such a depiction is found only in 5:2; 10:1; and 18:21 (εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς which may allude back to 5:2). A few commentators focus on this angel's connection to the little scroll and identify him with the angel mentioned in 1:1 and 22:16 who was centered on bringing the apocalyptic vision to John.<sup>13</sup> Thus as an ἄλλον ἄγγελον, he would be this initially mentioned angel in 1:1. This seems to have more signals pointing to it, but one cannot be certain.

b) ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν, strong angel. As already mentioned this phrase occurs in the exact same con-

<sup>12</sup>“The ἄλλος, ‘another,’ apparently refers to the only ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς, ‘mighty angel,’ mentioned earlier, i.e., in 5:2 (on the phrase ‘mighty angel,’ see Comment on 5:2). Van Schaik argues that while this angel is modeled after the angel in Dan 12:5–7, his words and message are changed enough so that the author refers to him as ἄλλος ἄγγελος (‘Ἄλλος ἄγγελος,’ 221). Charles (1:258–59) has speculated that Gabriel could be identified as the mighty angel, since the Hebrew term גַּבְרִיִּל *gibbôr*, ‘mighty one,’ can refer to ‘Gabriel’ (which means ‘mighty one of God’). There is, however, no reason to suppose that the author had any particular angel in view. This is a formal link between two text units that deal with scrolls.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 557.]

<sup>13</sup>“Bauckham argues that the unique role of this angel and the majestic way in which he is described suggest that he should be identified with the centrally significant revelatory angel of Rev 1:1; 22:16 because it is the scroll in Rev 10 that contains the primary content of John’s prophetic revelation (“Conversion,” 254–55): (1) God gave the revelation to Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1) = the Lamb received the scroll from the hand of the one seated on the throne (Rev 5:7). (2) The revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1) = the Lamb opened the scroll and revealed its contents (Rev 6:1–8:1). (3) He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John (1:1) = the angel brings the opened scroll from heaven and gives it to John (10:2, 8).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 557.]

struction three times in Revelation: 5:2; 10:1; 18:21. The English translation pattern of “mighty angel” hints that the adjective ἰσχυρὸν is virtually a title rather than just a trait attributed to the angel. But the adjective ἰσχυρός, -ά, -όν is used eight times in Revelation in connection with a city (18:10), a voice (18:2), thunder peals (19:6), powerful people (19:18), the Lord (18:8). It is used in reference to an angel only in these three places of 5:2; 10:1; 18:21. Its core meaning is simply possessing strength or power.<sup>14</sup> Of course, all angels are strong

<sup>14</sup>ἰσχυρός, ἄ, ὄν (s. ἰσχύς, ἰσχύω; Aeschyl.+ ) comp. ἰσχυρότερος (Hdt.+; ins, pap, LXX; Ar. 1, 2; Just., D. 103, 3; Ath. 34, 2) gener. ‘strong, mighty, powerful’.

1. pert. to being strong physically, mentally, or spiritually, strong, of living beings

a. of transcendent beings: of God (SIG 216, 1 [IV B.C.] ἰσχυρῷ θεῷ [=θεῷ s. note 4] Σανέργει; Dt 10:17; 2 Macc 1:24 and oft.; TestSol C 12, 3; Philo, Spec. Leg. 1, 307; PGM 10, 11; 12, 374; 36, 105; Just., D. 103, 3) **Rv 18:8**. Of angels (PGM 3, 71f ἄγγελος κραταιὸς κ. ἰσχυρός) **5:2; 10:1; 18:21**. Of Christ **1 Cor 10:22**; cp. also **Lk 11:22** (s. below on Lk 11:21). Of the one to come after John the Baptist ἰσχυρότερός μου (cp. Judg 5:13 A; PGM 13, 202) **Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7; Lk 3:16**. τὸ ἀσθενὲς τ. θεοῦ ἰσχυρότερον τ. ἀνθρώπων 1 Cor 1:25 (cp. Philo, Ebr. 186 τὸ ἀσθενὲς ... τὸ ἰ.). Of Satan, who may be the ἰσχυρός of the parable **Mt 12:29; Mk 3:27; Lk 11:21** (cp. PGM 5, 147 the δαίμων, who calls himself ἰσχυρός, and the ἰσχυρός of 13, 203 who, acc. to 197 is ἐνοπλος, as well as the Φόβος καθοπλισμένος 528 fighting the ἰσχυρότερος 543; Mel., P. 102, 783). In case Satan is not meant, these passages, together w. **Lk 11:22** (s. above) belong under b below.

b. of human beings (opp. ἀσθενής as Philo, Somn. 1, 155; Tat. 32, 2f) **1 Cor 4:10**; Agr. 4.—1J 2:14; Hs 9, 15, 1. ἰ. ἐν πολέμῳ mighty in war Hb 11:34. ἐν τῇ πίστει Hn 3, 5, 5; m 11, 4. οἱ ἰσχυροὶ (Ps.-X., Constitution of Athens 1, 14; 4 Km 24:15 codd.; Da 8:24 Theod.) **Rv 6:15; 19:18**. ὁ ἰ. 1 Cl 13:1 (Jer 9:22); 38:2. Even the neut. τὰ ἰσχυρά refers to persons **1 Cor 1:27**.

2. pert. to being high on a scale of extent as respects strength or impression that is made, violent, loud, mighty, etc., of things (cp. IAndrosIsis, Kyme 16 of justice) ἄνεμος violent (TestSol 6:1 D; Dio Chrys. 60 and 61 [77 and 78], 7 χειμῶν ἰ.) **Mt 14:30** v.l.; βροντή loud **Rv 19:6**. κραυγή **Hb 5:7**. φόβος Hm 7:4 (=the fear of the Lord is very productive). πίστις 9:7, 10. μετάνοια Hs 7:6. λίθος solid, mighty (Sir 6:21) B 6:2. πέτρας ἰ. B 11:5 (Is 33:16). λιμός a severe famine **Lk 15:14** (cp. Petosiris, Fgm. 6, ln. 49 λιμός ἰ.; Hdt. 1, 94; SIG 495, 59 [c. 230 B.C.] σιτοδείας γενομένης ἰσχυρᾶς; Gen 41:31). πόλις mighty (Is 26:1 v.l.; TestJud 5:1) **Rv 18:10** (cp. also τείχος X., Cyr. 7, 5, 7; 1 Macc 1:33 v.l. Kappler; πύργος Judg 9:51 B). φωνή loud (Aesop. Fab. 420 P. ἰσχυρᾶ τῇ φωνῇ; Ex 19:19; Da 6:21 Theod.) **Rv 18:2**; παράκλησις ἰ. strong encouragement **Hb 6:18**. ἰσχυρότερας ἀποκαλύψεις more meaningful revelations Hn 3, 10, 8. ῥῆμα mighty 1, 3, 4. (W. βέβαια and τεθεμελιωμένα) πάντα ἰσχυρά everything is secure 3, 4, 3. θέσις Hn 3, 13, 3. (W. βαρεῖαι, as TestJud 9:2) ἐπιστολαί weighty and strong (cp. X., Cyr. 3, 3, 48; Wsd 6:8) letters **2 Cor 10:10**. Avoided in J (s. MBoismard, Le chapitre 21 de StJean: RB 54, 47, 491).—B. 295. DELG s.v. ἰσχύς. M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 483–484.]

and posses power well beyond that of humans. Why then did John add this quality to this particular angel? The best guess is so that with ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν he could identify this angel as separate from the one in 5:2. But one cannot be certain of this. What is clear is that the subsequent depiction of the angel eliminates any question about him being ἰσχυρὸν or not!

c) ἄγγελον . . . καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, **an angel...coming down out of heaven**. Particularly in contrast to the four chained angels at the Euphrates (9:14-15), John stresses the origin of this angel as in heaven with God. And John sees him as he descends from heaven to earth, not after he arrived on earth. In Revelation several things descend (καταβαίνω) from heaven to earth: fire (13:13; 20:9); huge hailstones (16:21); new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2, 10); angels (10:1; 18:1; 20:1). By this image the divine authorization of the angel's descent is affirmed. The angel is on an assigned mission.

d) ἄγγελον . . . περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, **an angel...clothed with a cloud**. The mentioning of clouds in Revelation is limited but instructive. Christ returns with the clouds (1:7); the two witnesses return to heaven on a cloud (11:12); and the Son of Man sits on a cloud (14:14, 15, 16). Many stretch the idea of a cloud here to identify Christ with this angel, but this is hardly justifiable. This angel is neither sitting on a cloud, nor riding one, as Christ and the two witnesses are depicted. Instead he is 'cloud wrapped,' περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην. The cloud completely surrounds him in the manner of a wrap around garment would a first century Jewish man.

Is Daniel 7 in the background here? Most likely not, at least directly. Unquestionably the depiction of the granting of dominion to the one coming to the Ancient of Days on the clouds in verse 13 stands behind the reference in Rev. 1:7: ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο, **One was coming upon the clouds of heaven like the Son of Man** (Dan. 7:13b). But to apply it also to Rev. 10:1 is without adequate foundation (contra G.K. Beale, NIGTC).

The religious significance of clouds especially in the Christian Bible stresses divine activity and provision.<sup>15</sup> That the angel descended wrapped in a cloud

<sup>15</sup>“The presence of the cloud, rainbow or halo, sun, and fire (v 1c) are all optional features of theophanies. It is perhaps appropriate that ἴρις can refer not only to a rainbow but also to Iris, the personification of the rainbow (which Zeus has set in the clouds, Iliad 11.27–28), who is the messenger (ἄγγελος, Iliad 3.121; 18.182; μετᾴγγελος, Iliad 15.144) of the Olympian gods (Iliad 2.786–87; 8.398, 409; 11.185; 15.158–59; Hymni Hom. 2.314–15). On the cloud as a means of transport for supernatural beings, see Comment on 14:14. A text in Dionysius Hal. Ant. Rom. 1.77.2 narrates the story of a god who mated with a human woman and then was “wrapped in a cloud” (νέφει περικαλωθῆναι) and was lifted from the earth. On the use of ἴρις for rainbow rather than the LXX term τόξον, see Comment on 4:3.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*,

underscores the divine nature of his mission and movement. It is not accidental that this angel comes down to the earth with a scroll with John watching while the two resurrected messengers ascend to God on clouds (11:12).

e) **καὶ ἡ ἴρις ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, and a rainbow was upon his head**. Interestingly, ἴρις is only found in the NT here and in 4:3 (ἴρις κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου ὁμοίως ὁράσει σμαραγδίνῳ, **a rainbow encircling the throne like the appearance of an emerald**). For John's non-Jewish initial readers the mentioning of ἴρις referenced the goddess Iris who functioned as a messenger of Zeus to mortals.<sup>16</sup> The rainbow in the sky affirmed contact of people with the gods as being possible. But for the Judeo-Christian tradition the ἴρις from Gen. 9:13 on signals the divine promise of grace and mercy by God upon the people on earth. In 4:3, the ἴρις surrounds the heavenly throne of God, but here an ἴρις surrounds the head of the angel. Both signal divine mercy and grace upon God's people. Interestingly, later Judaism after the end of the first Christian century came to teach that one should not look at a rainbow since it symbolized the glory of God which was deeply connected to the unpronounceable sacred name of God.<sup>17</sup> To look at a

vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 557.]

<sup>16</sup>“From the time of Homer ἴρις is the customary word for a ‘rainbow’ (e.g., Il., 17, 547); Theophr., De Signis Tempestatum, 22: ὅταν ἴρις γένηται, ἐπισημαίνει (sc. rain), or for a rainbow round the moon (Aristot. Meteor., III, 4, p. 375a, 18: μέγιστον δὲ σημεῖον τούτων ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς σελήνης ἴρις). Figur. it can be used for a ‘halo,’ for the ‘circle’ round a light (Theophr., op cit., 13), for the ‘iris’ of the human eye, or even for the ‘play of colours’ around the eyes on the feathers of a peacock (Luc. De Domo, 11). Even when used figur., the word still retains the original notion of the coloured ring or bow. Along with many other natural phenomena, the bow around heaven and earth was personified for the Greeks in the messenger goddess Iris (Hom. Il., 15, 144; 24, 77ff.), who also found a place in Roman mythology (Vergil. Aen., 4, 693ff.).<sup>1</sup> In this figure are reflected the religious experiences and concepts which the sight of a rainbow kindled in the men of antiquity. The rainbow was thought to typify the ancient connection between the world of the gods and the world of men.” [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 3:339–340.]

<sup>17</sup>“The later Rabbis<sup>6</sup> carried this thought further in their warning not to look at the rainbow. Resh Laqish (c. 250 A.D.) saw in this a threat to the eyesight (b. Chag., 16a), since man cannot bear to look on God's glory (Ez. 1:28; Is. 6:5), and Rabba († 331 A.D.) regarded it as an insult to the Creator and consequently as a desecration of the divine name (→ ὄνομα, b. Qid., 40a). The idea of merit, which dominates Rabbinic piety, is here introduced into the consideration and appraisal of the rainbow. This shatters the unity of the revelation of God's glory on the one side and His grace on the other — two things which cannot be separated, since the one God is manifested in both and His whole activity is directed to one and the same goal. This unity has to be dissolved, however, because a religion of attainment makes grace dependent on human

rainbow was to desecrate the sacred name, and thus a serious sin.

For the angel to have an ἵρις on his head signaled not only the presence of God but the mission of communicating God's will. He indeed came as a messenger of God. If it is the same kind of ἵρις as in 4:3, then it is not multi-colored, but an emerald green color. Sometimes outside the Bible, ἵρις is translated figuratively as 'halo.' And this might be more appropriate here as well.

f) **καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, and his face was like the sun.** That is, his appearance was so bright that one could not look at him. Such comparisons signal connections to God and His presence.<sup>18</sup> When one has been in God's presence to this extent, he face will indeed shine brightly. Interestingly, a very similar depiction of the face of Christ in 1:16 reflects a similar perspective: ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ, **his appearance was like the sun shining in its full strength.** But it should be noted that Christ's ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ is not a synonym to the angel's τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ. Both radiated the full glory of God but in different ways.

g) **καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός, and his legs were like pillars of fire.** Some possible allusion to Exod. 13:21 may be in the background here, but is not certain.<sup>19</sup> Literally the reference is to his feet but the conduct. The question now is not whether one is strong enough to bear the vision of the divine glory which is vouchsafed (Is. 6:5), but whether one may contemplate the sign of the gracious will of God which also declares His omnipotence. For who knows, and who can know, whether this grace is of personal application? The lack of assurance of salvation in later Judaism (→ II, 526 f.) is also manifested in another way in connection with the rainbow. We often find the view (Gn. r., 35 on 9:12; b. Ket., 77b) that the rainbow appears only when there is none completely righteous on earth, since the existence of such an one would guarantee the preservation of the world and an express indication of divine grace through the rainbow would be unnecessary.<sup>7</sup> This is a complete departure from the outlook of the author of Gn. 9:8 ff. and of the OT generally." [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 3:340–341.]

<sup>18</sup>καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός, 'and his face was like the sun and his legs like fiery columns.' Comparing the face to the sun is a metaphor used in theophanies (Rev 1:16; Matt 17:2; Apoc. Zeph. 6:11; Apoc. Peter 1), of angels (2 Enoch [Rec. A] 1:5; 2 Enoch [Rec. J] 19:1; T. Abr. [Rec. A] 7:3–4; 12:5; 16:6; Apoc. Paul 12; see Dan 10:6), and to describe the transformed appearance of the righteous in the eschaton (4 Ezra 7:97; Matt 13:43; b. Ber. 17a; see Dan 12:3; 4 Ezra 7:125) or as a result of their experience of the presence of God. Moses, whose face shone when he descended from Mount Sinai, is a paradigmatic figure for such imagery (Philo Mos. 2.70; see Exod 34:30; Tg. Onq. Exod 34:30; Ant. 3.83; 2 Cor 3:7)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 557–558.]

<sup>19</sup>"The reference to the mighty angel's legs (lit. 'feet'; see Note 1.e.\* ) as 'pillars of fire' is often considered an allusion to Exod 13:21 (Wis 18:3; Sib. Or. 3.250; Ezekiel Trag. Exagoge 247 [in

depiction makes it clear that the feet and legs are included in the reference. The more likely point of this image is to echo the presence of God with Israel in the wilderness. The pillar of fire both guided and protected them from harm.<sup>20</sup>

This is an impressive description of this angel, with some more to come. The temptation is to identify this angel in some special manner, due to this unusual description. To equate him with Christ is not justified in my opinion. Neither is it accurate to group him in a special category of extra powerful angels because of ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν. But clearly this individual stands as an angel of God commissioned to carry an open scroll to earth with God's message. To be sure, it would be John's responsibility to get this message out (vv. 8-11) to the people. But the essence of his message we will examine in vv. 6b-7 that the end of time is quickly coming. Then what God has been up to over the centuries since creation will become clear as human history moves into its very last segment before the end.

**What does the angel do?** In vv. 2-3, he puts his feet down and roars out like a lion across the earth.

**First** is the completion of the description of the angel in terms of what he was holding: καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ἠνεωγμένον, **and holding in his hand an open little scroll.** As already surveyed above in the **Internal History** section, the βιβλαρίδιον ἠνεωγμένον is only mentioned in vv. 2, 9, 10 in all of Revelation.

In the background most likely is Ezekiel 9:8-10:<sup>21</sup>

8 καὶ σύ, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, ἄκουε τοῦ λαλοῦντος πρὸς σέ, μὴ γίνου παραπικραίνων καθὼς ὁ οἶκος ὁ παραπικραίνων· χάνε τὸ στόμα σου καὶ φάγε ἃ ἐγὼ δίδωμί σοι.† 9 καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοῦ χειρὸς ἐκτεταμένη πρὸς

the latter the στῦλος πυρός is understood as a σημεῖον or 'sign'), where the guiding presence of God is described as a ψα 772γ :*ammūd* ʾēš (LXX στῦλος πυρός), 'a pillar of fire,' though it is not clear that this is anything but a formal allusion without material significance. In 1 Enoch 18:11 and 21:7, Enoch sees 'pillars of fire' (στῦλοι [τοῦ] πυρός) falling from heaven, both in contexts of divine punishment." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 558.]

<sup>20</sup>"The point of the reference to God's presence with Israel in the wilderness is that the same divine presence is to protect and guide the faithful witnesses of the new Israel in the wilderness of the world, as the following chapters reveal (so 11:3–12; 12:6, 13–17).<sup>130</sup> The allusion to the rainbow and the wilderness theophany is an echo of God's faithfulness in carrying out his covenants, and here it anticipates the angel's affirmation in vv 6–7 that God will again be faithful in executing his covenantal plan for all of history.<sup>131</sup>" [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 524–525.]

<sup>21</sup>One should note that this same image from Ezekiel is applied in a significantly different way by John in Rev. 5:1. See the study on this text for further details.

με, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ κεφαλῆς βιβλίου·† 10 καὶ ἀνείλησεν αὐτὴν ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα ἦν τὰ ὄπισθεν καὶ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν, καὶ ἐγγράπτο εἰς αὐτὴν θρῆνος καὶ μέλος καὶ οὐαί.†

8 But you, mortal, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you. 9 I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. 10 He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

John draws from Ezekiel the idea of God presenting a scroll to him that is to be eaten which symbolizes mastering the contents of the writing on the scroll. As 3:1ff. stress in Ezekiel, when he had ‘eaten the scroll’ he then went to house of Israel and proclaimed to them the message contained in the scroll. This scroll also became “sweet as honey” (ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκάζον) in Ezekiel’s mouth (3:3).

That this scroll was already opened, ἠνεωγμένον, mostly likely in the sense of being unsealed and ready to be read is not unusual, since in first century Greco-Roman religious art partially opened scrolls are commonly depicted in the hands of various gods / goddesses and / or their representatives.<sup>22</sup> The mentioning of the scroll in the angel’s hand (ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ) assumes his left hand, since in v. 5 he raises his right hand to heaven in making his oath before God.

One of the debated questions is whether this scroll, βιβλαρίδιον, equals the scroll, βιβλίον, in chapter five. Many will contend that the two references refer to the same document containing the eternal will of God.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>“The ‘open,’ i.e., unrolled, scroll is a common motif in Greco-Roman art (see Birt, Buchrolle, 124–96). Though partially open scrolls are normally held in both hands, the normal way to read them (Birt, Buchrolle, 130–71), there are numerous iconographical parallels to figures holding an open book in either the right or the left hand, which usually indicates that reading has been interrupted (Birt, Buchrolle, 181–96). It is assumed here that the open scroll is in the left hand of the mighty angel since in v 5 he is said to raise his right hand to heaven. This book (mentioned repeatedly in vv 8–10) is a book that originated in heaven but is intended for use by people on earth, just like the book in Hermas Vis. 2.1.3; 2.4.1–3 (see Koep, Buch, 1–2). The adjectival participle ἠνεωγμένον, ‘open,’ should not be construed as meaning ‘unrolled’ (i.e., somehow draped over the hand of the mighty angel); rather it means ‘unsealed,’ i.e., in contrast to the sealed scroll first mentioned in 5:1.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 558.]

<sup>23</sup>“Some maintain that the book in ch. 10 is identical in every way to the one in ch. 5. The last seal has been opened in 8:1 or at least after the sixth trumpet. Therefore, the ‘open’ book in the hand of the angel in 10:2 is the book that had been sealed up. Among the strongest arguments for this are: (1) the numerous parallels, listed above, between the two books; (2) the contention that βιβλαρίδιον is not a diminutive of βιβλίον, since other diminutive forms in Revelation have lost their diminutive meaning,<sup>150</sup> βιβλίον is the preferred textual reading in 10:8,<sup>151</sup> and βιβλαρίδιον and βιβλίδιον are

But such an equating of the two scrolls is hardly likely and rests on evidence arguing against the identification from within the text of chapter ten itself.<sup>24</sup>

clearly synonyms of βιβλίον in Hermas, Vision 2.1, 4;152 and (3) the scroll in Ezek. 2:9–10, on which the books of Revelation 5 and 10 are modeled, was at first not opened and then was opened by God so that the prophet could read it, which suggests that the book of ch. 10 was at first not opened (in ch. 5) and then was unsealed for John.<sup>153</sup>

“Bauckham makes two significant theological conclusions on the assumption of the exact identity of the two books. First, the opening of the scroll reveals two limited judgments on the whole world, which are designed to bring repentance, but fail to do so. Second, and in contrast, the sealing of the seven thunders (10:4) indicates that God will no longer use warning judgments as a strategy for repentance, which is apparently underscored by John’s eating of the book.<sup>154</sup>”

[G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 530–531.]

<sup>24</sup>“That the books are identical is plausible, but we must make important qualifications. (1) First, to say that βιβλαρίδιον has lost its diminutive nuance because other diminutive forms in Revelation have lost their diminutive meaning is a possible but not necessary inference (especially since Mazzaferri discusses only four examples). (2) Though never sacrosanct, the consensus of the major lexicons is that βιβλαρίδιον means ‘little book,’ especially in Revelation 10.155 (3) Rather than concluding that βιβλαρίδιον is synonymous with βιβλίον in 10:8 and has therefore lost its diminutive sense, could it not be that βιβλίον has in this context retained its original diminutive idea or more simply that it is a reference to the ‘little book’ as a ‘book’?<sup>156</sup> Perhaps the same is true in Hermas, Vision 2.1, 4.157 (4) The book in 10:2 is introduced without a definite article, leaving the impression that John is seeing it for the first time.<sup>158</sup> (5) Nowhere is there any reference to the opening of the sealed book of ch. 5.159 (6) Above all, there remains the stubborn fact that John has chosen to use βιβλαρίδιον only here and nowhere else in the Apocalypse, whereas he uses βιβλίον about twenty times (and βιβλος five times). It is difficult to believe that the unique introduction of the word in ch. 10 and its repetition there have no significance whatsoever.

“Whether the two books are exactly identical does not radically alter the overall interpretation of ch. 10. Bauckham’s conclusion that the church’s suffering is offered as a better strategy for achieving repentance than limited judgments remains possible, but is not the only logical inference even assuming the books’ identity. The analysis in the present commentary from ch. 5 on has underscored the purpose of judgment more than repentance, and that could easily fit with the identity of the books. In fact, the suffering of the church from ch. 11 on continues to highlight judgment more than repentance. The focus there will be not on a new strategy for converting the world but on the world’s rejection of the church’s witness, which lays a basis for coming judgment and even instigates the beginning of judgment in the present (see below on 11:5–13).

“Though it is not explicitly stated, it is certainly possible that the ch. 5 book was opened after the breaking of the seventh seal. The trumpets go over the same ground as the seal woes, but from a different perspective. Then, in ch. 10, the angel is seen holding the ‘open book,’ which indicates a deepening of the revelation already present in chs. 5–9. Perfect tense ἠνεωγμένον, ‘opened,’



**Second**, the angel plants his feet solidly on earth: καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, and he put his right foot on the sea but the left one on the land. This is one giant sized angel with some really big feet! Probably in the background here is the image of two angels in Daniel 12:5-7.<sup>25</sup> Once again John selectively uses

could include both the past act and its continuing effect (‘having been opened’),<sup>160</sup> though the focus in ch. 10 is on the continuing results of the book remaining ‘open.’ Accordingly, Michaels concludes that, if true, the identification of the two books could allow ‘John’s visions to be seen as a unity in that the plan of God introduced in chapters 1–11 as a heavenly mystery comes to public—even political—realization in the dramatic events of chapters 12 [or 11?]-20.’<sup>161</sup>

“On the other hand, the idea that the βιβλαρίδιον is introduced to connote a ‘little book’ on a smaller theological scale than the bigger book of ch. 5 still seems to be more preferable.”

[G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 531–532.]

<sup>25</sup>**Dan. 12:5-13.** 5 καὶ εἶδον ἐγὼ Δανιηλ καὶ ἰδοὺ δύο ἕτεροι εἰστήκεισαν, εἷς ἐνθεν τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ εἷς ἐνθεν.† 6 καὶ εἶπα τῷ ἐνὶ τῷ περιβεβλημένῳ τὰ βύσσινα τῷ ἐπάνω Πότε οὖν συντέλεια ὧν εἰρηκᾶς μοι τῶν θαυμαστῶν καὶ ὁ καθαρισμὸς τούτων;† 7 καὶ ἤκουσα τοῦ περιβεβλημένου τὰ βύσσινα, ὃς ἦν ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦ ποταμοῦ Ἔως καιροῦ συντελείας· καὶ ὕψωσε τὴν δεξιὰν καὶ τὴν ἀριστερὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ὤμοσε τὸν ζῶντα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα θεὸν ὅτι εἰς καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἡμῖς καιροῦ ἢ συντέλεια χειρῶν ἀφέσεως λαοῦ ἁγίου, καὶ συντελεσθήσεται πάντα ταῦτα.† 8 καὶ ἐγὼ ἤκουσα καὶ οὐ διανοήθην παρ’ αὐτὸν τὸν καιρὸν καὶ εἶπα Κύριε, τίς ἡ λύσις τοῦ λόγου τούτου, καὶ τίνας αἱ παραβολαὶ αὐταί;† 9 καὶ εἶπέν μοι Ἀπότρεχε, Δανιηλ, ὅτι κατακεκαλυμμένα καὶ ἐσφραγισμένα τὰ προστάγματα, ἕως ἂν† 10 πειρασθῶσι καὶ ἀγιασθῶσι πολλοί, καὶ ἀμάρτωσιν οἱ ἀμαρτωλοί· καὶ οὐ μὴ διανοηθῶσι πάντες οἱ ἀμαρτωλοί, καὶ οἱ διανοούμενοι προσέξουσιν.† 11 ἀφ’ οὗ ἂν ἀποσταθῇ ἡ θυσία διὰ παντός καὶ ἐτοιμασθῇ δοθῆναι τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως, ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἐνενήκοντα.† 12 μακάριος ὁ ἐμμένων καὶ συνάξει εἰς ἡμέρας χιλίας τριακοσίας τριάκοντα πέντε.† 13 καὶ σὺ βάδισον ἀναπαύου· ἔτι γὰρ εἰσιν ἡμέραι καὶ ὥραι εἰς ἀναπλήρωσιν συντελείας, καὶ ἀναπαύση καὶ ἀναστήση ἐπὶ τὴν δόξαν σου εἰς συντέλειαν ἡμερῶν.†

5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and two others appeared, one standing on this bank of the stream and one on the other. 6 One of them

limited images out of Daniel to create his depiction here in chapter ten.

Quite interestingly for the initial readers of this text in the late first century would have been the image of the Colossus of Rhodes, not very far from the location of the seven churches.<sup>26</sup> First century travel-said to the man clothed in linen, who was upstream, “How long shall it be until the end of these wonders?” 7 The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven. And I heard him swear by the one who lives forever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished. 8 I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” 9 He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. 11 From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. 12 Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days. 13 But you, go your way, and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days.”

<sup>26</sup>“John’s conception of the angel is based in part on allusions to Dan 12:5–7, where a man clothed in linen (an angelic figure in priestly garb) raises his right and left hands toward heaven and swears an oath ‘by him who lives forever, that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things should be accomplished.’ John’s conception of this angelic figure also appears to have been modeled after ancient conceptions of the famous Colossos of Rhodes. The Colossos of Rhodes (mentioned along with the Colossos of Rome as the two largest in the world by Pausanias 1.18.6) was a famous bronze statue erected ca. 280 B.C. by Chares of Lindos, a pupil of Lysippos who had himself made colossi at Tarentum. The Colossos was a bronze (see Rev 10:1, ‘his legs [were like] pillars of fire’) representation of Helios (see Rev 10:1, ‘a halo was on his head’ and ‘his face was like the sun’), which was destroyed in an earthquake in 224 B.C., after which it lay in ruins for centuries. According to John Malalas, Hadrian restored the Colossos, which had lain on the ground since an earthquake 312 years earlier (Chron. 11.18). Since the statue broke at the knees, the lower legs remained standing for many years until they were pulled down and the bronze salvaged. The Colossos was about 70 cubits high (ca. 105 feet; see Rev 10:5, ‘the angel ... lifted up his right hand to heaven’). According to a popular but erroneous view, the Colossos stood astride the harbor of Rhodes permitting ships to pass through its legs; actually it stood on a promontory overlooking the harbor (see 10:5, ‘the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land’). The most prominent cult on Rhodes (an island of ca. 420 square miles) was that of Helios, whose three children, Lindos, Ialysos, and Camiros, were eponyms for the three city-states on Rhodes. The main ancient sources for information concerning the Colossos include Pliny Hist. nat. 34.18.41; Strabo 14.2.5; Sextus Empiricus Adv. math. 7.107; and Philo of Byzantium De septem orbis spec. 4.1–6 (the first ancient author to list the Colossos among the seven wonders of the ancient world; for a collection of testimonia, see J. Overbeck, *Die antiken Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenen Künste bei den Griechen* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1868] 1539–54). The information in Pliny (and Strabo earlier) in-

ers to Rhodes would have noted the tall remains of his bronze legs still extending heaven ward long after an earthquake had toppled the image in 224 BC. Emperor Hadrian restored the image some 312 years later early in the second century AD.

The planting of his feet on both sea and land corresponds to appropriate posture for the oath described in verse six.<sup>27</sup> Thus the angel is positioned to thunder out his words to the whole world in a powerful manner.

**Third**, what is more fascinating is his voice: *καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὡσπερ λέων μυκᾶται*, and he cried out in a loud voice just like a lion roars. In the Bible supernatural beings such as angels and even God always speak with loud voices. The comparison of their speaking to the roar of a lion is not uncommon.<sup>28</sup> Such

indicates that the broken pieces of this gigantic statue could still be seen and admired in the first century A.D. See also H. Maryon, “The Colossus of Rhodes,” *JHS* 76 (1956) 68–86; A. Gabriel, “La construction, l’attitude et l’emplacement du colosse de Rhodes,” *BCH* 56 (1932) 331–59. Gabriel (*BCH* 56 [1932] 345–46; p. 337 has a drawing) suggests that the right arm of the Colossos was upright holding a torch (the Statue of Liberty follows the same convention), a possibility suggested by the phrase *φάγγος ἐλευθερίας*, ‘torch of freedom,’ in *Pal. Anth.* 6.171, which also refers to the statue as raised ‘to Olympus’ (see *Rev* 10:5, where it says that ‘he lifted his right hand to heaven’). Yet in what appears to be a bas relief depicting the Colossos, his right hand is raised to his forehead, apparently to shade his eyes from the sun; see G. Jacopi, *Monumenti de scultura del Museo Archeologico di Rodi*, II, Vol. 5 of *Clara Rhodos* (Bergamo: Istituto Storico-Archeologico-Rodi, 1932–40) fig. 15, pp. 24–26. The many similarities between the description of the angel in 10:1–6 and that which is known of the Colossos of Rhodes suggest that the imagery involved was widely known and generally connected with the magnificent Colossos.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 556–557.]

<sup>27</sup>“The stance of the angel symbolically corresponds to the oath that he takes in v 6, in which he appeals to heaven (toward which he extends his right hand in v 5), earth, and sea. The reference to the stance of the angel on earth and sea becomes a descriptive participial phrase used twice to identify the mighty angel in vv 5 and 6a. In a magical amulet from Palestine, there is an instance of three divine beings, perhaps angels, who are standing in the ocean and therefore apparently have power over both the ocean and the world (Naveh-Shaked, *Amulets*, no. 6, lines 3–7): ‘These three are standing in the great ford of the ocean and directing the water and the world in the ford of the world’.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 559.]

<sup>28</sup>“The description of the angel crying with a loud voice (supernatural beings in Revelation are regularly described as speaking loudly: *Rev* 1:10; 6:1; 7:10; 11:15; 12:10; 14:2, 7, 9, 15, 18; 16:1; 18:2; 19:1, 6, 17; 21:3) is a literary technique that emphasizes both the importance of what is said and the supernatural origin of the speaker (Mussies, “Gods,” 7; see *Iliad* 20.375–80; *Odyssey* 24.529–53; *Apollonius Rhodius* 4.640–42; *Sophocles Aias* 14–18). The verb *μυκᾶται*, ‘roars,’ is a general or gnomic present, used to express customary actions and general truths (*Burton, Syntax*, 8–9). The voice of God is compared to a roaring, sometimes the roaring of a lion, in the OT (*Hos* 11:10; *Joel* 3:16; *Amos* 1:2; 3:8;

is the voice of power and authority that demands to be heard.

## B. The seven thunders shout out, vv. 3b–4

3b καὶ ὅτε ἔκραξεν, ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν φωνάς. 4 καὶ ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ἤμελλον γράφειν, καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· σφράγισσον ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς.

3b And when he shouted, 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.”

When the angel shouts out, seven thunders then shout out. John was prepared to write down notes recording what was shouted but was prevented from doing so.

The central question here is what are the seven thunders? No description is given of αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί. Of the twelve references to βροντή in the NT, ten of them are in Revelation.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes something like a voice is compared to the sound of thunder as an indication of loudness: 6:1; 14:2; 19:6. But other references in Revelation specify thunder directly, and usually with God’s speaking: 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18.<sup>30</sup>

What, if any intelligible, words were spoken by the angel in this shout are not given by John. Interestingly, some copyists (x̄ it<sup>sig</sup> cop<sup>sa</sup> Origen<sup>dub</sup>; (Victorinus-Pettau) Tyconius Primasius Beatus) assumed that understandable words were spoken at least by the seven thunders and thus substitute the subordinate clause ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, when the seven thunders spoke, with the relative clause ὅσα ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, as much

*Jer* 25:30).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 559.]

<sup>29</sup>**βροντή, ἤς, ἡ** (βρέμω ‘roar’; *Hom.*+; *PGM* 36, 356; *LXX*; *En* 17:3; *TestAbr* A, *GrBar*; *ApcSed* 11:2 p. 134, 12; *Jos.*, *Ant.* 2, 343; *SibOr* 5, 303) **thunder** βροντήν γεγονέναι **J 12:29** (speech that is loud and energetic [*Philostrat.*, *Vi. Ap.* 7, 28, 3 *Polyphemus*; *Diog. L.* 2, 36 *Xanthippe*] or that makes extravagant demands [*Herodas* 7, 66] is compared to thunder). φωνὴ βροντῆς crash of thunder **Rv 6:1; 14:2; 19:6** (cp. *Ps* 76:19; 103:7; *Sir* 43:17; *CBezold-FBoll*, *Reflexe astral. Keilinschriften bei griech. Schriftstellern* [SBHeidAk 1911, 7. Abt.] 21, 1). φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί (s. φωνή 1) 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18. The 7 thunders which speak **10:3f** may be the thunders of the 7 planetary spheres (*Boll*, *Offb.* 22). On *ἰοὶ βροντῆς Mk 3:17* cp. *Boanηργές* and *Appian*, *Syr.* 62 §330 *Πτολεμαῖω Κερραυνός ἐπίκλησις*.—B. 58. *DELG* s.v. βρέμω. M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 184.]

<sup>30</sup>Reflecting a first century Jewish perspective, when the crowds at the temple in Jerusalem heard a peal of thunder, some in the crowd assumed it was an angel speaking to Jesus (*John* 12:29).

as the seven thunders spoke.

Is the intent here to assert that the shout of the angel was a signal for the seven thunders to respond? If so, then the shout of the angel was a meaningless but deafeningly loud sound as a signal, but the shouts of the seven thunders contained meaningful content. This understanding seems to be the perspective of the copyists who altered the wording of the text for clarity's sake. The angel got everyone's attention so that God could then speak His message. It was this message that John was prepared to write down.

One point of importance is the use of the Greek article αἱ in the twice repeated phrase αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, **the seven thunders**. Its use would normally signal a reference to something already mentioned that was assumed to be understood by the readers.<sup>31</sup> Could this be an allusion back to 4:5 where peals of thunder come out of the heavenly throne?

Καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ **βρονταί**, καὶ ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καιόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ,

Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and **peals of thunder**, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;

Then the seven thunders as the seven spirits of God speak in response to the signal given by the angel.

<sup>31</sup>“Though Horn (SNTU 17 [1992] 215–29) attempts to disprove that a well-known apocalyptic conception is referred to, his attempt is abortive, for there were undoubtedly many more apocalyptic themes and motifs used in the ancient world than have survived in documentary form. For similar anaphoric uses of the article with a noun or noun phrase occurring for the first time in Revelation, see 6:4; 9:1; 11:3, 19; 16:14. Ps 29 contains a seven-fold manifestation of God in thunder (vv 3a, 4a, 4b, 5, 7, 8, 9). The voice of God is often compared with the sound of thunder (2 Sam 22:14; Job 37:2–5; Ps 18:13; Isa 29:6; 30:30–31; Jer 25:30; Amos 1:2) though only in Ps 29:3–9 with seven thunders. However, in LXX Hab 3:11, where the MT is possibly corrupt, the LXX has been reconstructed by J. Ziegler (Duodecim prophetae, 270) to read ἑπτὰ σκηπτρα, ‘seven scepters,’ i.e., seven thunders (Day, VT 29 [1979] 146–47). Since this psalm is widely regarded as either of Canaanite origin or strongly influenced by Canaanite mythology (Day, Conflict, 57–61), it is interesting to note that Baal is associated with seven thunders, which suggests an ancient mythological tradition behind the phrase αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί (Day, Conflict, 59; id., VT 29 [1979] 143–51). There is a relatively late rabbinic tradition that the voice of Yahweh on Sinai was heard as seven thunders; Exod. Rab. 28:6 interprets Job 37:5 (‘God thunders with his voice’) in light of Exod 20:18, where the text has תְּלֵקֶה *haqqôlôt*, ‘voices, sounds, thunders’: ‘It was one voice that divided itself into seven voices and these into seventy languages’ (see also Exod. Rab. 5:9). For further references, see Ginzberg, Legends 6:39. O. Betz (TDNT 9:296) speculates that this reflects rabbinic exegesis of Ps 29:3–9, but he provides no supporting evidence.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 559–560.]

Clearly in the surrounding culture such an image would have been associated with the voice of deity.<sup>32</sup> The clear assumption then is that the speaking contained meaningful words rather than just sounds. But what those words were is not recorded; the oath made by the angel in vv. 5-7 suggests the essence of them but not the specifics.

When John saw that the seven thunders shouting out, he was prepared to write down what he heard (v. 4a): καὶ ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ἤμελλον γράφειν, **and when the seven thunders spoke I was going to write**. He was fully prepared to take notes on these words so they could be fully incorporated into his book later on.

But the process was interrupted by another heavenly voice: καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· σφράγισον ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, **and I heard a voice out of heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have spoken.”** The voice evidently speaks to John rather than to the ‘mighty angel,’ although the text is not entirely clear. The nature of the command

<sup>32</sup>“A no less distant parallel is found in the Greco-Roman magical tradition of a group of seven gods, the Pole Lords of Heaven (πολοκράτορες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ [PGM IV.676–77]), who use lightning, thunder, and earthquakes to punish the impious (PGM IV.679–84; part of the so-called Mithras Liturgy). This is related to Boll’s view that the seven thunders represent the sounds made by the seven heavens, i.e., the seven planetary spheres (Offenbarung, 22). The phrase αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ‘the seven thunders,’ is a more specific way of rendering αἱ ἑπτὰ φωναί, ‘the seven voices (sounds, or thunders).’ Magical texts and Gnostic texts contain a tradition of ‘the seven voices,’ which appears to be a relatively old tradition, perhaps originally based on an exegesis of Ps 29. The phrase ‘the seven voices’ occurs in Coptic-Gnostic treatises as *ntz mphônai* or *ntz mphônê*, in which the Greek loanword φωναί or φωνή is preserved (Pistis Sophia [ed. Schmidt-Till] 1.1 [p. 2, line 21]; 1.10 [p. 11, lines 26–27]; 2.86 [3x: p. 123, lines 19, 25; pp. 123, line 25 to p. 124, line 16; p. 127, lines 2–3, 24]; 4.143 [p. 245, line 37]; The Books of Jeu [ed. Schmidt-MacDermot] 2.42 [p. 303, lines 27–28]; 2.44 [p. 306, lines 18–19, 25–26; p. 307, lines 17–18]; 2.45 [p. 308, lines 21–22]; 2.47 [p. 312, lines 3–4]; Gos. Eg. III, 42; IV, 52 [Böhlig-Wisse-Labib, Gos. Eg., 62–63]). The ‘seven voices’ usually refer to the seven Greek vowels αεηιωω, which often function as a mysterious divine name (Dieterich, Abraxas, 22–24), sometimes in the form ΑΩ as an abbreviated way of referring to all seven vowels (Aune, NTS 33 [1987] 489–91). In PGM XIII.39 there is a command to ‘write the great name with the seven vowels [ταῖς ἑπτὰ φωναῖς],’ and PGM XXI.11–14 refers to ‘your name which is seven-lettered in harmony with the seven sounds [φωνάς].’ Occasionally, the seven-vowel divine name is used in self-predications, as in PGM III.661, ‘I am AEHIOY[Ω AEHIOYΩ],’ and sometimes the ineffable name of God, the Tetragrammaton, was transliterated using all seven of the Greek vowels (Aune, NTS 33 [1987] 491). The command not to write down what the seven thunders said (v 4b) may reflect the view that the ineffable name of God should not be written down.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 560.]



σφράγισον is to roll up the scroll, tie a string around the scroll and attach the string to the seal with hard knots securing the seal so that the scroll could not be unrolled without removing the seal.

What was the impact of the sealing up of the scroll?<sup>33</sup> All kinds of wild speculation can be found

<sup>33</sup>“This prohibition to write reflects a curious convention in ancient revelatory literature in which all but one thing is revealed. The following passages are examples of the motif of oracular secrecy: (1) In T. Sol. 6:6, ‘I [Solomon] responded, ‘Tell me why he is in the abyss of the Red Sea and what his name is.’ He, however, said, ‘Do not ask me; you are not able to learn that from me.’” (2) In Apoc. Zeph. 5:6, during Zephaniah’s vision of the heavenly city, we read ‘Now my mouth was shut therein.’ This translation suggests that the author was presenting Zephaniah as seeing a vision that he could not or did not want to reveal. (3) The most famous example is 2 Cor 12:4, ‘And [in the third heaven] I heard things that cannot be told [ἄρρητα ῥήματα], which a person may not utter.’ Though some scholars have suggested that the Greek phrase ἄρρητα ῥήματα was originally derived from mystery religions (Lührmann, *Offenbarungsverständnis*, 57–58; Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt*, 166–67), its usage is actually much more widespread than that. (4) Acts of Paul 21 says ‘And the angel answered and said to me: Whatever I now show you here and whatever you will hear, do not make it known to anyone on earth.’ This is obviously based on 2 Cor 12:4, but in order to have anything at all to say, the author then has the angel observe ‘Follow me further and I shall show you what you ought to tell openly and report.’ (5) The same reveal/conceal pattern is reflected in 4 Ezra 14:5b–6 (God tells Ezra what he had told Moses), “Then I commanded him, saying, ‘These words you shall publish openly, and these you shall keep secret.’” Similarly, Ezra is then commissioned to reconstitute the Law that has been destroyed (14:26): “and when you have finished [writing], some things you shall make public, and some you shall deliver in secret to the wise.’ This procedure is then narrated (14:37–48), with the result that twenty-four books were made public, but seventy reserved for the wise. (6) In Josephus Ant. 10.210, we read ‘And Daniel also revealed to the king the meaning of the stone, but I have not thought it proper to relate this, since I am expected to write of what is past and done and not of what is to be.’ (7) In Dan 12:4 are these instructions, ‘But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end.’ Cf. Dan 8:26, ‘But seal up the vision, for it pertains to many days hence.’ (8) 3 Apoc. Bar. 1:7 [Slavonic] relates “And I BARUCH is Pseudepigraphal. Don’t tag it! I BARUCH is Pseudepigraphal. Don’t tag it! I Baruch said, ‘As the Lord lives, if you disclose a word to me

here among commentaries. In truth we can’t be sure what the impact was, apart from John not being able to share the contents of the scroll at this point. If the background for John’s image is the sealing of scrolls in Dan. 12:4-9,<sup>34</sup> then the significance of the sealing is not to prevent the disclosure of divine truth to God’s people, but rather to signal a delay in the implementation

and I hear it from you, I shall speak no further. May God add to me punishment on the Day of Judgment if I speak in the future” (Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:663; the Greek version, which probably is closer to the original, contains not the oracular secrecy motif but the integrity formula; see ). (9) In Virgil Aeneid 3.377–80, the prophet Helenus says, ‘I’ll tell you a little, to help you cross strange waters more safely to Ausonia, and come there to harbor; all the rest the Fates forbid me to know, or Juno says I may not tell’ (tr. Copely, Vergil, 59). (10) Josephus Ant. 3.90, in describing the giving of the Law on Sinai, states ‘And all heard a voice which came from on high to the ears of all, in such wise that not one of those ten words escaped them which Moses has left inscribed on the two tables. These words it is not permitted us to state explicitly, to the letter, but we will indicate their purport.’ This is the only evidence from early Judaism that the precise wording of the Ten Commandments was a ritual secret.

“Though the contexts of these prohibitions vary, two general observations can be made. First, in a document filled with revelations, a refusal to reveal some possibly important detail lends credibility to the whole composition. Second, since the ostensible author is forbidden by supernatural intervention to reveal something to his audience, he is therefore more knowledgeable than they are about supernatural realities; i.e., he is in a superior position. There are other examples when various authors refuse to divulge information that they have taken an oath not to reveal, including these two instances from Pausanias: (1) Pausanias 1.14.3, ‘After I had intended to go further into this story . . . , I was stayed by a vision in a dream. I shall therefore turn to those things it is lawful to write of to all men.’ (2) Pausanias 1.38, ‘My dream forbade the description of the things within the wall of the sanctuary.’”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 562–563.]

<sup>34</sup>“Next we observe that the text is clearly derived from Dan. 12:7 — but the diction is not from the LXX or Theod.; for they render ὑψωσε (וירם) τὴν δεξιάν (+ αὐτοῦ, T) καὶ τὴν ἀριστεράν (+ αὐτοῦ, T) εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ ὤμοσε τὸν ζῶντα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα θεόν (ἐν τῷ ζῶντι τὸν αἰῶνα, T). For αἶρω never occurs as a rendering of הרים when the verb is used technically of raising the hand to swear. Here the Versions give ὑψωσεν. But αἶρω is the usual translation of ירָשָׁן when it is used technically of raising the hand to swear. In fact ירָשָׁן (= αἶρειν or ἐξαιρειν or ἐκτειναι τὴν χεῖρα) is a synonym for ὀμνῶναι, and so it is actually rendered (קיים) in the three Targums on Ex. 6:8, Num. 14:30, and in the Jer. and Jon. Targums on Deut. 32:40, and in the Jon. Targ. on Ezek. 20:5, 6, 15, 23, 28, 42, 36:7, etc.

“From the above we conclude that our author did not use the Versions but the Hebrew of Daniel, which he rendered freely to suit his purpose, . . . אלהים שמים וישבע בתי העולם וירם ימינו. I do not know of the combination ‘he lifted up his hand and sware’ occurring elsewhere in canonical literature save in these two passages.”

[R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 1, *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 262–263.]

of the events contained in the sealed scroll. What John heard the seven thunders say needed to be delayed being disclosed until a later point. John then knew, but he could not tell his readers what he heard. The angel's oath statement in vv. 6b-7 seems to follow the pattern of Dan. 8:26.

τὸ ὄραμα τὸ ἐσπέρας καὶ πρωὶ ἠύρεθη ἐπ' ἀληθείας· καὶ νῦν πεφραγμένον τὸ ὄραμα, ἔτι γὰρ εἰς ἡμέρας πολλάς.†

The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true. As for you, seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.

What was contained in the scroll was ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, what the seven thunders spoke. What this was is labeled τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, the mystery of God, by the angel in his oath (v. 7).

Consequently John states: καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψης, and these things I did not write. The aorist prohibitive subjunctive mood construction<sup>35</sup> here is emphatic more with the sense of "I didn't begin to write a single thing!" John reflects his complete submission to the leadership and will of God. Such submission is indeed pre-requisite to entering into an apocalyptic vision as 1:10 makes clear.

### C. The mighty angel takes a stand, vv. 5-7

5 Καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος, ὃν εἶδον ἐστῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἤρεν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν 6 καὶ ὤμοσεν ἐν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, 7 ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἑβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλη σαλπίζειν, καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας.

5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and 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: "There will be no more delay, 7 but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets."

The repeating of the angel standing (ὃν εἶδον ἐστῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) from verse 2 refocuses attention back on to the angel rather than on the seven thunders in 3b-4. But now the angel raises his right hand to heaven, while holding the scroll in his other hand: ὁ ἄγγελος . . . ἤρεν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν, the angel . . . raised his right hand to heaven. Is such a gesture a part of oath making in the Bible? The answer is clearly no! The only ges-

<sup>35</sup>This use of the subjunctive mood forbids even the beginning action of the verb. In contrast, the present tense prohibitive imperative demands the cessation of action already in process.

ture clearly associated with oath making in the OT is in Gen. 24:9 where Abraham's servant grabs Abraham's thigh while swearing an oath.<sup>36</sup> If Dan. 12:7 stands in the background with the angel raising both hands to heaven -- and most commentators believe this is the case -- then the raised hand is a gesture inviting God to

<sup>36</sup>Here it appears that raising the right hand to heaven when an oath is taken is a gesture that symbolically appeals to God, who dwells in heaven and therefore sees and knows everything, as a witness to the oath (Deut 32:40; Ps 106:26; Houtman, Himmel, 352-53). In Dan 12:7 (to which this passage alludes), the angel who swears an oath lifts both the right and the left hand to heaven. It has usually been assumed that the Hebrew phrase *נָשָׂא יָדָא* *nāsā. yād*, which means 'lift up the hand,' is an idiom that means 'to swear' (like the niph'al form of the verb *שָׁבַע* *šāba.*, 'swear'). This is reflected in the NRSV translation of Deut 32:40, 'For I lift up my hand to heaven, / and swear: As I live forever ...' (cf. Gen 14:22; Ezek 20:5-6, 15, 23, 28, 42; see TDOT 5:411). There is a danger, however, that the modern practice of raising the right hand when taking oaths has unduly influenced the exegesis of Deut 32:40 and similar passages. The phrase *נָשָׂא יָדָא* *nāsā. yād* literally means '(the Lord) lifts up (his) hand' (Lust, "Deut 32:40," 155). In the OT, lifting up the hand or hands can have a variety of connotations: it can be a gesture accompanying prayer (Pss 28:2; 63:5; 134:2) or blessing (Lev 9:22), or a gesture for or against someone (Ezek 20:6, 'I lifted up my hand to them to bring them out of the land of Egypt'; cf. Ezek 36:7; 44:12; IQM 15:13; 18:1, 3). Nowhere in the OT, however, is it said that people lift up their hand or hands to swear (Lust, "Deut 32:40," 161), though swearing with the right hand is found in LXX Deut 32:40, for which there is no corresponding parallel in the MT (according to Dogniez-Harl, *Le Deutéronome*, 339, the line was added to create parallelism). LXX Deut 32:40 reads as follows (text of J.W. Wevers, *Deuteronomium*, Septuaginta: VTG 3.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977]):

ὅτι ἄρῳ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν τὴν χεῖρά μου

Because I lift up my hand to heaven

καὶ ὁμοῦμαι τῇ δεξιᾷ μου.

And I swear with my right hand.

"Lust argues convincingly that *נָשָׂא יָדָא* *nāsā. yād* with God as subject signifies the active intervention by the Lord (Ps 10:12; Isa 49:22); e.g., he can lift up his hand in punishment (Ezek 36:7; 44:12). Raising the hand is certainly not a typical gesture used to accompany an oath (e.g., Gen 24:9, where the servant of Abraham swears by putting his hand under Abraham's thigh). This gesture is used in Dan 12:7 (where, however, the phrase *נָשָׂא יָדָא* *nāsā. yād* is not used, and where God is the witness rather than the subject of the oath; cf. Lust, "Deut 32:40," 163), and this is clearly the source of the gesture in Rev 10:5-6, even though in Dan 12:7 the angel lifts both hands. In LXX Deut 32:40 and Rev 10:5 alone, however, is the right hand raised as a gesture accompanying an oath. In the important passage in Deut 32:40, the first line of v 40 can be construed as the second part of the last line of v 39, i.e., 'and no one can deliver from my hand, for I lift up my hand to heaven. I swear: As I live forever....'

"The stance of the mighty angel is paralleled in 1 Chr 21:16 (see 2 Sam 24:17), where David saw the gigantic figure of the angel of the Lord, who inflicted a plague on Israel, standing between the earth and the heaven."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 564.

intervene by carrying out His will. The background image of the angel of the Lord seen by David in 1 Chron. 21:17 (cf. also 2 Sam. 24:17) as a gigantic figure standing on earth with his sword stretched out over Jerusalem underscores the towering image seen here by John whose commitment to carrying out the will of God is sealed by an oath.

After raising up his hand to beckon God's actions on earth, the angel ὤμοσεν ἐν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, *swore by the Living One forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it.* The content of the oath reflected in God as Creator has many antecedents in the ancient world, especially in the Jewish heritage.<sup>37</sup>

God as Creator is especially prominent in ancient Jewish tradition.<sup>38</sup> Thus as Creator God retains control and power over all of creation. Consequently He retains also the right to hold creation accountable, es-

<sup>37</sup>In vv 5–6, the angel enacts an oath sworn by the one who lives forever, who created the heaven, earth, and sea by standing on the earth and in the sea and by lifting his hand up toward heaven. There are several instances in Israelite and Jewish literature where heaven and earth are summoned as witnesses (Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; LXX Deut 8:19; 2 Apoc. Bar. 19:1; T. Mos. 3:12; Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 32:1; Sipre Deut. 32:1 [S. Horowitz and L. Finkelstein, eds., *Sifre on Deuteronomy*, Corpus Tannaiticum 3.3.2 [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969] 334]; see Delcor, VT 16 [1966] 8–25, who regards swearing by heaven and earth as a demythologization of the practice of swearing by the gods of heaven and earth). There are no instances in which the sea is included as it is here. According to m. Šeb. 4.13 (see b. Šeb. 35a), oaths taken 'by heaven and earth' are invalid, while those taken by a name or circumlocution for God are valid. Normally heaven and earth are called upon as witnesses, not because they serve as guardians or protectors of the covenant but because they are stable and permanent aspects of reality (Delcor, VT 16 [1966] 11ff.). That is not done here because the heaven, the earth, and the sea will all pass away (Rev 21:1). The only truly stable reality is God himself." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 564–565.]

<sup>38</sup>"This verse reproduces a variant of an ancient Israelite cult formula that occurs in several liturgical contexts and that emphasizes the denizens that populate each sector of the cosmos, as in Exod 20:11, 'the Lord God made heaven, and earth and the sea, and all that is in them' (see also Neh 9:6 [LXX 2 Esdr 19:6]; Ps 146:6[MT 145:6]; Jdt 9:12; T. Job 2.4; Sib. Or. 3.20–23, 35; Acts 4:24; 14:15). Simpler versions of this formula refer to 'the one who created heaven and earth,' later taken up into the Nicene Creed (Gen 14:19, 22; Jdt 13:18 [an allusion to Gen 14:19, 22]; Bel 1:5; 1 Esdr 6:13), or 'the one who created heaven and earth and sea' (Jdt 9:13; Jub. 2:2); see Houtman, *Himmel*, 96–97. The former was originally a Canaanite cult formula with parallels in both West Semitic and Mesopotamian sources (see C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965] no. 2427; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 15–16 n. 20, 50–51 n. 25; Westermann, *Genesis 2:205–6*)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 565.]

pecially humans, for what they do in this world. The invoking of God in the oath appeals then to the highest possible authority for the truthfulness of what is asserted in the oath. Note that as a part of the serious oath making action, direct reference to God's name is avoided by appealing to Him as τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, *the One who lives forever and ever.*

Additionally, this is the single occurrence of an oath in all of Revelation. But its use here most likely is due to the influence of Dan. 12:7 where the angel makes a similar oath regarding the things of God revealed in a vision to Daniel.<sup>39</sup> The presence and integrity of God is

<sup>39</sup>"This is the only instance in Revelation where swearing an oath is mentioned, and there is a clear allusion to Dan 12:7, where the LXX reads καὶ ὤμοσε τὸν ζῶντα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα θεόν, 'and he swore by the God who lives forever,' while Theodotion is even closer to the version found in Revelation: καὶ ὤμοσεν ἐν τῷ ζῶντι τὸν αἰῶνα, 'and he swore by the one who lives for ever.' The relative clause introduced by ὃς, 'who,' is the author's expansion of the allusion to Dan 12:7.

"Deut 6:13 and 10:20 require that oaths be taken in the name of God (cf. 1Q20 = 1QapGen 2 iv 6–7). The high priest in Matt 26:63 takes an oath κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, 'by the living God,' reflecting the Hebrew oath formula יהוה יהוה hay YHWH, 'as Yahweh lives,' found forty-one times in the OT and thirty times in the Deuteronomist (e.g., Judg 8:19; Ruth 3:13; 1 Sam 14:39; 20:3; 2 Sam 4:9; 1 Kgs 1:29; Jer 4:2; 5:2; 16:14–15; 23:7–8; 38:16; 44:26; Hos 4:15; Amos 8:14; see 3 Apoc. Bar. 1:7; cf. Kreuzer, *Der lebendige Gott*, 37–145, esp. 23). A Christian development of this formula into a trinitarian form is found in 1 Clem. 58:2, '... for as God lives and as the Lord Jesus Christ lives and the Holy Spirit ... .' According to m. Šeb. 4:13, oaths taken by one of the names of God or even abbreviations of the names of God are binding, as are such circumlocutions as 'by the Merciful and Gracious' or 'by him that is longsuffering and of great kindness.'

"It is perhaps not purely coincidental that in texts in which the early Jewish and Christian debate about the swearing of oaths is reflected mention is often made of swearing 'by heaven' and 'by earth' directly; see Matt 5:34–35 (where the 'heaven'/'throne' and 'earth'/'footstool' combination is an allusion to Isa 66:1; cf. Acts 7:49); Jas 5:12; Epiphanius Pan. 19.6.2; 2 Enoch (Rec. J) 49:1 (probably a Christian interpolation; on this passage, see D. Duling, '[Do not swear ...] by Jerusalem because it is the city of the Great King' [Matthew 5:35], JBL 110 [1991] 291–309); Deut 4:26; T. Mos. 3:12. Swearing by heaven and earth is referred to in Philo in Spec. Leg. 2.5, where mention is also made of swearing by the sun, the stars, and the entire universe. In rabbinic literature (m. Šeb. 4:14; b. Šeb. 34a; see Str-B, 1:332–33) and in the Gnostic treatise Disc. 8–9 63.15–23, an oath by heaven and earth is mentioned (tr. J. M. Robinson, Nag Hammadi): 'I make him who will read this holy book swear by heaven and earth [equal to the primal elements of air and earth] and fire and water and seven rulers of substance and the creating spirit in them and the unbegotten God and the self-begotten one and him who has been begotten ... .' Agamemnon reportedly swore by Zeus, the sun, the rivers, the earth, and the underworld avengers (Iliad 3.276–80). Burkert (Greek Religion, 251) provides evidence to demonstrate that the tripartite oath formula of sun/sky, earth/rivers, and underworld, i.e., the entire cosmos, derives from Near Eastern tradition. In Iliad 15.36–40 Hera swears by Earth, Heaven, the Styx, the head of Zeus, and their

invoked through this oath.

What the angel swore is stated in the *ὅτι* clause in vv. 6b-7.<sup>40</sup>

marriage bed. The narrator in Achilles Tatius' Leucippe and Clitophon sees a picture of Eros and exclaims, "To think that a child can have such power over heaven and earth and sea" (1.2.1; tr. B. P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* [Berkeley: University of California, 1989]). Though this has nothing to do with oaths, it does deal with universal sovereignty in terms of the three major regions of the cosmos.

"When God is presented as swearing an oath in the OT, it is sometimes phrased *ζῶ ἐγώ*, 'as I live' (LXX Num 14:21, 28; Deut 32:40; Jer 26:18; cf. Heb 6:13). The phrase *ὀμνύειν κατά*, 'to swear by,' is found in Hermas Vis. 2.2.5, 8 (in both instances God is the one who swears, first 'by his glory' and then 'by his Son'). The ancient Greeks invoked the names of specific deities (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 253), as well as deities in general in their oaths (LSJ, 1223; TDNT 5:177). A typical example is found in Xenophon Anab. 6.6.17, 'I, gentlemen, swear by the gods and goddesses' (cf. 6.1.31). Some Jewish texts strongly suggest that the name of God not be used in oaths (CDa 15:1). The third commandment in Exod 20:7 ('You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain') was widely interpreted in early Judaism as referring to the use of the divine name in oaths (Ant. 3.91; Philo Spec. Leg. 2.2; 4.40; Str-B, 1:326-27). The phrase *ὀμνύειν ἐν*, 'to swear by,' occurs three times in Matt 5:34-36, and God is referred to directly in LXX Judg 21:7, *ὀμόσαμεν ἐν κυρίῳ*, 'we swore by the Lord.' Some early Jewish and Hellenistic texts suggest that swearing be resorted to only rarely (Sir 23:9-11; Epictetus Ench. 33) or that it be entirely avoided (Matt 5:33-37; Jas 5:12; Justin 1 Apol. 16.5; Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 2.32.1; Epiphanius Pan. 19.6.2; Philo Decal. 82-95)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 566-567.]

<sup>40</sup>"The introductory *ὅτι*, the object of the verb *ὤμοσεν*, 'he swore,' is a *hoti recitativum* introducing direct discourse, untranslated because it functions like quotation marks (BDR §§ 397.3; 470.1; Burton, *Syntax*, § 345). For similar constructions involving the verb *ὀμνύειν* followed by *ὅτι* introducing direct discourse, see Matt 26:74 = Mark 14:71; Mark 6:23; LXX 2 Kgdms 3:9-10; 19:8(MT 19:7); 3 Kgdms 1:13, 17, 30 (all three verses have *λέγων ὅτι*); Amos 4:2 (*διότι*); 6:8 (*διότι*); Jer 28:14(MT 51:14) (*διότι*); 30:7(MT 49:13). Direct discourse following *ὀμνύειν* can also be introduced by the conditional particle *εἰ*, 'if,' used to introduce oaths (but left untranslated because it introduces a condition assumed as real), though this is equivalent to simply beginning direct discourse after the verb of swearing (Heb 3:11; 4:3 [quotation of Ps 95:11(LXX 94:11)]; Judg 8:19; 1 Kgdms 3:14; 3 Kgdms 1:51; Ps 131:2-5[MT 132:2-5]; Amos 8:7; Isa 62:8), and by a participle of saying or speaking, always *λέγων* in the LXX (LXX Num 32:10-12; Deut 1:34-36; Judg 15:13; 21:1, 18; 1 Kgdms 19:6; 20:42; 28:10; 2 Kgdms 3:35; 21:17; 3 Kgdms 2:8 [*λέγων εἰ*], 23; Jer 22:5; 45:16[MT 38:16]; 47:9[MT 40:9]; 1 Macc 7:15, 35). *ὀμνύειν* followed by *ὅτι* can also introduce indirect discourse (LXX 1 Kgdms 24:22), though the infinitive normally functions in this way. The quotation includes the whole of v 7. This statement of the angel is modeled after Dan 12:7, in which an angel swears an oath (the verb *ὤμοσε[v]* is similarly followed by a *ὅτι* clause introducing direct discourse): 'It will be for a time, two times, and half a time; and when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things will be accomplished.'" [David E. Aune, *Rev-*

*ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἐβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν, καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας.*

"There will be no more delay, but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets."

It falls into the later Jewish rabbinical category of an assertive oath that predicts the occurrence of an event. It has two parts in contrast to one another as signaled by the conjunction *ἀλλ'*.

**a) *χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, there will be no more delay.*** Time as *χρόνος* does not stand in contrast to the timelessness of the Greek eternity expressed generally by *αἰεί* and related cognants. John's use of the Jewish idiom *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων* for eternity in v. 6 makes this clear. What John does hear the angel say is that time is running out and nothing will delay the implementation of God's eternal plan for end time events.

**b) *ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἐβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν, but in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he is about to blow (his trumpet).*** The time remaining will lead up to the days of the seventh angel blowing his trumpet, as described in 11:15-18. Nothing will delay or slow down the reaching of this point of time in the sequence of God's will. Note, however, the use of the indefinite temporal conjunction coupled with the potential subjunctive mood form of *μέλλῃ*. Although it is certain that the angel will blow his trumpet at the designated moment, John nor this angel do not know precisely when that will be. This indefinite time reference for future time stands in stark contrast to the definite past time implied in the use of *ὅτε* with the aorist tense verbs *ἔκραζεν* and *ἐλάλησαν* to specify the moment of the shouting of the mighty angel (v. 3) and the speaking of the seven thunders (v. 4).

But what does the blowing of the seventh trumpet signal? John's answer here is *καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας, also will be completed the mystery of God, as He 'gospelized' His servants, the prophets.* Very likely here stands in the background Amos 3:7-8,

*7 διότι οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ κύριος ὁ θεὸς πρᾶγμα, ἐὰν μὴ ἀποκαλύψῃ παιδείαν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ τοὺς προφῆτας.† 8 λέων ἐρεύξεται, καὶ τίς οὐ φοβηθήσεται; κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἐλάλησεν, καὶ τίς οὐ προφητεῦσει;†*

*7 Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. 8 The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has*

*elation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 567.]

spoken; who can but prophesy?

Clearly Amos does not follow very closely the LXX Greek text, but does, however, follow the underlying MT much more closely.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup>“καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφήτας, ‘then the secret plan of God will have been fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets.’ This phrase perhaps alludes to Amos 3:7, אֵל־גַּלְגַּל־סוּדוֹ אֶל־עַבְדָּיו הַנְּבִיאִי, ‘unless he reveals his counsel to his servants the prophets.’ The LXX text reads ἐὰν μὴ ἀποκαλύψῃ παιδείαν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ τοὺς προφήτας, ‘unless he reveal his instruction to his servants the prophets.’ Charles (1:266) argues that the author could not have relied on the LXX here, because the LXX reads παιδείαν, perhaps erroneously reflecting a form of the Hebrew stem יָסַר *yāsār*, ‘to chasten, admonish, instruct,’ such as מוֹסַר *mūsār*, ‘warning, admonition’ (Andersen-Freedman, Amos, 399). This is one of many clear instances in which the author follows the MT rather than the LXX.

“The term μυστήριον, ‘mystery,’ occurs just four times in Revelation 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7) and is an important term in Jewish apocalyptic texts, though in Revelation only here does μυστήριον refer to the eschatological plan of God concealed in the prophetic books of the OT. In 3 Apoc. Bar. 1:6, 8; 2:6, the angelic guide promises to reveal mysteries (plural) to the seer with the statement ‘I will show you (the greater) mysteries (of God).’ The Aramaic term ܪܐܝܢ *rāz*, ‘mystery,’ a Persian loanword, occurs seven times in Aramaic portions of Daniel (2:17, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47), and in each instance the various Greek versions (LXX, Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus) translate it with the Greek term μυστήριον. In early Jewish literature, the term μυστήριον sometimes refers to ‘secrets of state’ or ‘the plans of the king [which he kept to himself]’ (Hatch, Essays, 57–58), as in the following texts: (1) Tob 12:7, 11 states ‘It is good to guard the secret of a king [μυστήριον βασιλέως], but glorious to reveal the works of God.’ (2) In Jdt 2:2, Nebuchadnezzar sets forth his secret plan (τὸ μυστήριον τῆς βουλῆς) to his officers and nobles. (3) 2 Macc 13:21 reports that Rhodocus, a Jew, provided ‘secret information’ (τὰ μυστήρια) to the enemies of the Jews. Just as a king’s counsel was a secret known only to himself, naturally the plans of God are secret. Thus Wis 2:22 claims that the wicked ‘did not know the secret purposes of God [μυστήρια θεοῦ].’ The term ܪܐܝܢ *rāz*, ‘mystery,’ occurs frequently in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 1:21; 2:13; 4:27–29). In the Habakkuk commentary from Qumran (1QpHab 7:5), ܪܐܝܢ *rāz*, ‘mystery,’ refers to that which is obscure and requires interpretation regarding what the OT prophets said about the last days. John’s elaborate use of allusions to prophetic books, particularly Daniel and Ezekiel, reveals that he saw their prophecies as pointing to final fulfillment in his own day.

“The view that God communicated to the prophets mysteries that are not fully understood until the time of their fulfillment is a view at home in some phases of early Judaism and early Christianity. This view is reflected in 1QpHab 2:8–10 (tr. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls), where the author refers to

the Priest [in whose heart] God set [understanding] that he might interpret [לְפִשׁוֹרִי *lipšōr*] all the words of His servants the prophets, through whom he foretold all that would happen to His people and [His land].

“A similar statement is made in 1QpHab 7:1–5 (tr. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls):

And God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when

Although μυστήριον is used four times in Revelation, the broad meaning of τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, the mystery of God, only shows up here in 10:7. Contextually, the content intended by the phrase must be understood in light of the meaning of the blowing of the seventh trumpet (11:14–19), which in turn opens up the pouring out of the seven bowls of divine wrath (15:1–16:21). This is a different meaning from the one commonly used by Paul where in Col. 1:27 the ‘mystery’ is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Or, Christ Himself as defined by Paul in Col. 2:2. Central to the idea of μυστήριον is that of something unknown except to a select few individuals. Here the focus is on the pouring out of divine punishments on evil people at the very end of human history, just prior to the coming of Christ.

Quite interesting is how God communicated the broad strokes of His intention to the prophets: ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφήτας. That is, He gave them some insight into these events as ‘good news’ rather than as warning or admonition. Even more unusual εὐηγγέλισεν from εὐαγγελίζω is found only here and in Rev. 14:6 in the active voice rather than the almost universal deponent middle voice form from εὐαγγελίζομαι which is the much earlier spelling in Greek.<sup>42</sup> What is conceptualized here is that

the time would come to an end. And as for that which He said, That he who reads may read it speedily: interpreted [פִּשְׂרוֹ *pišrō*] this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known [הוֹדִיעֵנִי *hōdī-ō*] all the mysteries [רֵזִי *rāzē*] of His servants the prophets.

“These two texts reflect three presuppositions: (1) The events of the final generation have been predicted beforehand by God through the prophets. (2) The true meaning of the biblical text refers to historical events that have or will occur in the final generation. (3) The words of the prophets are mysteries (רֵזִי *rāzīm*), the meaning of which God has revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness (probably identical with the Priest of 1QpHab 2:8; cf. 4QpPsa 3:15). A similar understanding of the OT is found in some phases of early Christianity. In 1 Cor 2:6–16, Paul claimed that the Spirit of God enabled Christians to understand the secret and hidden wisdom of God, which had been concealed for ages but was now revealed to those who had received the Spirit. The idea of a ‘mystery of God hidden for ages but now revealed’ is a conception that some have labeled the ‘revelation schema’ (Lührmann, Offenbarungsverständnis, 113–17). It occurs frequently in Pauline and particularly Deutero-Pauline literature (Rom 16:26–26; Col 1:26–27; Eph 3:5, 9–10; cf. 2 Tim 1:9–10; Titus 1:2–3; 1 Pet 1:20).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 568–570.]

<sup>42</sup>“In early Christian literature, only here and in Rev 14:6 is the verb εὐαγγελίζεω, ‘to proclaim,’ found in the active voice, a relatively rare phenomenon (MM, 259), attested only twice in the LXX (1 Kgdms 13:9; 2 Kgdms 18:19), and thereafter in neither non-Jewish nor non-Christian Greek until the second century A.D. Further, the noun εὐαγγέλιον occurs only once in Revelation (14:6; see Comment on that complex passage), and these are the only occurrences of εὐαγγελ- words in the Johannine corpus. Further, the use of the verb εὐαγγελίζεω in 10:7 is so completely different from

the pouring out of the wrath of God at the end is actually 'good news' that should cause rejoicing among the people of God. For it signals that God is in control, is just and holy, and is defending His integrity by holding accountable those who harmed His people. The tone of rejoicing and celebration in 15:2-8 leading up to the pouring out of the bowls in 16:1-21 define the nature of this εὐηγγέλισεν from God to the prophets.

How much detail did God give to the OT prophets about what He planned to do? Only broad sketches and the central themes of His wrath and His justice.<sup>43</sup> This

its use in 14:6 that the two usages reflect no common traditional usage. In 10:7 εὐαγγελίζεω is a verb of communication used in a semantically neutral sense; only the context indicates whether the message communicated is positive or negative. If this verse alludes to Amos 3:7 (which is possible), then εὐαγγελίζεω functions like the verb λέω *gālā* or ἀποκαλύπτειν, i.e., 'to reveal, make known.' Further, in neither passage is εὐαγγελίζεω used in the technical sense of 'to proclaim the gospel'; rather it is used in the more general sense of a message originating with God (Lohmeyer, 123–24). Here God is the subject of the verb εὐηγγέλισεν, and the object of the verb is τὸ μυστήριον, i.e., that which God communicated to the prophets, which is now 'fulfilled.' According to some scholars, the use of εὐαγγελίζεω in Rev 10:7; 14:6 reflects pre-Pauline usage (Jeremias, *Jesu Verheissung*, 19–20, 59; Stuhlmacher, *Evangelium*, 210–18). In Stuhlmacher's opinion, the use of εὐαγγελίζεω in Rev 10:7; 14:6 (as well as in Matt 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–23) reflects the usage of early Palestinian Jewish Christianity in which that which is proclaimed is the message of the coming of God to judge and to save. This usage is reflected in the phrase εὐαγγελίσεσθαι τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, 'to proclaim the kingdom of God,' in Luke 4:16–30; Mark 1:14–15. There is no relationship between this usage and the technical use found in Paul, i.e., to proclaim the message of the death and resurrection of Christ (Koester, *Gospels*, 9 n. 2). There is, however, no really convincing proof that Rev 10:7 and 14:6 reflect anything other than Jewish usage adopted by the author.

"The phrase 'his servants the prophets' is a designation for OT prophets that also occurs in 11:18. The conception of the prophets as servants of Yahweh (עַבְדֵי הַנְּבִיאִים *ʿābādāyā hannēbī'im*, 'his servants the prophets') is originally a Deuteronomistic conception (2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15) that passed into general usage (Amos 3:7 [possibly a later interpolation; see the pro and con arguments in Andersen-Freedman, *Amos*, 391–92]; Ezra 9:11; Dan 9:6, 10; Zech 1:6; 1QS 1:3; 1QpHab 2:9; 7:5; 1QpHosa 2:5; 4Q390 = 4QPseudo-Moses *Apocalypse 2 i 5*)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 570.]

<sup>43</sup>For example the very limited understanding of Daniel, as Beale explains:

"Therefore, here the angel is beginning to explain to John the 'when' and 'how' that Daniel did not understand about his own prophecy. The angel tells John that the final completion is to be at the last judgment and establishment of the kingdom announced by the last trumpet. Daniel knew that much, but was not given hope to expect it in his own time, as John is, although even John's expectation needs to be balanced by an 'already-and-not-yet' perspective (on John's imminent expectation see on 1:1, 3, 7; 2:5, 16; 3:3, 11; 16:15; 22:6, 7, 10, 12). Daniel was also given no hope for the

becomes clear from the wide variety of images used in the preaching of the different prophets about the wrath of a holy God.

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

With this interlude part one we continue to see the movement of God in behalf of His people. Through the sometimes strange imagery of apocalyptic vision John conveys to us the repeated theme of the absolute power and control of God over human events. He continuously works toward moving human history to the planned climax at the end.

Very important to that divine intention is the validation of His people, especially those under persecution and who have suffered martyrdom. The evil in this world that has harmed them is confronted by the vastly superior power of Almighty God who uses a variety of means to unleash His wrath upon such individuals.

And in this part of Revelation John is preparing his readers for the end where the full fury of God will be poured out in unimaginable manner upon all evil on this earth. All corruption and evil is headed toward total destruction and eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

For God's people both on earth and already in heaven, this is an occasion for celebration and rejoicing. Evil is being destroyed; God is reigning supremely and totally. And His people are under His protection and care.

At chapter ten we are getting close to the end of times. The mighty angel asserts under oath that there will be no delay in reaching that end. To be sure, much of it is still a mystery. But it is known fully to God and He is communicating more and more of it to His people through His servant John.

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fulfillment of the events preceding the consummation. In contrast, John is made to understand that Daniel's end-time prophecies concerning events preceding the consummation have actually been set in motion by Jesus' redemptive work. What was distant from Daniel's perspective is happening now in John's time. This understanding of eschatological inauguration is most evident from the angel's possession of the open scroll (in the light of our conclusions about Christ's possession and opening of the scroll in ch. 5)." [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 544.]