

## E.M. Zerr Commentary On Revelation Chapter Ten

**Verse 1.** The drama of the book of Revelation is proceeding down through the centuries, until we are about to arrive at the revolution known in history as the Reformation. But the full development of that mighty movement will be preceded by some items preparatory to it. Now is another time when the reader should again read carefully the “General remarks” at the beginning of this book. But the oppression from the power that was created through the union of church and state has exhausted the patience of the Almighty and he will soon inaugurate the work that is destined to dissolve the unrighteous monster and return to the people their right to act upon their own responsibility. The preliminary events necessary for the main performance are due to begin soon, which will be indicated by some of the symbols of this chapter. The angel in this verse **came down from heaven** and the description shows he was coming on behalf of the Lord to impart some predictions about to be carried out. ***Clothed with a cloud*** agrees with the fact that he was from the courts of heaven, because the clouds are frequently used in connection with heavenly events (chapter 1:7; 14:14; **Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:17**). ***Rainbow upon his head*** signifies the dignity and grandeur of his mission. ***His face like the sun*** denotes great light which was especially appropriate since his mission was to announce the shedding of Gospel light on those who had been deprived of it because of the Dark Ages. ***Pillars of fire***. Thayer explains this to mean. “Flames rising like columns.” It denotes a penetrating brilliance that belongs only to heavenly beings.

**Verse 2.** The angel had a ***little book*** which indicated that the events about to be predicted would not take long and hence would not require a large book to record them. The book was open which signified that the things about to happen were to be made known; that their account was not a sealed book as the one in **chapter 2**. It denoted further that the which had been closed to the people by Rome would soon be opened again so that all might read. The ***sea and earth*** comprise the entire surface of the globe and the symbol means that all the world would be affected by what was soon to occur and which would be announced presently.

**Verse 3.** The **angel's voice was like that of a lion** in that it was strong and itself heard far and near. We know from the context that the angel's cry

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was the announcement that the **Bible was again to be given to the people**. Of course that would be unwelcome news to the heads of the apostate church and it was natural for them to protest. That called for seven thunders from the “seven-hilled” city of Rome.

**Verse 4**, Not realizing the deception there was in the protests, John was about to write down what the thunderous voices said. (We remember he was told in **chapter 1:19** to write the things that should be thereafter.) But the Lord understood the motive of the seven voices coming from the headquarters of the “**man of sin**,” and He caused a voice to instruct John not to record them but to seal them up.

**Verse 5**. In lifting up his hand the angel mentioned before (in **verse 2**) was preparing to make an oath. (There is no inconsistency in this, for he was an angel of God and man only is forbidden to make oaths.)

**Verse 6. *Should be time no longer.*** Much misuse has been of this passage. It is not uncommon to hear a preacher making an earnest plea to his audience to obey the Gospel while the time is here. That soon **the angel of God would place one foot on land and the other on the sea** and declare that “**time shall be no longer.**” They thus make the phrase mean that the last day of the earth has come and hence it will be “**the end of time.**” In the first place the events concerning which the angel uttered the phrase were several centuries prior to the second coming of Christ. In the second place the Bible does not teach there will ever be an end of time, for the word means the same as the word “eternity,” and both words simply mean “**duration**” which is something that had no beginning and will never have an end. The word in our passage does not mean “**time**” as being the opposite of “**eternity**,” but it has the same meaning the word would have if a moderator announced to the speaker that his time was up. The Englishman’s Greek New Testament renders the word “**delay**,” The passage means that the events being predicted—the events getting ready for the Reformation—were about due to start and that there would be no longer delay in the matter.

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**Verse 7.** The *mystery of God* refers to the work of the Reformation that was to restore the Bible to the people. The **seventh angel has not yet sounded**, but he soon will because the preceding verse says there was not to be any further delay. By the time this seventh angel gets his message sounded the complete work of the Reformation will be done, that is, the prediction will be completed. Of course an inspired prophet speaks of things in the present tense even though he is speaking of events long in the future. John was seeing this vision in the first century and the Reformation came in the sixteenth, but an inspired angel can speak of such an event as having taken place. Such is the meaning of this verse when it says that when he shall begin to sound, the 'mystery of God should be finished. (See **chapter 11:15.**)

**Verse 8.** This little book is the one mentioned in verse 2 which contains predictions of things about to begin. John was the human agency of God for delivering the message to the world, and hence it was appropriate for him to receive the book at the bidding of the angel. We note two angels are involved in this episode, the one that held the book and the other one that sounded the instructions to John.

**Verse 9.** In obedience to the instructions of the angel John went and requested the other angel to give him the little book, As the angel delivered it to him he told him to eat it up. This was a symbol and indicated that John was to be inspired to report to the people. A similar instance of such a symbolic inspiration of a prophet is in **Ezekiel 3:1-3**. The book produced two opposite effects upon the prophet although he had only one body to absorb it. There was nothing inconsistent in John's personal attitude toward the word of God, but the world would not take the same stand in view of the unpleasant things it contains in its teachings. Therefore John was required to have a bodily experience that represented both his and the people's reaction to the word. See the note about "**prophets acting**" at **1 Kings 20:35** in Volume 2 of Bible Commentary.

**Verse 10.** John took the book and ate it with the results that he was told what would happen within his body.

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**Verse 11.** We are sure that the effects of eating the book included the reactions of the world, for this verse refers to the subject in direct connection with his eating it. The instruction explains why he was to eat the book, and why it had the mentioned effects, namely, that he was to prophesy again before many peoples, etc. Incidentally, this last statement shows that the one in verse 6 that there should be time no longer, does not mean that the end of the world had come.