

## Revelation 10 Revealing Christ's gospel to the world

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The last four chapters we've looked at contain two types of pictures.

1. God's judgements being poured out on the earth. Ch 6, 8&9.

2. The view from heaven,

with God's people praising him around his throne. Ch 7

In Chapter 10 we have a different picture.

It's a picture letting us know what we should be doing

while we have all that stuff going on around us,

and before we get to the throne room of God.

What are you meant to be doing while you wait to go to heaven?

I guess not many of us would describe our lives

as waiting to go to heaven.

It sounds a bit like we aren't appreciating the here and now.

But if without reducing the mount we appreciate the here and now,

we could increase our sense of anticipation

for the glories that God has in store for us.

Then we might appropriately think of our lives as

'waiting to go to heaven'.

But what are we going to do while we wait?

Well that's our final destination.

But we begin with a mighty angel coming down from heaven.

There's a great debate in the commentaries

about who this angel actually is.

Is it the angel of the Lord?

Or is it the Lord Jesus?

I'm sure you are not super interested

in getting in the minutia of the debate.

But I do feel the need to mention it,

because I'm going with the non obvious answer.

I think it is Jesus.

It could be the angel of the Lord.

That's the OT figure who spoke to Abraham

to tell him that Sarah would become pregnant.  
 Or who addressed Israel's army in Judges 2 after the death of Joshua.  
 It's more than just an ordinary angel,  
 but one who directly mediates the presence of God.  
 But because the word angel can just mean a messenger,  
 that messenger could be the Lord Jesus.  
 And there are some real signs that could be the case.  
 This figure in Rev 10 is pictured being clothed in a cloud.  
 Jesus is pictured as coming with the clouds in Rev 1.  
 And no one who is not God  
 is pictured as being clothed with clouds in the whole Bible.  
 This figure has a rainbow above his head.  
 The rainbow is a sign of God keeping his covenant promises.  
 God put the rainbow in the sky when he promised Noah  
 that he would never again flood the earth like he had in Noah's day.  
 The rainbow signifies God's faithfulness to his promises.  
 And Jesus is the one in whom all God's promises are kept.  
 As Paul tells the Corinthians, 2 Cor 1:20,  
 "No matter how many promises God has made,  
 they are 'Yes' in Christ."  
 This figure has his face shining like the sun,  
 and legs like fiery pillars.  
 In Rev 1, Jesus has his face shining like the sun  
 and feet glowing like burnished bronze.  
 This figure is holding a scroll:  
 a scroll that lay open,  
 its seals broken.  
 But who is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals in Rev 5?  
 It is the Lord Jesus.  
 This figure gives a shout like the roar of a lion.  
 But who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah in Rev 5?  
 It is the Lord Jesus.

So it's not obvious at first sight that this angel might be Jesus.  
 But I'm sure you can see

why commentators like John Stott and David Beale conclude that this angel is in fact Jesus.

So Jesus is coming down from heaven.  
He's bearing a scroll with instructions for his church.  
The scroll is open.  
The instructions are ready to be enacted.  
And Jesus has his feet planted.  
One foot on the sea and the other foot on the land.  
We're not meant to think of someone down the beach  
and they put one foot in the water and one up on the sand.  
"Hey look, I've got one foot in the sea and one foot on land."  
That's not the picture.  
This is a mighty figure.  
Someone who towers over the rest of creation.  
One leg is planted in the Tasman Sea half way to New Zealand  
and the other leg is planted half way to Adelaide.  
If you can't imagine that,  
you didn't watch enough cartoons when you were a kid.  
The picture is of the ruler of creation.  
And he speaks words of authority.  
When he speaks, it's like a clap of thunder.  
Well seven claps of thunder according to our reading.  
Which is a way of saying the loudest clap of thunder on record.  
And John is poised to write down his words.  
But no.  
He's given instruction from heaven.  
10:4 "Seal up what the seven thunders have said  
and do not write it down."  
In the book of Revelation, we have words of prophecy  
that reveal to us some of what the future holds.  
In broad brush strokes and in picture language.  
But not everything is revealed.  
Some things as sealed up  
and they won't be revealed to us until they happen.

That's not to say that Jesus doesn't know.  
He knows the future.  
Just we don't know.  
And actually that's a mercy.  
I don't want to know everything.  
I'm not sure I have the mental toughness  
to face knowing everything God has in store for me.  
In this broken world,  
there are going to be some parts of his plan  
that I wouldn't look forward to with glee.  
But God has promised to give us enough strength for today.  
Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow,  
for tomorrow will worry about itself.  
Each day has enough trouble of its own."  
Let's be thankful that what the seven thunders have said is sealed up.  
We'll find out soon enough.

And then we see Jesus,  
one leg in the Tasman Sea, one leg half way to Adelaide.  
His arm is stretched out to heaven,  
as he swears an oath by the one who created the heavens and the earth.  
Now you might remember vaguely  
that Jesus told us not to swear oaths.  
Just let your Yes be Yes and your No be No.  
So why does he swear an oath?  
In fact he is only doing what God has done throughout history.  
All of God's covenants are God swearing an oath.  
God told Noah he wouldn't flood the earth again.  
He told Abraham  
his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.  
He told Moses that Israel would be his treasured possession.  
He told David that his descendant would sit on his throne forever.  
God swears oaths, we don't.  
Why?  
Because God always keeps his promises.

We don't.  
And when we swear oaths and break our promises,  
we bring God's name into disrepute.  
We take God's name in vain.  
But Jesus can swear an oath in the name of the creator, his Father,  
and what he is telling us is that these words come  
from the one who made everything.  
And what does Jesus promise?  
"There will be no more delay.  
The mystery of God will be accomplished."

What is the mystery of God?  
Well take a look at the pictures on the screen.  
These are the mystery of God.  
The mystery of God is the gospel.  
It's the good news that God is saving a people  
from out of this decaying world.  
That God sent his Son the Lord Jesus to die as a substitute,  
so that the judgement that we deserved would be taken by him.  
And then we might be ransomed from out of the earth.  
Literally snatched from amongst the judgements  
that have been described in the last four chapters,  
and turned into a people who are God's treasured possession.  
A people from every tribe and language and nation.  
That's a mystery.  
As the hymn writer Charles Wesley said,  
"Tis mystery all, immense and free.  
For O, my God, it found out me."  
It's easy to think that you are better than other people.  
You know, there are politicians running around doing silly things.  
And you think, "The world's gone crazy.  
I'm not like that."  
And you imagine yourself above the rest of the nutters out there.  
But actually, in God's eyes, we are all on a level.  
All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

There is no one righteous not even one.  
But in God's mercy,  
he has made a way for a people of his very own to be purified.  
To have their robes washed white in the blood of the lamb.

As Jesus announced to John,  
"There will be no more delay! ....  
The mystery of God will be accomplished,  
just as he announced to his servants the prophets."  
The prophets longed to see the day of God's salvation.  
They longed for the appearing of the Messiah.  
And God delayed for centuries.  
But now there is no more delay.  
The mystery, how God would purify a people for himself,  
is now being accomplished.

But how is it being accomplished?  
How does God bring this great mystery to fruition?  
10:8, "Then the voice I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more:  
'Go take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel  
who is standing on the sea and on the land.'  
So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll."  
God accomplishes the mystery through his word written on the scroll.  
The Lord Jesus has broken the seals.  
The scroll lies open.  
So God's plans for the future are put into action.  
It's like a fire alarm.  
It sits there doing nothing for years and years.  
Then someone breaks the glass.  
And the bells ring and the call goes through to the fire brigade  
and the sprinklers come on.  
All the precautions that had been written into the plan years before  
suddenly starts to spring into action.  
God's purposes were written on the scroll.  
And nothing happens for centuries.

But then Jesus comes and takes off the seals.  
And then it's all happening.  
But what does it actually look like  
when God's purposes are being accomplished?

10:9 "He said to me,  
"Take it and eat it."

Now that is a very strange thing to do to a scroll.  
Unless it happens to be a coffee scroll, but that's different.  
It's a strange thing but it's also strangely familiar.  
Remember the prophet Ezekiel.  
This is from the call of the prophet Ezekiel in Ez 2&3.  
"Then I looked and I saw a hand stretched out to me.  
In it was a scroll which he had unrolled before me.  
On both sides were written words of lament and mourning and woe.  
And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll;  
then go and speak to the people of Israel,"  
So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.  
Then he said to me,  
"Son of man, eat the scroll I am giving you  
and fill your stomach with it.  
So I ate it,  
and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth."  
Well the similarities with Rev 10 are more than just coincidence,  
aren't they?  
It's very clear that the vision in Revelation is intentionally shaped  
by the vision in Ezekiel from 700 years earlier.  
They both have the strange image  
of a scroll with God's judgements written on it  
being eaten by the prophet.  
In both cases there are terrible consequences  
for those who have to come under the wrath of God.  
And yet in both cases,  
the prophet finds the taste of the scroll as sweet as honey.

How can it possibly be  
 that the terrible calamities  
 that were described in our reading last Sunday  
 when the trumpets were sounded  
 could leave a sweet taste in the prophets mouth?  
 It's because the mystery of God is being accomplished.  
 God is calling out a people from a decaying world  
 to be his treasured possession.  
 Amidst the judgement,  
 which at least on the surface of things is where the action is,  
 a pandemic, a war, a locust plague, the breakdown of civil order,  
 these things will dominate the headlines.  
 But amidst the judgement there are other things written on the scroll.  
 Courageous martyrs  
 who choose not to respond to violence with violence,  
 but they do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.  
 Faithful believers start a Christian School  
 so that children can grow to know the Lord Jesus  
 while they are being educated.  
 Churches show the love of God in word and deed  
 quietly in their communities.  
 It doesn't make the headlines.  
 But quietly, imperceptibly, it accomplishes the mystery of God.  
 And Oh the taste of that is sweet.  
 A sweet, sweet taste in a world going sour.

I watched the SparkLit  
 Australian Christian Book of the Year on Thursday night.  
 One of the books nominated was an autobiography of Anna McGahan.  
 She was a star of the TV series Underbelly: razor,  
 a hard hitting series  
 based on the crime wars in Sydney in the 1920s and 30s.  
 She was a tough young lady who despised Christianity.  
 But the mystery of God is this:  
 today Anna is one of his children.

It was written in the scroll that her life would be turned around.  
And it was, while she read a Gideon's Bible in a hotel room.

And that's a very sweet thing.

We have the book on order,  
20% off because we ordered it on the night of the ACBOY,  
but I think I might be behind Lwendyl in the queue to read it.

Ok we're nearly done.

But we still haven't fully teased out the eating of the scroll.

We've got that it contains God's purposes for the world.

The headline of that is judgement on a world opposed to its creator.

But the sweet mystery of God is also being accomplished.

But why must the prophet eat it?

Why couldn't he just read it?

I think the prophet eats the scroll as a sign

that God's purposes come into being through his word spoken.

In the final verse of our reading, John is told,

10:11 "You must prophesy again

about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

Just like in the creation of the world,

God speaks and it comes into being,

so it is that the prophet speaks God's words

and then God accomplishes that which the prophet speaks.

Our God is a speaking God.

And it's not the 'let's go and get a coffee' type of speaking.

He speaks and things happen.

His work in the world comes through speech.

God's great servants speak on his behalf.

Think of Moses speaking God's words to Pharaoh

and then God acted.

The prophets spoke God's words to Israel.

And God acted both in judgement and blessing.

Even servants who were not so much renowned for their speech,  
like Abraham and David.

You can read Abraham speaking God's blessing on his sons

as he lay on his death bed.  
Where do you think the phrase 'Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah'  
came from?  
It was Abraham's words on his death bed to his son Judah.  
David spoke many, many psalms.  
And we still use them to speak out our praises of God today.  
God is a speaking God.  
He acts through the speech of his servants.  
And that's why the prophet and apostle John had to eat the scroll.

Cherida sang the words of the prophet Jeremiah with the kids earlier.  
"When your words came.  
I ate them.  
They were my joy and my hearts delight."  
We too are called to put God's words into our mouths and chew.  
They will taste sweet  
because they are accomplishing the mystery of God.  
Sweet but double edged.  
Not everyone will respond like Anna McGahan.  
But remember God only holds you accountable to speak what you hear.  
He doesn't hold you accountable for how people respond.  
We might wind up exiled with John on Patmos.  
Down a well like Jeremiah.  
But still we will eat his words.  
They are our joy and our heart's delight.