

THE MYSTERY OF GOD
Revelation 10
By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Everybody loves a good mystery. One of my favorite movie directors, M. Night Shyamalan, is a master of mystery. One of his earlier movies was called “The Sixth Sense.” It’s about Malcolm Crowe, a child psychologist. One day a former patient breaks into his house and shoots him, before killing himself. A few months later, Malcolm begins counseling a 9-year old boy named Cole Sear. Cole has a problem – he sees dead people. He sees ghosts, although they don’t know they are ghosts. Malcolm helps Cole understand that the ghosts are appearing to Cole because they want his help with unfinished business, and he encourages Cole to help them. So Cole begins helping them. The ultimate twist in the movie is that at the end, Malcolm, the child psychologist, remembers what Cole said about the ghosts not knowing they are ghosts. He realizes that he did not survive the gunshot in his house, and that he has been dead the whole time that he was working with Cole.
2. The Bible is a mystery, too. The NT talks about an important mystery, and the book of Revelation says that when the seventh and last trumpet sounds, the mystery of God will be completed.
3. What is the mystery of God?

II. REVELATION RECAP

1. In the first three verses, we are told that Revelation is all about events that “must soon take place,” because “the time is near” (Rev 1:1-3). Revelation is not about the end times, but about the near future – the first century.
2. As a result, my interpretation of Revelation is preterist rather than futurist. There are two main interpretations of Revelation: Futurist and Preterist. The futurist view sees Revelation as primarily a prophecy about the end times. The word “preterist” means past. The preterist view sees the bulk of Revelation as already fulfilled. It is primarily about the near future, rather than the distant future. It is primarily about the end of the Jewish nation and religion, rather than the end of the world.
3. According to some preterists, and the view that I hold, Revelation was written about AD 65, and its prophecies are about God’s judgment on

the Jewish nation, which was fulfilled just five years later in AD 70, when the Romans invaded the land of Israel, destroyed Jerusalem, and destroyed the temple.

4. In Revelation 5, John sees a vision of God on His judgment throne, holding out a seven-sealed scroll. This is God's divorce certificate against adulterous Israel for rejecting and murdering Christ and His followers.
5. In Revelation 6, Jesus breaks open one seal at a time, revealing visions of terrible destruction that will come upon Israel. When Jesus opens the seventh seal (Rev 8), John sees seven angels with seven trumpets. One at a time, each angel blows a trumpet, and John sees more visions of impending doom that will be poured out on Israel in the first century.
6. In Revelation 10, before the seventh trumpet is blown, we have an intermission; a pause; an interlude. We also had an intermission before the opening of the seventh seal. So, here we have an intermission to provide more context and meaning to the terrible judgments pronounced against Israel.

III. TEXT: Revelation 10:1-11

1 Then 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, his legs were like pillars of fire, 2 and he held a little scroll opened in his hand. He put his right foot on the sea, his left on the land, 3 and he called out with a loud voice like a roaring lion. When he cried out, the seven thunders raised their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down!"

5 Then the angel that I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 He swore by the one 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 no longer be a delay, 7 but in the days when the seventh angel will blow his trumpet, then the mystery of God will be completed, as he announced to his servants the prophets."

8 Then the voice that I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take and eat it; it will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

10 Then I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I ate it, my stomach became bitter.

11 And they said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings."

IV. FIVE QUESTIONS

1. Who is the mighty angel?
 - i. John sees a mighty angel coming down from heaven, holding a little scroll. Who is this mighty angel?
 - ii. The mighty angel is probably Jesus for the following reasons:
 1. He is wrapped in a cloud. Rev 1:7 says that Jesus is coming with the clouds. In Rev 14:14 Jesus is seated on a cloud.
 2. He has a rainbow over his head. In Rev 4:3 we saw a rainbow surrounding the throne of God.
 3. His face was like the sun. In Rev 1:16 Christ's face was shining like the sun.
 - iii. If Christ is not an angel, then why does John portray him as an angel?
 1. Remember that the word "angel" just means "messenger," and sometimes it is translated "messenger." So in this case it could just mean a mighty messenger.
 2. But also keep in mind that Revelation is highly symbolic. In Revelation 5 Jesus is portrayed as a lion and a lamb, even though literally he is not a lion or a lamb. In Rev 19:11 he is portrayed as a rider of a white horse. If he can be symbolically portrayed as a lion and a lamb, then he can be symbolically portrayed as an angel. John is not saying that Jesus is an angel.
 - iv. "He put his right foot on the sea, his left on the land" (v. 2).
 1. This could mean that Jesus has authority over the entire world.
 2. Or it could mean that Jesus has authority over both Jews, represented by the earth (or land), and Gentiles, represented by the sea (Dan 7).
2. What is the little scroll?

- i. The mighty angel is holding a “little scroll opened in his hand” (v. 2). The angel commanded John to eat the scroll, and “it will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be honey in your mouth.”
 - ii. What is the little scroll?
 - iii. The scroll is the prophecy against Jerusalem that John was commanded to write down.
 - iv. This is an allusion to the Old Testament and the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was given a scroll which contained prophecies about Jerusalem’s destruction at the hand of the Babylonians. Ezekiel was told to eat the scroll and then to speak to the house of Israel. When he ate it, it was sweet as honey. But when he left to prophecy, he was filled with bitterness and anger (Ezek 2:8-3:15).
 - v. Something very similar is happening to John here in Revelation. John is being given a scroll, a Revelation of God, that contains prophecies of judgment against unfaithful Israel. And John is commanded to eat the scroll, because he will be charged with the responsibility of communicating its message. When he eats it, it is sweet because it means vengeance and relief for Christians; but it is bitter in his stomach because it means the destruction of the Jews.
3. What are the seven thunders?
- i. When the mighty angel cried out, the seven thunders raised their voices.
 - ii. The seven thunders refer to the voice of God, or the voice of the mighty angel. The angel’s voice sounds like seven thunders.
 - iii. In the OT God’s voice is said to sound like thunder (Ex 19:19; Job 40:9; Ps 104:7; Jn 12:28-29).
 - 1. **Exodus 19:19b** “Moses spoke and God answered him in the thunder.”
 - iv. John was about to write what the seven thunders said, but a voice from heaven told him not to write it down.
 - v. So, what did the seven thunders say?
 - 1. The point here is that there are some things God doesn’t want you to know.
 - 2. The Bible is not incomplete. It is not missing a lot of information. There are many questions that God

intentionally does not answer, because He doesn't want us to know right now.

3. Some people like to spend a lot of time speculating about questions that the Bible doesn't answer. But if it's not in the Bible, then God doesn't want you to know. And if God doesn't want you to know, then you don't need to know.
 4. Instead of focusing on what the Bible doesn't say, we should focus on what the Bible does say. That's hard enough.
 5. But maybe that's the point. Maybe some people like to focus on what the Bible isn't clear on so that they won't have to think about what the Bible is clear on.
 6. But I do have some good news. One day all of our questions will be answered when we get to heaven.
 7. **1 Corinthians 13:12** "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known."
4. What does "there will no longer be a delay" mean?
 - i. The angel swears that there will no longer be any delay.
 - ii. This refers to Revelation 6 and the opening of the seals. When Jesus opened the fifth seal, John saw the souls of the Christian martyrs, and they were crying out, "Lord, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev 6:10).
 - iii. Here in Revelation 10 the angel says when the seventh trumpet blows, there will no longer be any delay. In other words, when the seventh trumpet is fulfilled, there will be vengeance for the Christian martyrs who died at the hands of the Jews in the first century. For that will be the time of Jerusalem's destruction.
 5. What is the mystery of God completed?
 - i. Something else will happen when the seventh trumpet is fulfilled. "The mystery of God will be completed" (10:7).
 - ii. In the NT the mystery refers to "something formerly concealed and now unveiled. It is revelation: knowledge that God formerly withheld but has now revealed (David Chilton)."
 - iii. What is the mystery of God?

1. The mystery of God is His plan to create a new people for Himself, made up of both Jews and Gentiles who accept Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. **Ephesians 3:4-6** “4 By reading this you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. 5 This was not made known to people in other generations as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: 6 The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”
 - a. **David Chilton** “This ‘mystery’ is a major aspect of the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians: the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one Church, without distinction; "that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Jesus Christ through the Gospel" (Eph. 3: 6). Gentiles, who had been strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and from the covenantal promises, are now, through the work of Christ, full sons of Abraham, heirs of the Covenant, on an equal and indistinguishable standing with believing Jews (Eph. 2: 11-22; Gal. 3).”
 - b. **David Chilton** says that this relates to the angel having one foot on land, and one foot in the sea. “This is why the Angel stands as witness on the Sea and on the Land (cf. v. 2), a fact that is repeated for emphasis in verse 5. The Angel takes the oath with His pillar-legs planted on Israel and the nations, proclaiming the New Covenant which will unite the two into one new nation in Christ.”
3. Who are the people of God? Does God have two peoples – Israel and the church – with two plans, and two purposes? That’s what dispensationalism teaches. But what does the Bible say?
4. According to the Old Testament, the people of God are the descendants of Abraham? In the OT (Gen 12) God made a covenant with Abraham to bless his seed (offspring) with

land and a bunch of other things. So to be rightly related with God, you had to become a Jew.

5. The mystery revealed in the NT is that Abraham's seed are not ethnic Jews, but all those who put their faith in Christ – both Jew and Gentile.
6. **Galatians 3:16** “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say “and to seeds,” as though referring to many, but referring to one, and to your seed, who is Christ.”
 - a. Paul says that all the promises of the OT that were given to Abraham were given to his seed. But who is his seed? Is it all ethnic Jews? No. Paul says that Abraham's seed is in the singular. It is talking about one person, and that is Christ.
 - i. **Sam Storms** (*Kingdom Come*) “Amazing! Here Paul unequivocally says that the ‘seed’ or ‘offspring’ of Abraham with whom God established his covenant and to whom the land and all its blessings were promised was ultimately only ONE of Abraham's physical progeny, Jesus the Messiah! Jesus is ‘THE SEED’ of Abraham whom God had in mind when he made his covenant promise.”
 - b. But just when you think that all the promises of God are just for Christ, Paul says something amazing just a few verses later.
7. **Galatians 3:28-29** “28 There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.”
 - a. All of the promises given to Abraham were not guaranteed to ethnic Jews; they were for Abraham's seed, who is Christ. But, if you belong to Christ, whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, then you are also Abraham's seed, and all the promises are for you.
 - b. **Sam Storms** (*Kingdom Come*) “Paul's conclusion is that in the final analysis one's ethnicity has nothing

to do with who will or will not inherit the promises. Neither does gender or socio-economic status. The only relevant criterion is whether or not you are related by faith to the one seed of Abraham for whom the covenant promises were intended. Are you in Christ?"

c. Now someone might say, "But the OT says that all the promises given to Abraham were promised to the Jews. That's the mystery. The promise wasn't actually to ethnic Jews, but Christ and those who put their faith in Him. This mystery wasn't revealed until Christ came.

8. **Ephesians 2:11-22** "11 So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called "the uncircumcised" by those called "the circumcised," which is done in the flesh by human hands. 12 At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, 15 he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. 16 He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death. 17 He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit."

- a. First Paul describes the horrible condition of the Gentiles before Christ (v. 12). They suffered a five-fold misery: They were...
 - i. “without Christ.”
 - ii. “excluded from the citizenship of Israel.”
 - iii. “foreigners to the covenants of promise.” “
 - iv. “without hope.”
 - v. “without God in the world.”
 - b. But then Paul goes on to say...
 - i. In Christ Jesus, you have been brought near (v. 13).
 - ii. He made both groups one (v. 14).
 - iii. He created in himself one new man from the two (v. 15).
 - iv. Gentiles are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens and members of God’s household (v. 19).
 - v. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles together make a holy temple in the Lord (v. 21).
 - c. Because of the work of Christ, the categories of Jew and Gentile are meaningless. All that matters now is faith in Christ. There are no longer two different groups. Now believing Jews and believing Gentiles make up one new man, the church. All of the promises given to the Jews in the OT are applied not to ethnic Jews, but to Christ and His followers.
9. Here in Revelation, the angel says that the mystery of God will be completed with the seventh trumpet.
- iv. What does this mystery have to do with the seventh trumpet?
 - 1. Technically the categories of Jew and Gentile were abolished with the death and resurrection of Christ. From then on, what matters is not race but relationship with Christ.
 - 2. However, a major controversy about this subject persisted for the first several decades of Christianity. The question was still, Do Christians need to become Jews to be accepted by God? There were many Jewish Christians who thought

that it was not enough to believe in Christ; you also needed to become Jewish to be rightly related to God. The entire book of Galatians deals with this subject. The purpose of the first church council in Jerusalem was to deal with this subject (Acts 15).

3. A main reason this controversy persisted was the existence of the temple in Jerusalem. At the center of Judaism was Jerusalem, and specifically, the temple. As long as the temple stood, Christianity was tethered to Judaism. It couldn't break free and become the one new man that Christ created. Christians were tempted to not just follow the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, but to become Jewish as well and follow all of the OT laws and customs related to temple worship.
4. But when the seventh trumpet was fulfilled, Jerusalem and the temple, the locus of Jewish worship, were demolished. Christianity would make a clear and final break from Judaism. The mystery of God which was inaugurated with Christ would finally be completed with the destruction of temple worship in Jerusalem. Once the temple was destroyed, it was clear that Judaism and its old systems rituals and laws had passed away.
5. **Douglas Wilson** "As long as the Temple in Jerusalem stood, there would be standing pressure for the Gentiles to become Jews as part of becoming Christian. This was the great controversy in the first century. The dominant identity of the church would be Jewish as long as the temple stood. When the seventh angel sounded, the temple was done."

V. CONCLUSION

1. Let me close with some good news. This is the mystery of God. They mystery of the Bible.
2. **Colossians 3:11** "In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all."

3. **Hank Hanegraaff** "Scripture emphasizes faith not genealogy. Thus, historic Christianity has always believed in one people of God based on relationship rather than race."
4. **John Piper** (*What Jesus Demands*, p. 373) "When the nations become disciples of Jesus, they receive the Messiah of Israel. And when they receive the Messiah of Israel, they receive the God of Abraham. And when they receive the God of Abraham, they become heirs of all the promises God made to Israel."
5. As Christians, regardless of your ethnicity, you are the people of God (1 Pt 2:10). You are God's chosen ones (Col 3:12). You are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh (Phil 3:3). You are the true children of Abraham (Rm 4:11; Gal 3:7; Gal 3:28-29). You are the one new man (Eph 2:15). You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household (Eph 2:19). You are the heirs to the promises given to Abraham (Gal 3:29).
6. That's the mystery of God!