Fulfilled Prophecies

Why Did God Silence The Seven Thunders In Revelation 10?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the most mysterious passages in Revelation concerns the seven thunders that spoke while John was receiving his vision. John heard their voices, understood that something had been spoken, and was preparing to write their message. But before he could record their words, a voice from heaven commanded him to seal up what the seven thunders had said.

† Why would God reveal something to John and then forbid him

from writing it? What were the seven thunders? Were they announcing judgments against Jerusalem? And why was John immediately told that he must prophesy again concerning many peoples, nations, languages, and kings?
† These questions become especially important when we compare Revelation 10 with Daniel 12. Daniel was commanded to seal his prophecy until the time of the end, but John was commanded not to seal Revelation because the time was near. Only the words of the seven thunders were withheld.
† From the fulfilled perspective, Revelation concerns the approaching judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem and the completion of God's covenant promises in the first century. We must examine what Scripture reveals without inventing an explanation for something God deliberately concealed (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:22; Revelation 22:10).

The Seven Thunders Spoke, But John Was Forbidden To Write
Revelation 10:3-4
and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.
† Notice that the seven thunders actually spoke. John wasn't merely describing thunder during a storm. He heard something communicated and was preparing to record it. The command from heaven interrupted him before he could write the message (Daniel 12:4).
† The number seven appears throughout Revelation in connection with God's complete purposes. There are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. However, Scripture never identifies the seven thunders as another series of judgments. We can't assume they represent seven additional events simply because the number seven appears (Revelation 1:4; 5:1; 8:2; 15:7).

† The most important detail is that God commanded John not to reveal their words. Whatever they said wasn't intended to become part of the written prophecy. That's why any attempt to identify their exact message goes beyond what Scripture reveals (Deuteronomy 29:29).
† God didn't command John to seal the entire book of Revelation. He commanded him to seal only what the seven thunders had spoken. That distinction becomes extremely important when we compare John's instructions with Daniel's (Daniel 12:4; Revelation 22:10).

Thunder Represents God's Voice And Authority
Psalm 29:3-4
The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders, The LORD is over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful, The voice of the LORD is majestic.
† Throughout Scripture, thunder is associated with God's majesty, authority, and power. David described the voice of the Lord as powerful and majestic. That's important because Revelation uses similar imagery to communicate divine authority (Exodus 19:16-19; Revelation 4:5).
† When God descended upon Mount Sinai, thunder accompanied His presence. The people understood that something extraordinary was happening. Thunder wasn't merely background noise. It emphasized the seriousness of God's revelation (Exodus 19:16-19).
† In Revelation, thunder also accompanies heavenly activity and divine judgment. This helps us understand why seven thunders would appear within a prophecy concerning God's approaching judgment (Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).
† However, these connections don't tell us what the seven thunders actually said. They help explain the biblical imagery, but they don't authorize us to invent the missing message (Deuteronomy 29:29).

Daniel Was Told To Seal His Prophecy
Daniel 12:4

But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.

† Daniel received prophetic revelations concerning the future of his people. He was instructed to seal the book until the appointed time of the end. That instruction must be understood within the context of Daniel's prophecy concerning Israel, the sanctuary, and the coming judgment (Daniel 9:24-27; 12:1).

† Daniel's prophecy wasn't describing the destruction of the physical universe. It concerned the completion of events involving his people and their covenant history. The seventy weeks were specifically determined for Daniel's people and holy city (Daniel 9:24).

† The command to seal the prophecy indicated that its appointed fulfillment was still ahead of Daniel. John, however, received a different instruction because the events revealed to him were approaching (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:10).

† This comparison is one of the strongest connections between Daniel and Revelation. Daniel was told to seal his prophecy, while John was told that the time was near. The difference wasn't that God had changed His plan. The appointed time had drawn near (Hebrews 10:37).

John Was Told Not To Seal Revelation
Revelation 22:10

And he said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

† This instruction directly contrasts with Daniel's. Daniel was told to seal his prophecy, but John was told not to seal Revelation because the time was near. We must allow those words to retain their ordinary meaning for John's original audience (Revelation 1:1-3).

† If Revelation were primarily describing events thousands of years beyond John's lifetime, the command not to seal the prophecy because the time was near would become difficult to explain. The original seven churches were expected to hear, understand, and respond to the warning (Revelation 1:4, 11).

† Jesus had already declared that the events surrounding Jerusalem's judgment would occur within His generation. John wasn't introducing an entirely different prophetic timetable. He was revealing the approaching completion of the covenant judgment Jesus had announced (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-22).
† The seven thunders remained sealed, but Revelation itself remained open. God withheld one particular message while revealing the approaching fulfillment of His prophetic purposes (Revelation 10:4; 22:6-7).

The Mystery Of God Was About To Be Finished
Revelation 10:6-7
and swore by Him who lives 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, that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.
† This passage gives us an important time statement. The angel announced that there would be no more delay. The mystery of God was approaching its appointed completion with the sounding of the seventh angel (Revelation 11:15).
† Notice that the mystery wasn't something God had never mentioned. The angel connected it with what God had already announced through His servants the prophets. This directs our attention toward the fulfillment of Old Testament promises rather than an entirely new prophetic program (Romans 16:25-26).
† The New Testament explains that God's mystery involved the revelation of Christ, the inclusion of the Gentiles, and the fulfillment of His redemptive promises. What had once been concealed was being made known through the gospel (Ephesians 3:3-6; Colossians 1:26-27).
† From the fulfilled perspective, this mystery reached its covenantal completion with the passing of the Old Covenant order in AD 70. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple publicly demonstrated that the former covenant system had

reached its end (Hebrews 8:13; 9:8-10).
† We must distinguish the mystery God revealed from the words of the seven thunders that He concealed. Revelation identifies the approaching completion of God's mystery, but it never identifies the seven thunders' message (Deuteronomy 29:29; Revelation 10:4).

The Mystery Was Christ Revealed Among The Gentiles
Colossians 1:26-27
that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
† Paul explained that the mystery once hidden had already been revealed to the saints. It involved Christ dwelling among His people, including Gentile believers who were being brought into the promises of God (Ephesians 3:5-6).
† This wasn't a mystery that Christians would need to wait thousands of years to understand. Paul was already preaching its revelation during the first century. The gospel was bringing Jews and Gentiles together in one body through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14-18).
† The completion announced in Revelation concerns the fulfillment of God's covenant purposes, not the beginning of a completely different salvation plan. Christ had already accomplished redemption through His sacrifice, and the former covenant order was approaching its final removal (Hebrews 8:13; 10:9-14).
† That's why Revelation's announcement of completion belongs within the same first-century covenant transition described throughout the New Testament (Hebrews 10:37; 1 Peter 4:7).

John Was Told To Prophesy Again
Revelation 10:11
And they said to me, You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

† This verse answers Andrew's second question. John was instructed to continue his prophetic testimony concerning many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. The statement doesn't require John to travel personally throughout the world preaching another message (Revelation 1:11).
† The language describes the broad scope of the prophecy. Revelation concerns Jerusalem, Rome, the nations, rulers, and the covenant consequences of rejecting Christ. Its message wasn't limited to one individual or one local congregation (Revelation 1:4; 17:15).
† Notice that John received this command after being forbidden to record the seven thunders. God wasn't ending John's prophetic work. He was directing him to continue revealing what had been authorized for him to communicate (Revelation 10:4).
† The command to prophesy again doesn't mean the seven thunders would eventually be explained. Scripture never makes that connection. John was simply instructed to continue the prophetic revelation concerning the nations and their rulers (Revelation 11:1-2; 17:1-18).
† The prophecy was intended for the churches living during that generation. They needed to understand the approaching judgment and remain faithful to Christ (Revelation 1:3-4; 2:10).

The Prophecy Immediately Turns Toward The Temple And Holy City
Revelation 11:1-2
Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.
† Immediately after John was commanded to prophesy again, the vision turned toward the temple, the altar, the worshipers, and the holy city. These details are important for understanding Revelation's historical setting (Luke 21:20-24).
† Jesus had already predicted that Jerusalem would be

surrounded by armies and that its destruction would fulfill what had been written. Revelation's description of the holy city being trampled by the nations closely corresponds with that warning (Luke 21:20-22, 24).

† From the fulfilled perspective, the forty-two months belong to the first-century judgment associated with the Jewish-Roman War. The temple's destruction in AD 70 marked the visible end of the Old Covenant sacrificial system (Daniel 9:26; Hebrews 8:13).

† The sequence is significant. John was forbidden to reveal the seven thunders, commanded to continue prophesying, and then shown the temple and holy city under judgment. This supports Revelation's first-century setting, but it still doesn't reveal the specific words spoken by the seven thunders (Revelation 10:4, 11).

The Seventh Trumpet Announced The Kingdom
Revelation 11:15

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.

† Revelation 10 announced that God's mystery would be finished in connection with the seventh angel. Revelation 11 then describes the seventh trumpet sounding and heavenly voices proclaiming the kingdom of Christ (Revelation 10:7).

† Jesus had already established His kingdom through His death, resurrection, and exaltation. The seventh trumpet didn't mean Christ was only then beginning to possess authority. It announced the fulfillment and vindication of His kingdom within the prophetic judgment being revealed (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:13).

† The removal of Jerusalem's temple demonstrated that the Old Covenant order had passed away. God's people were no longer dependent upon an earthly sanctuary or Levitical priesthood to approach Him (Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:19-22).

† Christ's kingdom wasn't postponed until some future

generation. The first-century believers were already receiving an unshakable kingdom, and the judgment of the former covenant order confirmed the fulfillment of God's promises (Hebrews 12:22-28).

Jesus Identified The Generation Of Fulfillment
Matthew 24:34
Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
† Jesus placed the fulfillment of His prophetic warnings within the lifetime of His contemporaries. He wasn't speaking about an unidentified generation thousands of years in the future (Matthew 23:36; Luke 21:32).
† His disciples had asked about the temple's destruction and the sign of His coming. Jesus answered within the context of Jerusalem's approaching judgment, warning His followers to recognize the events and flee when the city was surrounded (Matthew 24:1-3; Luke 21:20-21).
† Revelation's repeated declarations that the time was near agree with Jesus' earlier words. We shouldn't separate John's prophecy from the historical expectations Jesus had already established (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-10).
† The seven thunders don't provide a reason to extend Revelation into our future. Their message was withheld, while the timing statements surrounding the prophecy remained clear (Revelation 10:4, 6-7).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, writing in The Jewish War, Books 5-6, described the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the terrible suffering within the city, and the destruction of the temple in AD 70. His historical account provides important background for understanding Jesus' warnings concerning Jerusalem's destruction (Luke 21:20-24).
† Josephus also described unusual signs and warnings preceding Jerusalem's destruction in The Jewish War, Book 6, Chapter 5. These reports are historical testimony, not additional

Scripture, and they don't identify what the seven thunders said (Revelation 10:4).
† Tacitus, in Histories, Book 5, described the Jewish revolt and the Roman campaign against Jerusalem. His account provides additional historical context for the events surrounding the destruction of the city (Matthew 24:2; Luke 21:20).
† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5, preserved the tradition that Christians in Jerusalem received a warning and fled to Pella before the city's destruction. This tradition is consistent with Jesus' instruction that His followers should flee when they recognized the approaching danger (Luke 21:20-21).
† These historical writers help establish the first-century setting of Jerusalem's judgment. However, none provides a reliable account of the seven thunders' actual message. We must not confuse historical evidence with information God chose not to reveal (Deuteronomy 29:29).

How It Applies To Us Today
† The seven thunders remind us that God hasn't revealed every detail of His purposes. We can trust what He has revealed without inventing explanations for what He has concealed (Deuteronomy 29:29).
† We should allow Scripture to establish its own historical setting. When Jesus said His generation would witness the fulfillment, and John said the time was near, we should respect those statements rather than move their fulfillment thousands of years into the future (Matthew 24:34; Revelation 1:3).
† We don't need to fear seven mysterious judgments supposedly waiting to fall upon the modern world. Scripture never teaches that the seven thunders represent future disasters awaiting our generation (Revelation 10:4; 22:10).
† We can rejoice that Christ has fulfilled God's covenant promises and established His kingdom. Believers have already been transferred into His kingdom and have access to the Father through Him (Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 2:18).
† Our responsibility isn't to uncover secret prophecies. It's to

proclaim Jesus Christ, study the Scriptures faithfully, and live in the blessings of the New Covenant (2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The message of Revelation isn't that Christians should spend their lives fearing an approaching worldwide catastrophe. It's that Jesus Christ is victorious, His kingdom is established, and His covenant promises are trustworthy (Revelation 11:15; Hebrews 12:28).

Q & A Appendix
Q: What exactly did the seven thunders say?
A: Scripture doesn't reveal their words. John heard their message but was commanded not to write it. Any claim to know exactly what they said is speculation (Revelation 10:3-4).
Q: Were the seven thunders seven additional judgments?
A: Scripture never identifies them as seven additional judgments. Although thunder frequently accompanies divine judgment, we can't establish their specific message from the number seven alone (Revelation 8:5; 10:4).
Q: Why would God allow John to hear something he couldn't write?
A: God sometimes reveals information to His servants while restricting what may be communicated. John was required to obey the instruction, even though he had heard the message (Daniel 12:4; Revelation 10:4).
Q: Does the sealing of the seven thunders mean Revelation contains unfulfilled prophecy?
A: No. The seven thunders' words were withheld from the written revelation. John was specifically commanded not to seal the prophecy of the book because the time was near (Revelation 22:10).
Q: What's the difference between Daniel sealing his prophecy and John sealing the seven thunders?
A: Daniel was commanded to seal his prophetic book until the appointed time of the end. John was commanded to withhold only the seven thunders' message while leaving Revelation unsealed because its fulfillment was approaching (Daniel 12:4;

Revelation 10:4; 22:10).
Q: Were the seven thunders connected with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70?
A: They appeared within a prophecy that, from the fulfilled perspective, concerned the approaching judgment of Jerusalem. However, Scripture doesn't explicitly identify their message with the destruction of the city. We can recognize the historical context without claiming knowledge of their words (Luke 21:20-22; Revelation 10:4; 11:1-2).
Q: What mystery was finished when the seventh angel sounded?
A: The mystery involved God's redemptive purposes revealed through Christ, including the inclusion of Gentiles among His covenant people. From the fulfilled perspective, its covenantal completion belongs to the first-century transition culminating in AD 70 (Ephesians 3:3-6; Colossians 1:26-27; Revelation 10:7).
Q: Why was John told to prophesy again concerning many peoples, nations, languages, and kings?
A: John was commanded to continue communicating the prophetic revelation concerning the nations and their rulers. This doesn't mean he was instructed to reveal the seven thunders' message or personally travel throughout the world (Revelation 10:4, 11; 17:15).
Q: Does Revelation 10:11 teach that prophecy would continue beyond AD 70?
A: No. The command was given to John within the first-century setting of Revelation. It doesn't establish an ongoing prophetic program extending beyond the fulfillment Jesus assigned to His generation (Matthew 24:34; Revelation 1:1-3).
Q: Are the seven thunders speaking to Christians today?
A: Scripture gives no indication that their sealed message would later be revealed to modern believers. We should not claim new revelation concerning words God commanded John not to record (Deuteronomy 29:29; Revelation 10:4).
Q: What should Christians learn from the seven thunders?
A: We should distinguish between what God has revealed and what He has concealed. The message of Revelation directs our

confidence toward Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of God's promises, not speculation about hidden judgments (Revelation 1:1-3; 11:15; 22:10).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Revelation 10:3-4, 6-7, 11; Psalm 29:3-4; Daniel 12:4; Revelation 22:10; Colossians 1:26-27; Revelation 11:1-2, 15; Matthew 24:34

† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5

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