



"We have become so engrossed in the work of the Lord that we have forgotten the Lord of the work."

—A.W. Tozer

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The Seventh Thunder

In [Revelation 10:3-4](#), the apostle John tells of seven thunders—seven distinct, sequential reverberations of God's message to mankind, delivered by His church during the seven church eras described in Revelation 2 and 3. If our calculation and understanding of the seven church eras is correct, we are well into the last church era, and the last thunder is now sounding before this age comes to a close.

What does this seventh thunder sound like? During the Philadelphian era, the thunder essentially came through one human conduit—one physical organization. It boomed out, loud and clear. Now, however, due to God's scattering, there is a multitude of weak, distant peals, each attracting only a small amount of attention. This is not the first time the church has been scattered. During the first century, the fledgling church was also moved out of its comfort zone:

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ... Therefore *those who were scattered* went everywhere *preaching the word*. ([Acts 8:1](#), 4)

The Ephesian era was not scattered as a result of [sin](#). The church members migrated to flee persecution, and the result was a greater audience of [the gospel](#) message. Interestingly, a similar effect can be seen today: [God](#) has scattered us in order to get us to remember Him ([Jeremiah 18:15-17](#)). But even as He has been *reactive* with regard to our spiritual condition, He has also been *proactive* in continuing to work out various aspects of His plan. God's people have gathered in a multitude—hundreds? thousands?—of groups. The preeminent media of this time is the Internet, where essentially anyone who wants a voice can have one. The singular thundering voice of the previous era has been replaced with hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of smaller voices (via websites), just as the singular geographic location of the first century church was spread out in all directions when God caused it to be scattered.

This change is double-edged. On the one side, the existence of increasing numbers of websites containing God's truth greatly increases the likelihood of that truth being found and having an impact. Do a Google search on any significant spiritual topic, and you will only have to go through a few search results before a website affiliated with the church of God comes up. It would be next to impossible for a single website, or a single organization, to establish that kind of presence in the present media world. This is a function of an abundance of Internet domains, writers, and bloggers affiliated with the church. From a large corporate site, to a substantial congregational site, down to a personal page perhaps with only a collection of links, all play a part in the witness that is being made of God to [the world](#) during this era.

On the other side, though, is the predicament of the *purity*—the quality—of the truth that is being promoted. This is not to suggest that God's truth is in any way tainted, but rather that, because of the church's present spiritual condition, our *presentation* of God's truth is muffled and unsteady. Sin destroys innocence, ideals, spiritual liberty, spiritual vision, and the will to do good. It produces sickness, pain, degeneracy, more sin, and ultimately death. If the sin at the root of the scattering is not identified and conquered, there is the distinct possibility that our usefulness to God will be severely limited.

It does not yet appear who the main messenger of this era is. Incredibly, a number have essentially claimed that position—apparently not recognizing that there is a very strong admonition and rebuke written specifically to the messenger of this time ([Revelation 3:14](#)). Claiming to be the remnant of another era only illustrates the problem of spiritual blindness that characterizes this era: "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked..." ([Revelation 3:17](#))

Even though the Sovereign has scattered us, He is still a God of foresight and order. He has still provided shepherds of various kinds to keep His sheep from going too far afield. He still fills the human positions necessary to bring us "to the unity of the [faith](#) and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of [Christ](#)" ([Ephesians 4:11-13](#)). At the same time, there is a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence that God even guides the individual members to the shepherds He has appointed, according to what He knows is going to accomplish His will.

As we await the unfolding of God's provision, it is essential to remember what He focuses on in His instructions to His end-time flock. God tells every one of the seven churches that He is aware of and has been evaluating their *works*. In each letter, He reserves a space to emphasize *overcoming*. Overcoming means "growth against a standard"—the same standard that the ministry is to help the membership achieve: the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. *God is most interested in His children growing into His image* ([Genesis 1:26](#)). How much space does He use to praise or chastise regarding the preaching of the gospel to the world—the sounding of the seventh thunder? He does not even mention it! This is not because it is unimportant, but rather because those who are *working* and *overcoming* are seeking Him, and those are the ones who can be used by Him to accomplish whatever purpose He desires. Without God's preparation, education, guidance, and blessing, and without our reciprocal [repentance](#) and drawing close to Him, all of our efforts will just be so much noise.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Revelation 10 and the Church's History](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Revelation 10 contains the seven thunders and the little book. This chapter serves as an inset, not following the time sequence of Revelation, but explaining in detail events necessary to understand more fully what is happening within it. The thunders (symbolic of God's voice) are the messages of the seven churches (end-time organizations typified by seven first-century organizations), occurring before the Tribulation, before the Two Witnesses preach, and before the seals are opened in chapter 6. The little book is God's Word, having both sweet and bitter aspects to those who are nourished by it. The seventh thunder, weak as it is, rumbles in the distance, typifying the Laodicean era, badly in need of oil (Matthew 25:3), gold (Revelation 3:18), and water (Isaiah 55:1-2)—all costly but necessary items for spiritual warfare.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The World, the Church, and Laodiceanism](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The seventh and last of the attitudes within the church, Laodiceanism is the attitude that dominates the era of the end time. It seems more natural to think that this attitude would be the least likely to dominate in such terrible times—that it ought to be obvious that the return of Christ is near. But Christ prophesies that it will occur. In fact, it indicates the power of Babylon! Why does Babylon dominate the church in the end time? Because it dominates the world, and the Christian permits it to dominate him!

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