

The Sweet and Sour Scroll

Text: Revelation 10:1-11

Introduction:

1. We now enter another parenthetical section in Revelation. It is of interest to note that there is an intermission between the 6th and 7th judgment with each series of seven – seals, trumpets and vials. John sees a vision of a large angel with a little book. There is a powerful challenge in this chapter on our relationship to the Scriptures.
2. Walvoord: “Chapter 10 begins another parenthetical section, which continues through chapter 14. With the exception of 11:15-19, introducing the seventh trumpet, the narrative does not advance in these chapters and various topics are presented. Like chapter 7, this section does not advance the narrative but presents other facts that contribute to the total prophetic scene.”
3. Cloud: “This chapter is an interlude preparing John for the final bitter judgments that will be poured out upon the world....Rev. 10:1-1:14 is a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh trumpets, and chapters 12-14 form a parenthesis between the blowing of the seventh trumpet and the beginning of the final vial judgments.”
4. The scene now changes from heaven to earth as in vision, John stands on the earth and sees the mighty angel descend.
5. We will divide our chapter into three for the sake of study and then conclude with some practical exhortation under the fourth point.

I. The Description of the Angel (Vs. 1-4)

A. His Portrait (Vs. 1)

1. His Apparel (Vs. 1a)
 - a. “clothed with a cloud” = he is of heavenly origin and clothed in the cloud of glory that is often associated with God’s presence. “He is clothed in Christ’s authority and acting as His representative.” (Cloud)
 - b. “rainbow was upon his head” = same word used in Rev. 4:3 to describe the emerald rainbow encircling the throne. This angel comes with authority from the throne of God. The rainbow is also a reminder of God’s mercy. Even in the midst of judgment, God still remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).
2. His Appearance (Vs. 1b)
 - a. “his face...as the sun” = his face bright with the glory of God. Similar description of Christ in Rev. 1:16.
 - b. “feet as pillars of fire” = fire often speaks of judgment. He comes to execute the will of God.

B. His Possession (Vs. 2a)

1. “a little book” = from what follows in the chapter, it appears to represent what remains to be revealed to John in the Book of Revelation. It “contains the rest of the prophetic message that John will deliver.” (Wiersbe)
2. It is a “little book” with a large message.
3. It is representative of the Word of God.

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C. His Posture (Vs. 2b)

1. The angel places one foot on the sea and one on the earth. This symbolizes his authority over the entire earth.
2. Ultimately it pictures the sovereign governance of God over this world.

D. His Peal (Vs. 3-4)

1. The starting peal of the angel's voice (Vs. 3a) "He cried out in the authority of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." (Cloud) See Hosea 11:10.
2. The sevenfold peals of thunder (Vs. 3b-4)
 - a. John is instructed to "Seal up" the message of the 7 thunders. This is the only "sealed" portion of this "unsealed" Book.
 - b. All that God wants us to know is written in His Word. Sometimes we spend more time focusing on what God hasn't told us than what He has told us! Remember the truth of Deut. 29:29.
 - c. Ironside: "Have you ever noticed how inquisitive people often are regarding those things that the wisdom of God has purposely kept from them? Alas, it is only too natural for man to pass over the precious revealed truth that would be for his sanctification and blessing and to occupy himself with hidden things that are not given for him now to know and that, if it had been for his blessing to know, God would have revealed them."

II. The Declaration of the Angel (Vs. 5-7)

A. The Solemnity of the Declaration (Vs. 5-6)

The truth of what the angel is about to declare is rooted and grounded in the Person of God.

1. God is Eternal (Vs. 6a) – "him that liveth for ever and ever" We have complete confidence in the Word of God when we remember the attributes of its Author. God is the Great I AM, the Self-existent, ever present, eternal, ever living One. "...even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Psalm 90:2) At least 30 times in the Bible God is called "the living God" (e.g. Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:26; Matt. 16:16; John 6:69; Acts 14:15; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 12:22)
2. God is the Creator (Vs. 6b) – "who created" God is the Creator of the universe and therefore its Owner, Lord and Master. The comprehensiveness of God's creative acts is emphasized in three statements:
 - a. "who created heaven, and the things that therein are"
 - b. "and the earth, and the things that therein are"
 - c. "and the sea, and the things which are therein"
 - d. Newell: "The phrase is repeated three times, once in connection with each sphere of creation, as emphasizing the Creator's rights as Creator, to proceed in judgment as He pleases."

B. The Substance of the Declaration (Vs. 6b-7)

1. The soon coming completion of Time (Vs. 6b)
 - a. "time no longer" = means no more time. Time has run out for men. Time does not cease right at this point as the next verse makes clear. There are still the final events of the second half of

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the tribulation period and the return of Christ to come but time as men have known it on earth is almost up. This answers the question of the martyrs in Rev. 6:10.

2. The soon coming completion of Truth (Vs. 7)
 - a. "the mystery of God" = a mystery in the N.T. refers to a truth hidden in past ages but now revealed in the New Testament Scripture (See Eph. 3:5).
 - b. This refers to the mystery of 'time'. The time for man's rebellion will be finished and the time for the fulfillment of the prophecies will be at hand. (Cloud)
 - c. Thomas: "The mystery of God consists of the heretofore unrevealed details unfolded in the chapters from here to the end, chapters that tell of the institution of God's kingdom on earth and eventually in the new heavens and new earth."
 - d. The signal for this mystery's completion is the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:14-19).

III. The Directive from the Angel (Vs. 8-11)

A. The Orders to John (Vs. 8-9)

1. The Command from Heaven (Vs. 8)
 - a. John hears the voice from heaven for a second time. In all probability this is the voice of God or Christ from the throne.
 - b. John is commanded to take the book from the hand of the angel. John, as an earthly servant, was to have the privilege of holding and proclaiming a heavenly message. That is our privilege with the Word of God!
2. The Command from the Angel (Vs. 9)
 - a. The angel issues an additional command to John to not only take the Book but to also eat it up! John's experience closely parallels that of Ezekiel (Ez. 2:9-3:4). It would not be enough for John to merely possess the Book in His hands; it was to enter his inner man (heart). "Eating is an easily recognized symbol for receiving knowledge. For example, we ourselves speak of digesting a piece of information." (Phillips)
 - b. Challenge: God desires truth in the "inward parts" (Ps. 51:6). How is your spiritual appetite going? Are you feeding on and digesting the Word of God?
 - c. God's Word is our spiritual food. God's Word is likened to bread (Matt. 4:4), milk (1 Pet. 2:2), meat (Heb. 5:14), and honey (Psalm 119:103).

B. The Obedience of John (Vs. 10-11)

1. John's Eating of the Book (Vs. 10a)
 - a. "John's devouring of the scroll is literal to illustrate his thorough assimilation of the scroll's contents." (Thomas)
 - b. The message was to become a part of John before he declared it to others. It is the same today for all of us. The Word of God first needs to be ingested before we declare it to others.
 - c. Challenge: What are you feeding your inner life?
2. John's Experience from the Book (Vs. 10b)
 - a. Sweetness in the mouth

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- b. Sourness in the belly
 - i. For the preacher, preaching the whole counsel of God involves preaching the difficult things of the Word of God.
 - ii. Illustration: Sometimes the preacher's stomach is literally affected prior to preaching, especially if it involves delivering one of the more "bitter" portions of God's Word. It wasn't unusual for Spurgeon vomit up his breakfast before preaching on a Sunday morning.
 - iii. Phillips: "What John savored of the mind and will of God in that little book was sweet to the taste, for the prayers of God's people were to be fully answered at last, and the coming of the Lord was at hand. But oh, the bitterness of what lay ahead first! How bitter it was to have it revealed that things had to get worse before they could get better! How bitter it was the further revelation of beasts and bowls and battles before the final breaking of the day!"
 - c. Cloud: "But it (God's Word) is also bitter in multiple senses. First, it is bitter because it describes the fierce judgments that must fall upon this world before God's kingdom is established. It is bitter to think of these things and of the horrible future that awaits every unsaved person, among whom are beloved relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Second is it bitter because it forces me to face my sin and to judge it before God and to change the way I live. It is bitter because it requires dying to self. Third, it is bitter because it brings persecution and trouble into my life when I seek to take a stand for God's Word. John could well testify of this, as he was on the isle of Patmos for his testimony's sake."
 - d. Note: To the believer, the taste of the Word of God is never bitter, it is always sweet, even if it be a word of rebuke that deals firmly with our inner hearts condition.
3. John's Exhortation about the Book (Vs. 11)
- a. John is commissioned afresh to be God's instrument to reveal the remaining truths of the Book of Revelation.
 - b. 'kings' = God's Word through His prophets takes precedence over the highest rank in human authority." (Thomas)

IV. The Digestion of the Word (Practical Challenge)

Illustration: We need a five fingered grip on the Bible. Let's briefly consider 5 ways we can digest the Word of God:

A. Read the Word (1 Tim. 4:13)

1. Have a daily devotional life.
2. Have a reading plan (e.g. one year through the Bible).

B. Meditate on the Word (Josh. 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:15)

1. 'meditate' = to think deeply about (Oxford); To dwell on anything in thought; to contemplate; to study; to turn or revolve any subject in the mind (Webster).
2. Practical tip: Turn off electronic devices for your devotions so you can be undistracted!

C. Listen to the Word (Rom. 10:17)

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1. Make use of the Bible on audio.
2. Be under the sound preaching and teaching of the Word of God in the local church.
3. Make use of sound sermons.
4. Godly music that teaches Biblical truth can also have a powerful way to absorb the truths of God's Word.

D. Memorize the Word (Psalm 119:11)

1. Memorize chapter by chapter.
2. Memorize topically (e.g. key verses on the Gospel and salvation)

E. Study the Word (2 Tim. 2:15)

1. Illustration: Difference between a tourist and an explorer.
2. Make use of the study opportunities in the local church (Bible college courses).

Conclusion: How is your spiritual appetite and digestion? How important is the Word of God to your life?