

Eating the Bittersweet Scroll

Text: Revelation 10.1–11

Theme: God's people are strengthened to endure by feeding upon His Word

Introduction — Zedekiah was one of the last king's of Judah

- puppet king under Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of Babylonian Empire
- forced to do whatever Nebuchadnezzar said or face dire consequences
- some of people of Judah already captive in Babylon (remember Daniel & friends?)

Jeremiah was the prophet of God during those days

- often called the prophet of woe
- probably where we get prophet of doom or doomsayer
- book filled with lamentations, bitterness, and woe
- called upon by God to deliver a harsh message
- “you, O Israel, have rebelled against Me; worshiped other gods, done abominable things”
- you will be taken off by Babylon into captivity

Hananiah was also a prophet...a false one, but a prophet nevertheless

- contemporary of, but often standing against Jeremiah
- one time, Jeremiah told to wear a wooden yoke on shoulders
- this was what people would be like with Babylon as the heavy yoke of God's discipline
- Hananiah: Babylon is not going to prevail against us
- took yoke off Jeremiah and broke it in two
- so God will do to Babylon in just two years
- Hananiah's message was a much more upbeat, positive, “We can do it!” type

Hananiah's words never came true

- Babylon came soon and crushed what remained of Judah
- Hananiah was killed; Jeremiah's prophecies, true words from God, came true...sadly
- 40 years Jeremiah preached the word...with no serious effect upon the people!
- how? How does a true follower of God stand when the Word of God gets ignored...
- rejected by God's people, and unbelievers alike?
- how did Jeremiah keep on delivering his bittersweet message?

God delivered words of hope and promise in the midst of the bitter words of judgment

- Apostle John knew his Bible, only Bible he had: Old Testament
- he knew the account of Jeremiah's life & prophecies
- and as he's seeing the seals opened...
- hearing the blasts of trumpets...
- all containing God's judgment upon the world...
- how does he do it? Endure it? Stand through it all?
- just like we must do: by feeding upon God's Word
- **God's people are strengthened to endure by feeding upon God's Word**
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This is what we see in Revelation 10

- another interlude, much like ch. 7 was following first six seals
- before “end of the world” comes from God's great wrath, John given a respite

- told how God's people would be sealed by Him
- they would be protected from that wrath
- then, when seventh seal is opened, God's people can endure
- God does the same thing here for John
- six trumpets sounded forth God's merciful warnings of horrible judgment coming
- similar in pattern, more intense than seals, however
- after ch. 9, which you recall, depicted such horrifying pictures of God's wrath, John given rest
- ch. 10 & most of 11 strengthen him for what is to come when seventh trumpet blows
- this where we find ourselves in walk thru Revelation of Jesus Christ
- we've heard the passage read; let's walk thru it, learn from it, and pray that we'll live it

First, there is...

I. THE ANGEL

- John sees another angel here in ch. 10
- but who exactly is this angel, and what is he up to?
- there has been considerable disagreement as to this angel's identity

1. The "other" angel

- some think this is Christ, simply appearing as an angel
- they reference the "angel of the Lord" passages from the OT

1) I believe that angel of the Lord was most often a theophany: an appearing of God

- it would have been Christ pre-incarnate—before He came and took on human flesh
- plus, those who see Christ here reference this angel's description as being displays of God

2) I am not convinced however and it's all based upon the text & context

- first of all, Jesus, in the NT is never referred to as an angel
- nor, with all the angel sightings in Revelation is Jesus ever called one
- in fact, when John falls down to worship an angelic being, he is told to only worship the Lamb
- second, John clearly states: I saw *another* mighty angel
- the first angel mentioned like this is in 5.2
- this one is just like that one; some say it is the same one
- not a different kind of angel; the wording is quite clear, but another of the same kind
- third, this angel swears an oath to God, something Christ would never do since He is God
- and then the fourth reason: even though the descriptions here are pointing to God's glory...
- I believe that is exactly what this angel is doing: reflecting God's glory
- angels were created to be perfectly polished mirrors, achieving no glory of their own
- instead, all they do is reflect that of God their Creator

3) What are these descriptors?

- look at the first and the last: wrapped in cloud and fiery pillars
- where else in Scripture have we seen pillars of cloud and fire?
- when God put His glory on display in protecting His people & delivering them from Egypt
- cloud by day, fire by night
- kept Israel safe from enemies & guided to them to their rest
- God is reminding His people, living in light of a cruel, hate-filled world, that He is with them
- He protects us with His presence by sealing us with His very own Spirit
- and He guides us through the wilderness of this sin-saturated world to our final rest
- then, there is the rainbow, there is no doubt what this means

- rainbow is the symbol of God's covenant promise & He is faithful to fulfill it
- in Ezekiel 1.28 we read: **“Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”**
- this angel is reminding John & all God's sealed saints that He is present, powerful, & in charge
- his face shining like the sun is like to that of Christ in Rev 1: again, reflecting Christ's glory
- so, this other mighty angel is meant to help us see God & Christ...
- in all their powerful majesty & sovereignty, guarding us, keeping us, and still coming in judgment upon those who dwell on the earth

2. The stance

- we'll get to the scroll in a moment, as well as this angel's voice
- but for now, look at end of v. 2: **“He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land”**
- this angel is huge! A colossus, if you will
- and by this, he shows us that even in the midst of the horrific judgments coming...
- God rules over all things in His creation
- and, in the Bible, when you put your foot upon something, you have authority over it
- Satan and his evil forces seem to be wreaking havoc all around the world
- turmoil, chaos, war, massive suffering and heartache
- but who stands over all earth and sea, even having head into the heavens? God does
- we serve and worship a big God; and recall this when you're suffering

3. The voice

- the first sound we hear from this mighty angel is the roaring of a lion
- does this not also reflect the almighty reign of our Lord Jesus Christ?
- He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah & roars to announce His judgment
- **“The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.”**

(Joel 3:16 ESV)

- **“The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?”**

(Amos 3:8 ESV)

- Jesus comes to save, even through His judgments
- take heart, believer, for your Lord is King over land and sea
- your Lord will save you even through His judgments
- he will send his angel to lead you through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud and flame
- our Lord has opened the scroll and has given it to an angel who roars like a lion, and thunders roll in response
- speaking of these seven thunders, what are these?
- in the OT, when the Lord thunders, He is coming in judgment
- recall also that the number seven is for fulfillment, completion
- God's complete & final judgment is yet to come
- John hears its foretelling, but cannot tell it himself just yet
- God's sovereign timing is perfect, complete
- He will bring His salvation & judgment
- look to Him and be saved

4. The oath

- and last, before we consider the scroll and what it tells us, listen to this oath: **read vv. 5–7**
- the angel confirms what we already know: God will judge the unbelieving world
- He keeps His sacred ones close, protecting them from His wrath
- but believe it, whether you want to or not: His Christ will come
- the seven seals, trumpets and bowls all seem to depict the same type of things
- John, along with us, gets to see them from different perspectives, angles
- and they progressively get worse and more intense
- until finally, when the seventh trumpet is blown...
- **“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, 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 shall reign forever and ever.””**

(Revelation 11:15 ESV)

- when this time of final judgment comes, there will be no delay
- perhaps you’re not a believer in Jesus, though
- if that’s the case, let me tell you with all concern for your soul
- you have everything to fear
- once the events of the end begin, they will take place quickly
- your worst nightmares will not do justice to the wrath of Almighty God
- let me plead with you: save your soul!
- trust in Christ and repent of your sin
- you are not guaranteed tomorrow
- if you don’t repent and believe in Jesus, you won’t ever be free
- it will be just, and it will be awful, and it will never end
- you will deserve every minute of it for refusing to honor God as God...
- for failing to give thanks to Him, for refusing to repent and trust in Christ
- but now, in this moment, God is offering you mercy
- trusting Christ now means
 - liberty, freedom,
 - salvation, redemption,
 - adoption, justification,
 - forgiveness, glorification,
 - and the joy of worshiping
 - every moment of your long eternity in Heaven

Let’s take a look at what is now in ...

II. THE LITTLE SCROLL

- this angel comes with a little scroll in its hand
- this doesn’t mean it is insignificant or trivial
- it is simply small due to the enormous size of the angel

1. What is it?

- first we know that this scroll contains the words of God revealing Christ
- **“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,”**

(Revelation 1:1 ESV)

- Jesus took the scroll from the hand of God the Father in ch. 5
 - this scroll now comes to John; he will see what judgments of God are to come
 - yet, he is also told to not reveal it all right away, even though there will be no delay when it comes
 - when we read that it also contains the “mystery of God” we know what a mystery it
 - it is something that God simply has not revealed or made known yet
 - Apostle Paul often equates this mystery with the gospel that goes to Jews and Gentiles alike
 - **“how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”**
(Ephesians 3:3, 6 ESV)
 - so John is given more gospel: God saving even in the midst of bringing down judgment
 - in His mercy, we’ve seen God warning hearth-dwellers to repent and believe
 - then we hear that John is to take and eat the scroll: could be literal, most likely symbolic again
 - consume it and know it full well
 - **“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”**
(Psalm 119:103 ESV)
 - **“More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.”**
(Psalm 19:10 ESV)
 - this word of God, in the scroll, containing words of salvation are always sweet
 - and yet, there are hard words in the gospel as well, are there not?
 - when you tell someone they need to look to Jesus to be saved, you’re telling them this:
 - the sweet news of freedom from bondage to sin, freedom from guilt
 - but the bittersweet bit is God’s wrath is against them, their guilt a death blot on their soul
 - they must be saved from hell, true; but also from the wrath of God’s judgment
 - these are bitter words, hard words, but proclaim John must...and so must we
- 2. What do we do with it?**
- some points of application of this interlude in ch. 10
 - *first*, remember that we know & serve a big God
 - He **“...created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it”**
 - and He stands with feet upon land and sea, owning everything in the world, ruling over it
 - *second*, He never fails
 - look at His word, this scroll and what they contain: salvation & judgment
 - all of which has come, is here now, and will still come until it all ends
 - God keeps His promises...everyone of them
 - and note: this “mystery” will be accomplished: no doubts, no if’s, and’s, or but’s
 - *third*: eat God’s Word, take it in all the time; chew it up and digest it
 - I daresay, if many of us were to eat literal physical food like we do God’s Word, we’d starve
 - with what is here and what is coming, we must, absolutely must consume the Bible
 - you’ll find it sweet, like honey
 - you’ll also find it may leave a bitter after-taste because of your own sin
 - or because you’ve been trying to proclaim the gospel to someone you care about

- they keep rejecting it, putting it off, or saying “I know, I know; I’ll get to it some day”
- but don’t give up; never give up

Conclusion – So, brothers and sisters in Christ, be strong and courageous

- know that God is Lord of all and will accomplish his purposes
- No terrorists,
 - no rogue governments,
 - no dictators,
 - no usurpers of democracy,
 - no kings,
 - no tax collectors,
 - no corrupt government officials,
 - no hypocritical senators
 are going to stand in the way of God’s accomplishing his purposes
- if Russia puts a military base on Cuba,
 - if terrorists strike the USA again,
 - if democracy comes to an end in this country,
 God’s purposes will still come to pass
- God is Lord of history, and His will is going to be done

You can know truth because God has revealed Himself

- we will never have exhaustive knowledge because only God is omniscient
- but we can have reliable knowledge because God gave the final scroll to Jesus, who opened it
- and then the angel gave it to John, who ate it.
- John ate the scroll and prophesied, and we can trust what God has shown us about **“the things that must soon take place”** (1.1)

Jesus said to his disciples in John 14.1–3, **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”**

- take heart, my beloved Albion: Jesus loves you, keeps you, is coming for you