

The Mysteries of Revelation 10

Those of us who struggle with the interpretation of the book of Revelation really struggle with chapter 10. Angels and rainbows and a little book that John has to eat and undisclosed messages which are both sweet and sour--- What does it mean?

Revelation 10 brings us three mysteries: the mighty angel, the mystery of God which the angel delivered, and the mystery of the little scroll in the angel's hand. Who is this mighty angel? It is a mighty glorious angel whose identity is not revealed, possibly Gabriel who exercises God's authority over all earth. Some commentators think it is Jesus because of his posture of having one foot on the land and one foot on the sea indicating dominion over the whole earth. His face is like the sun as it was in ch.1, his voice booms like a lion's roar, and his feet shine like fire—all like the Rev.1 vision of Christ. Remember that the word translated angels means literally, messenger so whoever this strong messenger is, he represents God and reveals God's Word.

In Rev.10:5-7, the end of the ultimate mystery is at hand, this is the second mystery of ch.10 that there will be no more delay. The delay in question is the delay of the Lord Jesus Christ's return. The first century Christians were looking for it in their lifetime, but nearly 2000 years later it has not happened. When will it happen? This is the mystery, but in ch.10 the messenger says now, when the 7th trumpet blows, then Jesus comes back and establishes His reign on earth. The amazing thing is that even though Christ created this earth, He has never fully ruled over it. He has never used His sovereign power to bring an end to human rebellion and worldly injustice and evil. Jesus has yet to receive the full worship and honor of this world. He has chosen not to exercise His power and authority until the appointed time spoken of in Rev.10.

In v. 8-11 we have the third mystery of the little scroll. This is a different scroll from that of ch.5. Amazingly, John is told to eat this scroll. Have you ever “digested someone's words”? I take it this is a message John takes personally, he assimilates it. It becomes a part of him. The message in this scroll is for John and not for us. Perhaps it is about his situation or his first century churches, or maybe it is another series of judgments not to be revealed to others. Whatever it is, it is both a sweet and a bitter message. How could this be? I think it is similar to Paul's imagery of the gospel as an aroma in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. To believers it is a sweet aroma of life, but to unbelievers it is a foul odor of death. This revelation is sweet to John as the Word of God, but it has a bitter aftertaste of harsh judgment upon the world.

Delay of Game

No one enjoys the official time outs during football games so they can run commercials, or delay of game calls, or the review delays so they can review official's calls. Here in Rev.10 we have the heavenly messenger's oath that there will be no more delay—the end

has come and Jesus is coming. In ch.6 the martyrs asked, “How long?” Just a little while longer. In ch.8 the prayers of the saints asked Him to come soon. Now in ch.10 we can know that the end-time scenario is irreversible

I'll Have the Sweet and Sour Sauce On Mine

John's eating of this scroll in Rev.10:10 brings to mind another author in the Bible doing much the same—Ezekiel. This Old Testament prophet was given a message to deliver to Israel that Jerusalem would fall and be destroyed. In Ezekiel 3, the message was in a scroll that he was told to eat which he did, and it was sweet tasting in his mouth—sweet as honey. Nevertheless, later after he digested it, it was a bitter message of suffering for his people. It had tasted sweet because it was the Word of God meant as a warning to the stubborn obstinate people of Israel, yet later Ezekiel became embittered because they would not listen and would have to suffer so much. In the same way John is given the revelation because he is held responsible for warning the world about coming judgments—a BITTERSWEET experience. God's message brings both joy and sorrow.

Prophecy

Revelation calls itself prophecy and revelation from God. Now in Rev.10:11 John is told to prophesy. A good definition of this would be to give divinely inspired messages. This command links ch.10 to ch.11. John will prophesy about God's judgments coming upon ungodly people. During the end times the two witnesses of God in ch.11 will also “prophesy” for 1260 days about sin and coming judgment. This just happens to be 42 months or 3 ½ years which coincides with the time Satan is given left on earth in ch.12, and the time Antichrist is given in ch.13:5. It is also the same as Daniel predicted in Dan.9:27.

Conclusion

It is easy to accept the sweet part of God's Word, but what about the sorrowful bitter part? What if God revealed to us what He did to Paul, “I will show you how you must suffer for my name's sake.”(Acts 9:16). Suppose that like John you were given the sweet news that Jesus was coming back in a short time? How would that be sweet and yet sour? Do you have friends and loved ones that don't know Christ? Would this mean the end for them? Are we ready for the end of the world? Have we done everything we can do? Like John, we want the Lord to act in judgment to take back the earth, bring justice, and vindicate Christ, but the harsh realization of the terrible doom awaiting unbelievers can't help but leave a bitter aftertaste.

Charlie Taylor

