

Bittersweet

Why did God write the Book of Revelation?

Well John told us in the very first verses...

Revelation 1:19 (ESV) 19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

God wanted us to know...the things that have happened....the things that are...and the things that are to take place. That's nice isn't it? God wanted us to know what would happen in the future.....Great.....But Why?

99.9% of all believers of all time will be dead when all this goes down. They will never experience it. We may not be here when the things that we are studying take place.

Yet God goes out of His way it seems to give us an entire book....full of incredible visions...dramatic scenes.....horrific judgments....amazing promises and even wondrous revelations. We see all the horror and judgement but we also we a new heaven and a new earth...We see Jesus wiping away every tear.....we get a glimpse of heaven....the throne...the elders.....the angels....It is an amazing book.

But knowing all of these things doesn't really change them. They are promises from God and certain to occur. If you think about it, knowing everything that is going to happen in the seals, trumpets, and bowls....is just information....ok so we know....we are informed. God has clued us in....we are "in the know"

But is that really what God wanted? Did He just want a bunch of followers who knew the future and trusted Him to achieve it? Maybe that is part of it...but God gave us the Book of Revelation so that we would understand the future and because of that knowledge we would change the present.

You see it is very easy to get to this point in Revelation and focus on all the details and miss the point.

The only reason to know and study the Book of Revelation is so that it can change you right now. It is true that most who read and study these pages will not be here when they occur. Hopefully, they will have been raptured.

But the real question is how many of those 99% changed their lives because of what they learned? Did reading these truths motivate them to change?.....did it spur them on to action? Does knowing the future inspire evangelism?.... Bring about a sense of urgency? Help you see the world and all that is in it as temporary?

If we are all just going to learn about Revelation and not be changed by the Revelation...then we can probably stop.

So at the moment in the book we have reached an interlude....a pause....it is a good time to refocus and spend some time in self reflection....Have I changed the way I live today based on what I have learned in the first 9 Chapters of Revelation?

Have I shared the gospel with more people....have I prayed more fervently for the lost and for an opportunity to reach them with the truth of what I am learning?

Have I refocused my priorities because of what I am learning?

What do I need to do to make sure that I get everything out of the last 13 Chapters? To make sure that I am not just learning....but actually changing?

God wrote Revelation...just like He wrote every word in the Bible....to change us...to shape us....to move us...to motivate us...and to transform us.

As we continue in Revelation.....lets make sure that we realize that what we learn here doesn't matter if it doesn't change who we are in Christ.

James told us that faith...and I would add knowledge...without works is useless. Don't just be hearers of the word...be a doer

My prayer is that your tomorrow will be different because of what you learn today.

Timeline

We have reached the last interlude of Revelation. Twice God stops and allows us to catch our breath and focus on what is to come. The first interlude was between the 6th and 7th seals....If you remember all of heaven and earth was silent for 30 minutes. It ushered in the 3 woes.

Now we have reached the 6th Trumpet....and before we get to the 7th, there is an interlude. A pause before the end of all things.

These interludes serve a dramatic purpose, but also show mercy in allowing more opportunity for repentance. It is as if God brought things to the brink, then pulled back a little to grant mankind more time to repent.

Revelation 10:1–11:14 is an interlude, or parenthesis, between the sixth and seventh trumpets. We saw an earlier interlude in 7:1–17 between the sixth and seventh seals. There is no parallel interlude between the sixth and seventh bowl judgments in chapter 16. The reason is clear: When the bowl judgments are poured out, "it is done!".

So here, devastating and horrific judgment is interrupted for a moment. The interruption provides "additional information bearing on the previous events and ... prepare[s] the reader for further developments".

There is certainly a change of subject matter from chapters 8–9. There we witnessed the outpouring of God's wrath on unbelieving humanity—what Revelation repeatedly calls "those who live on the earth" or those who lack the seal of God's protection on their foreheads.

Now we see a word of encouragement for believers. God's hidden plan will be completed. You can trust Him to finish things in His time and in His way. You can be confident in His purposes, so keep on proclaiming the gospel among "many peoples, nations, languages, and kings"

There will be a price to pay, but God will honor and vindicate His people. You can count on it. Chapter 10 begins with a word from heaven. It is both instructive and timely. Let me share it with you and then we will come back and dive in a bit.

Revelation 10

Revelation 10:1–3 (ESV) 1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, 3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

Revelation 10:5–7 (ESV) 5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, 7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. 8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

Revelation 10:10–11 (ESV) 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. 11 And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

Revelation 10:1–3 (ESV) 1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

It is unlikely that this is Michael, who is referred to by name elsewhere or Christ, since He is never called an angel in the New Testament. Furthermore, unlike Christ, this angel comes to earth before the time of tribulation is over. Yet many scholars debate this issue.

The Gr. word translated "another" means one of the same kind, that is, a created being. This is not one of the 7 angels responsible for sounding the trumpets, but one of the highest ranking in heaven, filled with splendor, greatness, and strength

Here he saw "another mighty angel." Angels are mentioned more than 60 times in Revelation, mighty or strong angels three times. The angel, coming down from heaven, is described as "mighty," perhaps because he is both majestic and huge. In the last chapter, we just saw demons ascend out of the abyss.....but this angel, as God's servant, descends from above. He comes to earth with great authority as God's ambassador.

"A rainbow over his head" is a sign of God's covenant faithfulness. It echoes the story of Noah and the flood. It adorned his head like a crown. Perhaps there is a reference in the rainbow to the merciful character of this angel's mission, and the faithfulness and patience of God. Yes God's final judgment is coming but he is crowned with a covenant.

The angel's "face was like the sun," brilliant and radiant, for he had been in the presence of God. As a result, he is an awesome reflection of the Lord.

So massive is this angel that he lays claim for his message on all the earth, setting his right foot on the sea and his left on the land (mentioned three times).

The angel's stance projects his authority over both land and sea. His authority is indirect as he is a messenger of God. His stance "indicates complete authority over the entire earthly situation." He has his feet on both land and sea "to show that he had the command of each, and that his power given to him by God was universal, all things being under his feet."

Thus it is indicated that the revelation which is to follow affects the whole world, and is not partial in its operation, as were the judgments set forth under the earlier trumpets.

Revelation 10:3-4 (ESV) 3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

Furthermore, his message is to warn all and be heard by all. He "cried out with a loud voice, like a roaring lion".

His cry is accompanied by seven thunders, which spoke. In the little scroll is the Word of God. In the seven thunders there is additional judgment from God, a judgment that comprehensively will impact the whole world.

Psalms 29:3-30:7 (ESV) 3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over many waters. 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; ... 7 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. 8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; ... 9 The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!" 10 The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

Seven seals have afflicted the earth. Six of seven trumpets have blown in cataclysmic judgment. Seven thunders are now ready to vent their judgment as well. They have already sounded. They are ready to act; John is ready to write. Then something amazing occurs: John hears a voice from

heaven, which I believe is the voice of our God. John is told, "Seal up what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down!"

These are the only words in the Revelation that are sealed up. Revelation 22:10 says, "Don't seal the prophetic words of this book, because the time is near." But here, this one time, John is commanded not to write what the "thunders said."

If John was not permitted to tell us what they said, why should he even record the incident? One result of it should be to let us know there are secrets in the prophetic scenario, mysteries that should keep us humble. We clearly don't know or need to know everything God has planned. While God has revealed much, there are secrets which God has not seen fit to reveal to man at this time. We should not act as though everything has been revealed....we know what we need to know.

Exactly why John was not allowed to write further about the thunders remains a mystery, at least for now. Maybe someday we will know. Then again, maybe not.

John is being told to affirm God's sovereign control over the judgments proclaimed in the thunders and then is prohibited from revealing the contents to his readers. The major message is one of sovereignty. God is in control, and the saints do not need to know all the details.

Revelation 10:5-7 (ESV) 5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, 7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

In an act of solemn oath taking, the angel raises his right hand to heaven. This is the only time an oath is taken in Revelation.

The message of God's servant angel is twofold: First, "there would be no delay" (ESV), literally, "there will no longer be a period of time." This answers the question of the martyrs in 6:10. God will not stop or delay the remaining judgments. Evil will now run its course quickly as antichrist rises from the abyss (11:7) and emerges as a world ruler (see 2 Thess 2:3-12; Rev 13:1-18). God and evil, the Lamb and the dragon, are headed for cosmic conflict, a global showdown. It will happen soon.

Second, when the seventh angel sounds to send forth the seven bowls (ch. 16), the mystery or "hidden plan" (Gk musterion) of God will be fulfilled, completed, finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets. In the New Testament a mystery is a truth previously concealed but now revealed

God's plan and purpose in creation and redemption, made possible through the blood of the Lamb, is now revealed plainly. It is nothing less than the answer to the prayers of the saints throughout history, "Your kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10). The time is now.

He is the God who created heaven, the earth, and the sea and "what is in it" (spoken three times for emphasis). He is the sovereign Creator. He alone is the Source and

ultimate Cause of all that is. This angel could not have sworn by any greater. God will confirm His Word.

Revelation 10:8–9 (ESV) 8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

The voice from heaven speaks again (10:4). The voice is almost certainly the voice of God. This voice commands authority and demands obedience. John is told to "go" and "take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel." Both "go" and "take" are imperatives of command. No doubt John needed such a word to approach such a mighty angel (10:1). Interestingly, the scroll lies open. For you and me, we also have an open book God has prepared for us to read. It is called the Bible.

As John is commanded to go and take this little scroll for his spiritual edification, God commands us to go and take His big book and explore its truths. For us there is no intimidating angel to approach. There is an open book ready for the taking. All you have to do is go and get it.

John approaches the angel and requests the scroll. The angel responds by telling him to "take" it and to "eat it." Both verbs are imperatives. John is to take the scroll and devour it, to completely eat it up. Remember that there is little new in the book of Revelation. We have seen this before.

Jeremiah 15:16 (ESV) 16 Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.

Ezekiel 2:8–3:3 (ESV) 8 "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." 9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. 1 And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. 3 And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

What a powerful image for how we should approach the Word of God! This book is honey (Pss 19:10; 119:103; Prov 24:13), better than bread (Matt 4:4), meat (1 Cor 3:1–2), and milk (1 Pet 2:2).

Psalms 19:7–11 (ESV) 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalms 119:103–104 (ESV) 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Here is a diet for spiritual health and nourishment. However, we can expect a twofold reaction when eating and digesting this book. It will be sweet in our mouths, but it can be bitter to our stomachs

The Gospel message of Jesus....His saving and sanctification of us....the sweetest thing we will ever experience....full of joy and gladness.....

It is sweet in our mouths because it reveals the gospel—God’s goodness and grace, His love and mercy, His plans and purposes, His will and His ways.

Yet soon after we taste the goodness of God's word....as we ingest it...chew on it....take the truth into our lives....we come to a very difficult realization.

As followers of Jesus, we realize that this joy comes with another truth....It is a word of persecution....suffering...and surrender for those who follow Jesus. We will experience the honey...but also have some times of bitterness in our walk with Christ.

But for those who choose to reject Jesus....His truth reveals that it is full of sorrow, punishment, bitterness, sadness, and eternal doom for those who reject Jesus. It is a word of judgment to unbelievers and a word of persecution and suffering for believers.

All who love Jesus Christ can relate to John’s experience here. Believers long for Christ to return in glory, for Satan to be destroyed, and the glorious kingdom of our Lord to be set up on earth, in which He will rule in universal sovereignty and glory while establishing in the world righteousness, truth, and peace. That is the sweetness...the honey....or God's truth. We will have challenges and suffering along the way, but the experience is sweet. But at the same time that honey comes with an awareness of something very bitter. The truth of God's plan brings to us great sorrow as we understand what happens to those who reject Him. Our love for them....for nonbelievers...for our friends and family who reject Him...drives us to wish we could take their place....Paul expressed it this way.

Romans 9:1–3 (ESV) 1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

When you feed on the Word of God....The Holy Spirit gives you a love for others that is so strong, you wish you could take their place and take their punishment for them. You love your children and your family so much...that you would die for them. You wish that there was a way to take their place and keep them from the judgment and wrath that they will face. Why do you feel that way? Because you have Christ in you and that is exactly what He did.

Romans 5:8 (ESV) 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Word is sweet to the taste....but once ingested....there is some bitterness in the stomach from the truth revealed in the Word.

Revelation 10:10–11 (ESV) 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

Notice something critical here...Verse 10 tells us that it is sweet and makes our stomachs bitter.....What would you expect to come next? Well, you might expect God to tell us that the Sweetness far exceeds the bitterness....That the bitterness is just for a little while but the sweetness lasts forever.....But instead God gives John a command.

Revelation 10:10–11 (ESV) 11 And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

He may as well have said...John...there is only one antidote to that sick feeling that you have in your stomach because of what you know....

We have that right? As we study the End Times it is sweet but it is also nauseating....Many people that we know and love are going to Hell. They are going to reject Jesus' offer to take the wrath of their sins for them and instead tell Jesus...What you did on the cross means nothing to me...and they will stand and die in the wrath of a holy God who did everything to keep from having to pour out His justice....

As John reaches this interlude....as he feels the weight of the gospel....as he sees the vision of God's wrath on nonbelievers....the bitterness of the gospel is paramount.

God doesn't tell John that the sweetness is forever and the bitterness is fleeting.....even though it is...He tells John...that bitterness should drive you to do something!

John....don't just sit there marveling in what has been revealed to you.....You must act...You must again preach the future about what is going to happen to many peoples....nations...languages and kings....

God is telling John...I didn't show all this stuff to you just so you would be informed.....Knowing all of this...YOU MUST...a command....tell the world what I have shown you.

Though it is not identical, the commission is similar to the Great Commission the Lord Jesus gave the church. These are words of important application for all of us. "You must" sounds a moral imperative, a moral and spiritual obligation. You must prophesy, preach, and proclaim again

Like the book itself, proclaiming God's Word to the nations is bittersweet. It is a positive word of redemption to those who believe, and it is a bitter word of judgment to those who refuse to repent and who persecute God's people. Our assignment is to go. Our calling is to proclaim the good news of the gospel.

Many of us will sit around the table or chat on the phone with loved ones this Thanksgiving. As you speak to them...your stomach will start to churn a bit....you want to tell them everything that you know....but they have rejected that message so many times. You know

that they hate it when you bring up that Jesus stuff. You want so badly for them to know Jesus that it makes you physically sick....That is what John is realizing after ingesting the Word...the Gospel message...the sweetness has passed and the bitterness remains.

When that bitter feeling hits the pit of your stomach...I want you to remember the antidote that God gave John....YOU MUST SPEAK AGAIN.

Closing

That is our command from God....We are no more passive in this plan than John was. God has clued us in on the future because we have a role to play in that plan right now. Think about that for a moment....God's ultimate plan for mankind...include us...acting on what we know....allowing the Revelation of Jesus Christ to change our today and thus our tomorrow.

We don't call ourselves "apostles," and we don't receive literal visions and new revelations from God. We're not required to swallow prophetic books to utter inspired words.

But each of us has been given a crucial mission to share the good news of salvation with the world. Yet just like John, we must first internalize the message, allowing it to become a part of our own lives. Devour the Word of God...feed on it...ingest it and absorb it...be spiritually full of God's Word. So much so that it changes everything about you and how you live.

As ambassadors for Christ in this age, we must not only understand and accept the gospel ourselves, but we must also be able to communicate that message to others. We are not told to just eat it and internalize it....we are told to go proclaim it. The bitterness in our stomachs moves us to do something....to once again...another time...no matter how many times it takes....we must proclaim the truth to others.

People you love are just one conversation away from the sweetness that is the promises of Jesus Christ. Let's be doers...lets risk rejection one more time...and proclaim the good news to everyone. I am praying that God will fill us.... not only with turkey.....but with boldness this Thanksgiving. Let's Pray.