

## The Bitter Sweet Scroll

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Revelation 10:1-11

Will you take your Bibles and turn with me this morning to Revelation chapter 10? We return once again to our verse by verse expositional study of this incredible book, the *Apokalypsis Iesou Cristou*, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. And we find ourselves this morning in chapter 10. Let me read this brief chapter to you.

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book which was open. And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them."

And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there shall be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.

And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it, and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."<sup>1</sup>

Sadly, many people assume that Bible prophecy is so mysterious, so esoteric that it cannot be understood. And, of course, such a charge assumes that God is a poor communicator. But remember that Scripture is defined revelation. It unveils. It discloses. It reveals truth. And it was written by an omniscient Creator who knows precisely the intellectual abilities of his creation.

The reason so many people think Bible prophecy is incomprehensible is because they have made it so. Rather than recognizing the fact that God is as clear about the future as

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 10:1-11.

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he is about the past and the present, many go to enormous lengths to avoid the normal meaning of Scripture, to look into the Old Testament and other passages to help explain the present passage and, in so doing, they impose upon the prophetic literature all manner of ridiculous and fanciful meanings that do make it incomprehensible.

Sadly, all of a sudden things like Israel becomes the Church, and all of a sudden the Lord's Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 and Mark 13 and Luke 21 as well as the entire book of Revelation is spiritualized to a point where all of it had to do with what happened in AD 70 and on it goes.

But, beloved, there are 333 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Deliverer, and 100 of those prophecies were fulfilled literally at his first advent. So don't you think the rest of them will also be fulfilled literally? We must understand that foundational to interpreting any passage of Scripture, including the prophetic literature, we must ask a very simple question, and that is: How would the original hearers have understood these truths? Remember, that these were written to common, ordinary people like you, like me. Most of the disciples were uneducated fishermen. They were not erudite theologians. But because of his amazing love, God has given us his infallible record, the record of his Word, a straightforward message of his redeeming grace.

Now, before we come to the text let me give you the big picture again. In our study thus far we have learned about the unimaginable judgment that will one day be poured out upon the earth, upon all those who mock the Lord Jesus Christ and who despise all who love him and serve him. And as we look around us today we can see the insanity of sin. We see that the world today is being prepared for the rise and, I might add, the fall of the antichrist. And we know, according to the Bible, that a day of judgment is coming.

But before it comes we understand that the Church is going to be translated or raptured into heaven. That is the next event on the prophetic time table. It is imminent meaning it is next. That is a signless event. The Word of God says that it will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And soon thereafter the antichrist will sign a covenant with Israel which will trigger all of the pre kingdom judgments, many of which we have studied thus far in our study of Revelation. Those judgments will last throughout the seven years of tribulation and then the Lord will return and he will establish his earthly kingdom on a renovated earth and he will reign in righteousness for 1000 years followed by the uncreation of the universe and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth in which all believers will live in the glorious presence of God forever.

Now today, right now, at this stage of history, we believers are currently awaiting the rapture of the Church. This is such a thrilling prospect. In 1 Corinthians 15:51 the apostle Paul says:

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for

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the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.<sup>2</sup>

Now this is explained in even greater detail in 1 Thessalonians chapter four beginning in verse 16 where Paul tells us:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.<sup>3</sup>

I might add that there is no hint of judgment in that particular event suggesting that it will happen before the tribulation occurs. Remember, the tribulation period is Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. It has to do with Israel not the Church. The Church must be removed. And as soon as you make Israel and the Church synonymous, as soon as you, therefore, deny the normal meaning of Scripture and language and impose some novel interpretation upon a text to defend some preconceived theological system, dear friend, at that moment you will be set adrift in an ocean of eschatological chaos and confusion.

Now before we examine the text I want you to ask yourself a question. As I anticipate the Lord coming to suddenly snatch us away into glory, what really should be my attitude? How would the Lord want me to be right now this side of that glorious event?

Well, there are many passages we could look at. Let me give you a few that will kind of set the stage and prepare our hearts and minds for looking at the text before us. The apostle Paul tells us in Titus chapter two beginning in verse 12 and through verse 13 that we are to:

...to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

That is to be our attitude. In fact, the Lord Jesus said in Luke 21 and verse 34, "Be on guard, so that your hearts,"<sup>5</sup> in other words your inner person, "will not be weighted down."<sup>6</sup>

"Weighted down" is an interesting verb, *bareo* (bar-eh'-o) in the original language, and it can be translated, "having your eyelids heavy with sleep," "a heart," shall we say, "that

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

<sup>4</sup> Titus 2:12-13.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 21:34.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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has lost its edge.” So he is saying, “Don’t become insensitive and numb with respect to your spiritual understanding of what is going on.”

So he says, “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down,”<sup>7</sup> and then he adds, “with dissipation.”<sup>8</sup> The word is very interesting in the original language. It had to do with sin, but certainly one that is characteristic of many other sins, especially the nausea that would accompany debauchery of that day. Dissipation would include, in that day, eating, being gluttonous, gorging yourself with food, drinking so much that eventually you become nauseated and you vomit. And that feeling after that is the idea of dissipation. And the Lord is saying, “I want you to be on guard so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation.” In other words, the idea of sin that leaves you in kind of a nauseated state and even adds, “And drunkenness,”<sup>9</sup> referring to intoxication, symbolic of any kind of excess and the lewdness that accompanies that.

As Christians we should have no part in these things, and he says, also, “And the worries of life,”<sup>10</sup> in other words the preoccupation with the temporal matters of earthly existence. Don’t be preoccupied with those things. And then he says, “And that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, this is a call to holy living for us this side of the rapture. You don’t want the Lord to come and to find you in that state where you are staggering around in some stupor of spiritual lethargy, biblically ignorant of the Word of God, especially the prophetic Word, preoccupied with all of the eternally insignificant things that we typically follow after, obsessed with all those things. If he comes when we are like that, the idea is that you are “trapped.” You are going to forfeit reward.

I know Christians that know the details of their favorite television show or their favorite sports team. They can give you batting averages, but they are absolutely clueless when you ask them to explain just the basics of the prophetic time line and what God is going to do. How tragic, as if they did not read Revelation 1:3 where we are told that we are going to be blessed, all those that read and hear the words of the prophecy and heed the things which are written in it for the time is near.<sup>12</sup>

“Watch yourselves,” John says in 2 John eight, “that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”<sup>13</sup> That is how we need to be. The Lord even went on in Luke 21 and said in verse 36, “Keep on the alert.”<sup>14</sup> In the Greek it literally means “chase the sleep away.” Wake up, people. Chase the sleep away. “Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> See Revelation 1:3.

<sup>13</sup> 2 John 8.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 21:36.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Escape what things? Well, the chronology of the pre kingdom judgments that Jesus was just discussing in Luke 21 and what he gives even more detail to in Matthew 24 and 25 and Mark 13 and what are detailed in great detail here in Revelation that we are studying. That is what he is saying here: “Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place.”<sup>16</sup>

“Pray.” In other words, pray not to lose heart. Pray that you don’t give up and lose focus of what is really going on in the world and where we are and what God is about to do? Pray that you won’t get intoxicated by the world and become spiritually lethargic and just kind of walk around like most Christians in a state of stupor and ignorance.

And then he says, “You will escape all these things.”<sup>17</sup> Escape is interesting, *ekpheugo* (ek-fyoo’-go) in Greek. We get our word “fugitive” from that. It means “to flee” or “to take flight.” And the little preposition ek (ek) intensifies the verb. So it literally means you will “flee out from” or “flee away from” all of these things. For believers living prior to the tribulation judgments it is the idea that we are going to escape them which is another argument, I believe, for a pretribulational rapture. For believers who learn of these truths during the tribulation, they will escape God’s wrath upon unbelievers. That is why he says, “Escape all these things that are about to take place.”<sup>18</sup>

Not only will we escape, but, dear friends, we will “stand before the Son of man.” No man will ever be able to stand in the presence of the glorified Christ apart from his imputed righteousness. Only believers will be able to stand and the others will fall. That is why in Jude 24 in that great doxology he says that we will be able to “stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.”<sup>19</sup>

So, dear friends, these are the attitudes that should characterize every one of us. We are a Second Coming church. We live in the light of his soon return. This is how we are to be. This is how we are to think. Paul summarized this so well in Romans 13 verse 11. He says:

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> See Luke 21:36.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 21:36.

<sup>19</sup> Jude 24.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 13:11-14.

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Oh, child of God, please hear me. The bridal church is to be in a state of constant readiness as we await our bride groom. What if it were today? Are you ready?

As we come to Revelation 10 we examine this morning a very fascinating chapter. And I want you to understand from the outset that this chapter is an interlude that extends from verse one of chapter 10 all the way to verse 14 of chapter 11. You might say it is a parenthesis in the whole prophetic scheme here. It is a pause just prior to the sounding of the seventh trumpet judgment. And this is similar to the interlude between the sixth and the seventh seal judgments that we studied in chapter seven, and also we find a brief interlude between the sixth and the seventh bowl judgments later on in chapter 16 verse 15.

So this is an opportunity for God to remind us, as well as the tribulation saints some day, that he is still on the throne, that he is the mighty sovereign orchestrating all things, all of these cataclysmic plagues and judgments as well as a time to comfort believers of that day as he reveals to them that the end is in sight. The wicked are about to be punished and the faithful will, indeed, be exalted as the Lord returns in all of his glory.

So this is a literal scene filled with much symbolism. And in order to interpret it, we must understand the whole scope of Scripture from which it taps. I have divided it into four very simple little categories that we will look at. We are going to see, first of all, *the magnificent angel*; secondly, *the forbidden message*; thirdly, *the solemn vow*; and finally, *the bittersweet judgments*.

First, notice this magnificent angel in the first three verses here. Verse one, “I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven;”<sup>21</sup> “another,” in Greek *allos* (al’-los) is “another of the same kind.” In other words, it is another angel like the other trumpet angels. Now we read of other strong angels in the book of Revelation. We read of one in chapter five verse two and there is another in chapter 18 verse two. But this is not, dear friends, a reference to Christ as some would argue. If it were John would have used the appropriate adjective which would have been *heteros* (het’-er-os), which is “another of a different kind.” He did not use that. He said another of the same kind.

The imagery also of this angel coming down out of heaven to earth is radically different than any other biblical description of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, in Revelation whenever the Lord Jesus Christ appears he is given an unambiguous title.

For example in chapter one verse five he is called, “The firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”<sup>22</sup> In verse 13, “The son of man,”<sup>23</sup> in verse 17, “The first and the last.”<sup>24</sup> In chapter three verse 14 he is called, “The Amen, the faithful and true

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<sup>21</sup> Revelation 10:1.

<sup>22</sup> Revelation 1:5.

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 1:13.

<sup>24</sup> Revelation 1:17.

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witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”<sup>25</sup> In chapter five verse five he is called, “The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”<sup>26</sup> And in chapter 19 verse 16 he is called the, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”<sup>27</sup> That is just a sampling. And finally, it is inconceivable to think that the second member of the triune Godhead would take an oath, as this angel does here in verses five and six. We know according to Hebrews 6:13 that God swears only by himself.

Now notice this angel. He is clothed with a cloud. Throughout Scripture heavenly beings are often transported on clouds as they ascend and descend to and from heaven especially in eschatological contexts. And they are often used in connection with divine judgment.

So here the angel is “clothed with a cloud,” symbolic of the supernatural judgment that he is going to bring to earth. And we read that “a rainbow was upon his head;” “rainbow” in Greek is *iris* (ee’-ris) which was also the name of the Greek messenger goddess who was also personified by the rainbow. So the readers of that day would have understood this, the messenger motif. But also we know that the rainbow was the sign that God gave to all of the world in Genesis chapter nine in the days of Noah after the flood and thereby promising that he would never again destroy the world with water.

So we behold this colossal angel and we see that amidst the *clouds of judgment* there exists a *rainbow of mercy*, both of which are very descriptive of this interlude. And we are told that “his face was like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire.” Well, this makes sense because having been in the presence of the ineffable, glorious light of the shekinah of God, this angel refracts this dazzling light of God’s glory. And we also see that “his feet are like pillars of fire.” Here John reaches back, again, into the Old Testament to derive this imagery referring indirectly to the providence of God when he led the children of Israel through the wilderness with a pillar of fire, and you will recall that he used that pillar of fire which, again, was the glory of his presence to shield his covenant people from the approaching Egyptians.

Fire in the Word of God symbolizes divine wrath and divine judgment that consumes the ungodly on the one hand, but interestingly enough it also provides the warmth of divine healing for the righteous, even as the Egyptians saw the glory and the fire of God’s presence: it was death to them and protection to the Israelites where on the other side they were warmed, shall we say, by the blaze of his glory.

We see this illustrated, for example, in Malachi chapter four where the prophet tells us beginning in verse one:

For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root

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<sup>25</sup> Revelation 3:14.

<sup>26</sup> Revelation 5:5.

<sup>27</sup> Revelation 19:16.

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nor branch. But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.<sup>28</sup>

Notice, also in verse two, that “he had in his hand a little book which was open.”<sup>29</sup> “Little book” is *biblaridion* (bib-lar-id’-ee-on) in Greek. It is the diminutive form of *biblion* (bib-lee’-on), which was the scroll that we read about in chapter five verse one, and, interestingly enough in chapter 10 and verse eight *biblion* (bib-lee’-on) is literally translated “little book.” The point is this little book that the angel has which is open in his hand, is merely a miniature version of the seven sealed scroll that contains all of the judgments that God will pour out upon the earth to retake the earth back from the usurper Satan when the Lord returns. And notice that it is now open, the idea here is that it is unrolled. It is fully disclosing the final plagues of the wrath of God which will be the seven bowl judgments that we will understand later on in our study.

Now notice what this strong angel does in the end of verse two. It says that, “He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land.”<sup>30</sup> We understand, biblically, that this is emblematic of power and of authority as this magnificent servant of God is dispatched to execute judgment upon the whole world. In fact, comparable expressions are found in other passages of Scripture concerning the sea and the land, and in every case it connotes the comprehensive nature of whatever it is talking about, especially in this case, coming judgment.

So the point is—and you need to understand this because you hear people from time to time saying that all of this had to do with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Well, there are so many passages that refute that. It is inconceivable to me how people can come up with this. But here we see, again, that the plagues of the seventh trumpet are going to encompass the whole of the earth, not merely some tiny region around Jerusalem.

As we continue in verse three we read that, “He cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars.”<sup>31</sup> My, this is an amazing scene. Can you imagine if you were John and you are seeing all of this? Absolutely inconceivable. And we know that both a lion’s roar on earth as well as the peals of thunder that we hear in heaven induce fear in man. And that is the idea here. Both speak of majesty and supremacy and power and unrivaled authority.

I think of Psalm 29 verse three where we read:

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders,  
The LORD is over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful, The  
voice of the LORD is majestic.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Malachi 4:1-2.

<sup>29</sup> Revelation 10:2.

<sup>30</sup> Revelation 10:2.

<sup>31</sup> Revelation 10:3.

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 29:3-4.

And then in verse eight we read that:

The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness.<sup>33</sup>

And often the Old Testament prophets used the imagery of a voice roaring like a lion in the context of divine judgment. In Hosea chapter 11 verse 10 we read, "The LORD... will roar like a lion; Indeed He will roar."<sup>34</sup> And in Joel chapter three verse 16, "The LORD roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble."<sup>35</sup> So here, dear friends, this immense angel roars on God's behalf. Now we are not told what he said. But the context obviously suggests that his deafening cry was one of furious vengeance and certainly irresistible power.

I want you to notice what happens in verse three. "And when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices."<sup>36</sup> In response to the strong angel's audible roar of impending judgment we have seven peals of thunder that are actually communicating intelligible information that John is not going to be allowed to record. We know that the number seven is very significant in the Word of God. It is always the number of completion. And thunder is commonly used in Scripture to describe judgment. It is a harbinger of judgment. And here the final judgments will be completed just as God has decreed in eternity past.

As I was meditating upon this text my mind went to John chapter 12. Do you remember when Jesus entered into Jerusalem and he was contemplating the wrath that he was going to have to bear for sinners from the Father? He said this beginning in verse 27:

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."

Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Psalm 29:7-8.

<sup>34</sup> Hosea 11:10.

<sup>35</sup> Joel 3:16.

<sup>36</sup> Revelation 10:3.

<sup>37</sup> John 12:27-31.

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There Jesus referred to the defeat of Satan's power, the defeat of sin, the defeat of death that would be accomplished at the cross. But here in Revelation chapter 10 the thunder is a harbinger of the defeat of Satan's reign as the diabolical ruler of this world and also a harbinger of the defeat and the total annihilation of all who follow after him, a defeat that will be accomplished when the Messiah returns to earth King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now, the scene shifts from the magnificent angel to, secondly, *the forbidden message*. Notice verse four. "When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.'"<sup>38</sup> This is fascinating. Unlike the previous pieces of revelation that the Lord had commanded John to write, for example in verse 19 of chapter one he said, "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things,"<sup>39</sup> unlike that, here suddenly we have a voice that abruptly stops him from recording what he has just heard from the seven peals of thunder. Now either the voice is that of Christ or of God the Father. We don't know. The text does not tell us, but certainly it originates from God, and whatever was said is a mystery and we must leave it as such. Frankly, any kind of speculation would be a supreme act of arrogance.

In Job 37 and verse five we read that, "God thunders with His voice wondrously, Doing great things which we cannot comprehend."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, there are things that God just simply doesn't tell us. "The secret things belong to the LORD,"<sup>41</sup> Deuteronomy 29:29. So we can only imagine what else he saw and heard. Even like many of the things that Jesus did here on earth that are not recorded. You will recall what John said in John 21:25, "Many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written."<sup>42</sup>

So, as we come to this particular text we have no idea what the seven thunders communicated. God may tell us some day. I don't know. But I do know on the basis of Scripture—and dear Christian friend, you must hear this, that one day our faith will become sight. One day we will see the Lord in all of his glory. We will see him face to face. And at that moment our glorified senses will be able to experience all of the splendors of heaven.

You might recall that God also restrained Paul from recording the full Revelation of his ecstasies in 2 Corinthians 12 verses one through four. Remember when he was caught up to the third heaven. He tells us in that text that he was, "caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak,"<sup>43</sup> verse four. So here the apostle John receives a similar prohibition.

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<sup>38</sup> Revelation 10:4.

<sup>39</sup> Revelation 1:19.

<sup>40</sup> Job 37:5.

<sup>41</sup> Deuteronomy 29:29.

<sup>42</sup> John 21:25.

<sup>43</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:4.

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Now the scene shifts from forbidden message to *the solemn vow*, number three, beginning in verse five.

Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer.<sup>44</sup>

So here is what is happening. You have got the little book or the scroll in his left hand, completely unfolded, and he now lifts his right hand toward heaven, which is the proper gesture and the customary gesture for taking a solemn vow (we see that even in the Word of God in Deuteronomy 32 as well as in Daniel chapter 12 and verse seven). And I might add that this is still our practice today, is it not? We do this when we take an oath in a court of law or we see that at an inauguration. It is an action that appeals to God as the highest power and the supreme authority in the universe. And sometimes we even conclude that particular gesture by saying, “So help me God.” That is the idea here.

So the angel now affirms the absolute infallibility and sovereignty of the almighty, eternal Creator God that he serves. Notice he identifies him as “the one who lives forever and ever.” There is the eternity of God. And then “the one who created heaven and the earth and the sea” and so forth, which is a stunning reminder of how important it is to recognize God as the Creator and the sustainer of all things. The fact that man has denied this so profoundly in our day with all of the evolutionary theories that are being taught to our young people even from elementary school through college and university. All of this, dear friends, is a testimony to man’s depravity. And I might add that it will also be a witness against him in the day of judgment. For this reason we know, according to Romans one, that man is without excuse, that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”<sup>45</sup>

I was at a zoo the other day and we were looking at the monkeys and one little monkey came up to the window and he hung down and spun around and he was upside down, kind of waving at us. And I teased my brother-in-law. I said, “Brian, there is one of your relatives,” and we all laughed. And immediately some man stood over there and he heard that and he immediately began to lecture us on how this wasn’t necessarily the closest one to us, but he began to explain other apes that were. And I thought, boy, I didn’t mean to start this whole conversation. And even though we laugh, how said it is.

So the point here in this scene is now the cup of God’s indignation has run over and the final outpouring of his wrath is about to commence. I might also add, dear friends, that the purpose of creation is to give God glory. And everything in creation does this except those creatures that were given a choice: fallen angels and man. We have chosen to do something different. So now the final judgments will destroy all who rebel against him as

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<sup>44</sup> Revelation 10:5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Romans 1:18.

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well as the earth upon which we live, and, again, that will lead to a renovation of the earth for 1000 years and then, ultimately, a destruction, an implosion, a recreation of the earth, a new heaven and a new earth.

And this leads us to *the substance of the oath* here in verse six at the end. He says, “That there will be delay no longer.”<sup>46</sup> Literally in Greek he is saying “time will be no more.” Another way of thinking about this is “the period of waiting is over.” No more delays. Time is up. It is time to commence with the final judgments. This is a direct response to the passionate prayers of the martyrs in chapter six and verse 10. Remember where they cried, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”<sup>47</sup>

You see, now the seventh trumpet is about to sound which will include the seven bowl judgments that are detailed in chapter 16, and we will obviously get to them soon. These will be the final plagues of the day of the Lord that will be poured out upon the earth.

Think of it this way. Finally, the disciple’s question to Jesus in Acts chapter one verse six will be answered. Remember when they asked, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”<sup>48</sup> They thought it was. Obviously it wasn’t. But now here as we come to Revelation 10 we say, “Yeah, it is time. It is time for it to happen.” The Lord told us to pray, “Thy kingdom come.”<sup>49</sup> Guess what? Here it is getting ready to happen. Ok. Time’s up. That is the idea. And in verse seven the prophesy continues.

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.”<sup>50</sup> Now, mysteries in Scripture are merely previously hidden truths that are later revealed in God’s perfect timing, primarily in the New Testament. We read, for example, in Romans chapter 16 verse 25 how Paul described his gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ as a, quote:

Revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, mysteries of the Old Testament were revealed in the New Testament and some of them include things like the mysteries of the kingdom in Matthew chapter 13 verse 11, the mystery of Israel’s partial hardening, that is their spiritual blindness that will be sustained until the fulness of the Gentiles is come in as we read in Romans 11:25. There is the mystery of the rapture of the Church that we read about earlier in 1 Corinthians

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<sup>46</sup> Revelation 10:6.

<sup>47</sup> Revelation 6:10.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 1:6.

<sup>49</sup> See Matthew 6:10.

<sup>50</sup> Revelation 10:7.

<sup>51</sup> Romans 16:26.

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15:51. There is the mystery of lawlessness that is already at work in the world that will lead to the lawless one, the antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. There is the mystery of Christ in Ephesians 3:4. There is the mystery of Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:32. Then there is that wonderful mystery of Christ in the believer, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” in Colossians 1:26 and 27, and then, of course, the mystery of the incarnation that we read about in 1 Timothy 3:16. You see, all of these hidden truths were concealed to the Old Testament saints, but now revealed to those of us this side of those wonderful truths being revealed in the New Testament.

But now here we have, notice, “the mystery of God.” And this can be understood as a general reference to the divine revelation of Scripture mentioned, for example, in 1 Corinthians two verse seven as “the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood.”<sup>52</sup> Or in Colossians 2:2 where Paul speaks of the “true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”<sup>53</sup>

But I want you to understand that more specifically here in this text “the mystery of God” pertains to the fruition of, shall we say, the consummation of God’s plan for the ages, namely, the establishment of his kingdom when he returns as Lord of lords and King of kings. This has been the theme of the Old Testament prophets, the essence of God’s unequivocal, unilateral, unconditional covenant promises to Abraham and all of his descendants, the elect people of Israel.

Now, finally, the consummation of redemptive history has come. That is the point, the time when sinners will be judged and all creation is going to ultimately be recreated and the saints will be glorified. At long last he will establish his millennial kingdom which is the consummating bridge between history and the eternal state. This is the mystery of which Paul spoke in Ephesians chapter one and verse nine. He said, quote:

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.<sup>54</sup>

Dear friends, this will be the time when, according to Revelation chapter 11 and verse 15, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”<sup>55</sup>

Beloved, these were the great truths revealed to the Old Testaments prophets, but truths that they couldn’t fully understand, yet truths that were explained in great detail by Jesus and the apostles. And, again, for us who look upon the tribulation judgments now, as we study them, we can rejoice knowing that we are going to be spared from them, that God

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<sup>52</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:7-8.

<sup>53</sup> Colossians 2:2-3.

<sup>54</sup> Ephesians 1:9-10.

<sup>55</sup> Revelation 11:15.

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is working his plan precisely and so forth. But for the many who will come to Christ during that time, they will read these marvelous truths and be encouraged knowing that God, again, is sovereign. He is working his plan precisely and the end is in sight. They will know that the end is in sight because, remember, by now the world is absolutely devastated.

Well, finally, John's vision shifts away from the solemn vow to the bittersweet judgment.

Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."<sup>56</sup>

Here John moves from an observer and a recorder of this amazing scene to becoming an actual participant in what is happening. The eating of the little book is reminiscent of Ezekiel chapter two as well as Jeremiah 15 where both prophets were required to act similarly. And here John is told to eat the scroll. Now he would have understood this, as the people of that day, as a Hebrew idiom. The idea of eating something was, in this context, to receive its knowledge. And, frankly, even in English we understand this concept. There have been times where we have said, "I really want to devour this book or I really need to digest what I have just read." This is the idea here.

And in this case John is about to devour or digest the Word of God containing the final judgments upon the wicked and the glorious return of Christ so he must consciously ingest and internalize and assimilate the contents of what is about to transpire and what he must record.

It is interesting. The angel mentions bitterness before sweetness. Think about this. John is still languishing on the isle of Patmos doing hard labor for the Romans, and as he reads this, as he reads the contents of the prophecy he can see that there is no offering of immediate rescue for him. The consummation of redemption and the kingdom is obviously going to be beyond his lifetime. All of the spiritual and political aspirations of the Jewish people, of John and his Jewish kinsmen must be set aside because, first, they must undergo judgments like you could never imagine. But, oh, it is also sweet knowing that some day salvation is coming.

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<sup>56</sup> Revelation 10:8-11.

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To be sure the Word of God is sweet to all of us as believers, isn't it? I think of Psalm 19 and verse 10. It is "more desirable than gold,"<sup>57</sup> referring to Scripture. "Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb."<sup>58</sup> Beloved, apart from the Word of God I would not know how to be saved. Would you? Of course not. I would not know how to live for his glory. I would not know how to avoid divine chastening in my life. I would have no understanding of God or of life or of the universe in which we live. But because of the Word I can say as Jeremiah did in chapter 15 and verse 16, "Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts."<sup>59</sup>

But it is also bitter, is it not? When we contemplate the suffering that we must endure this side of glory, when we think about the horrors of divine judgment that await sinners. Suddenly the sweetness of our undeserved grace and the blessed hope of our future inheritance quickly yields to bitterness as we anticipate the wrath of God abiding upon those that we love, upon the ungodly, as we reflect upon the eternal fate of those who rebel against Christ I am sure you join me, beloved.

I long to see the earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,<sup>60</sup> as the prophets said. I long for that. I long for the day when I can see the lover of my soul face to face. I long for that day when the king returns and he breaks upon the darkness in all of his glory. I long for that day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. But, oh, how I mourn for those I know and love and for those that I don't even know who will perish in their sins.

This is what John experienced as well. But, still he was commissioned yet again there at the end of verse 11 to, "Prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."<sup>61</sup> In other words, "John, I want you to warn them that judgment is coming, Warn the whole world. Judgment is coming. And, indeed, by the time of this interlude when it actually occurs there will be no more delay." And on this note the interlude ends.

Dear friend, I pray that these truths will bring conviction to your heart and especially those of you that do not know Christ as Savior. Those of you who play the typical American religious game you have got some ridiculous profession of faith that really is meaningless. You really know nothing of Christ. You really have no desire to know him, to love him, to serve him. All you do is claim that you are a Christian like the many of Matthew seven that will one day stand in the presence of his glory and he will say, "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you."<sup>62</sup> I pray that as you hear these truths that you will cry out to the Lord in genuine repentant faith. I think of the Lord's word through the prophet Ezekiel when he said, "I have no pleasure in the death

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<sup>57</sup> Psalm 19:10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Jeremiah 15:16.

<sup>60</sup> See Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14.

<sup>61</sup> Revelation 10:11.

<sup>62</sup> See Matthew 7:13.

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of anyone who dies,' declares the Lord GOD. 'Therefore, repent and live.'"<sup>63</sup> That is my cry to you.

And for those of us who know and love the Lord, I just hope that these truths stir your heart to further evangelism, to have a passion for evangelism knowing that the stage right now in our life time is being set for the consummation of redemptive history.

Let's bow our heads.

*Father, we praise you for these eternal truths and somehow by your grace I pray that they will impact us in such a profound way as to change our lives even as we leave this place this morning. I pray for all of those who are within the sound of my voice who do not know you as Savior, Lord, that you will make them miserable in their sin until they cry out to you for the undeserved grace that you will so quickly and mercifully give them. Lord, thank you for this time. Thank you for your love for us, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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**Transcript Explanation:** Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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<sup>63</sup> Ezekiel 18:32.