
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 10:8-11: “Take God’s Word and Eat It”

General idea: God calls John to take the small scroll that has been unrolled from the great angel. And what is he to do with it? Eat it! It first tasted great and then it did not, and it made John sick. And then, he was called to take this prophecy to the entire world. John is being used to declare God’s message so it can be heard by others. But, before this message can be given, it must be taken and it must convict and transform. John had to undergo conviction that was both bitter and sweet; it was bitter because of its news of suffering, and sweet for its blessings of communion and restoration with God. God has His creation and messengers, even magnificent angels beyond our ability to understand or perceive, let alone His Majestic nature; yet, it is us Christians whom God desires to use over all else. This is the awesome privilege and responsibility that John demonstrates to us. God has better means to make Himself known, but still desires to use us. What we gain is so sweet.

This passage is more about receiving God’s Word for life—like food that is necessary and instrumental for us to survive and thrive; it is for sustenance and joy, as His precepts are. Why are they bitter? Because God’s ways must go deep within us, changing us from the inside out. His precepts convict and challenge us to move from our means and ways to His Way. This causes us to transform and be challenged—a process that takes its toll on our will, satisfaction, resolution, and pride. Its ultimate bitterness is the cost of our surrender as He becomes more in us and we become less to ourselves. His Word becomes a greater part of us, affecting all we are and do. Yet, its positive sweetness is that it enhances and improves us beyond our measure and this is far, far greater than what we think we lose. We can quickly forget its sweetness when all we see is what we think we lose rather than the bounty of what we gain (Rom. 12; Heb 4:12).

Vs. 8-11: John is drawing from Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 (an apocryphal, apocalyptic book “4 Ezra” (an “Apocryphal” not recognized or inspired as Scripture, “Apocalyptic” referring to end of days literature, that gives us insights to this type of genre and metaphors and their usage to a 1st century Jewish understanding) where Ezekiel sees a hand extending to him and God telling him to “*listen to what I say to you,*” and also from what Jeremiah experienced emotionally (Jer. 15:16; Rev. 5:1). It was a warning that sin is sweet but then becomes bitter as it ferments and works its way in us, corrupting and destroying, and it upsets us as God’s judgments precede over our will, poor choices, and willful disobedience. At first sin seems good and we get away with it; then, at some point, the party is over and we have a disease and are dying. Then, there is the eternal damnation thing looming over us, and as we utterly refuse His offer of salvation, His love and grace go unnoticed and unmet. God extends a dire warning to us to stay away from sin

and seek Him. Conversely, this passage is also a call to heed God's Word, to cling to His precepts which are sweet, and take them seriously, which can be bitter as we must allow His conviction to remove what is in His way of our growth and betterment, and point to His Worth and Glory. If not, there will be judgment from our own misdeeds accumulating and implementing their way back to us from their own harm as well as opening us up to God's judgment (Num. 5:23-31; Prov. 5:3-4; 24:13-14; Rom. 1:18-32; Rev. 7:13-14).

- *Take it and eat it.* This refers to "grasping" as in taking food for our pleasure and nourishment. However, before we can be nourished, we have to obtain it, then eat and digest it. This applies to God's Word as we have to get it, read it, understand it, and apply it (Psalm 119:103).
- *Your stomach sour/bitter* indicates that the contents of this scroll will also contain suffering and a message of judgment that the people will not like because when we will receive "bad news," it will "sour" us (as in sadden us), from all of these events coming in chapter 11. This also refers to the taking in of His Word; as we do, His Word will come across our will and ideas and we will be challenged and convicted.
- *Sweet as honey* refers to God's goodness, grace, and mercy, and that through His Word, both written and Spirit-led, we have "good news" from God's promises and our communion with Him through which we receive His instructions and the knowledge of His nature inducing His grace, mercy, and goodness (Psalm 19:10; 119:103; Ezek. 2:3).
- *Prophesy again* refers to telling the people again, as Jeremiah, who kept prophesying even when his people ignored and rejected him. It refers to the sounding of the seventh trumpet in chapter 11. It also is a warning to John that his obedience may have a cost, and that he, too, will "sour" or suffer for the cause of Christ as he offers "sweetness," or God's forgiveness. The people he tells may reject the message as well as the messenger. People do not want or like to be convicted of their sins. They would rather choose between two sins that will destroy them rather than choose the right and good path that will bless them. They may even refuse to acknowledge another and better way. The application, as John demonstrated, is our call to heed God's precepts and make them known to others, even though we may suffer for our obedience. However, whatever we endure, our reward will be far, far greater...sweet (Rev. 9:20).
- *Many peoples* refers to our allegiance to Christ. Christians are in Christ, and are a part of a greater Kingdom than one of race or nationality. This also refers to the "Abrahamic Promise" (Gen 12; 18:18; 22:18; Is. 60:1-5; Rev. 7:9-17; 11:9) which indicates that God's purpose and plan is inclusive to all; there are no peoples that are not a part of His will and plan. His purpose will be accomplished and nothing can stop Him. His message is universal as it not

only applies to Christians, but to all people of all time (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 11:2).

This passage is also about how God's Word must first transform and "affect" us before it can be used to have an "effect" on others. The Gospel must be experienced and be impacting before it can be used to make an impact upon others. As we feed on His Word, we grow from His precepts, and who we are and what we can be are significantly enhanced from His work in us; thus, our efforts to bring Him glory will in turn flourish. His Truth is the impact for whatever condition or situation we face. We must allow Christ to transform us as we digest His principles and apply them to our faith and lives so we can be used by our Lord to influence and affect others. Truth is bitter to those who do not like it and to those of us who need to be moved and challenged to make room for it in our mindsets and worldviews. Are His Word and precepts a part of you? If not, why not? For us to thrive as His children and His messengers, His Word must be a part of us—deeply and passionately! This means that to be an effectual Christian, we must walk in Christ and remain trusting and faithful with our confidence and submission to Him. If not, we are of no use to God or to others, and we become the noise of 1 Cor. 13:1, not the love of verses three and onward.

In this passage, the call is to be proactive—to take what the Lord has given and do as He has empowered and called. What has He called you to do and with what? How many times do we ignore His call? God does not need us, but He does desire to use us. We are the instruments and means He uses to make His voice heard and known. Yes, the Spirit goes before us, but we are the examples and the truth-tellers of His Word and precepts. We are to know His Word and His precepts first; they must go deep and break us free of our sin so we can bathe in His love. For the Christian leader and pastor, it is essential that our words match our beliefs and our behaviors match our convictions. It does no good to give a sermon or lead a church when we are not impacted by the words we say or do not walk in the direction that we ask of others.

This is convicting and will move us beyond what we think we can do and where we can go; this bitterness can either be a barrier we refuse to trespass or an obstacle we take as a challenge to go deeper and further with what Christ has for us. Look at it this way; we are called to Fruit and Love, and to operate in His call and principles with joy. When we impact others with His Gospel, it will cause some resentment in others—perhaps even persecution. When we speak out against the sins of others, they will hate us. But, we must set the example and tell His Truth in love to others even when they do not want to hear it. Our experiences and actions will give us both sweetness and bitterness from others. If we only see the bitterness, we will gain little and the sweetness will not last. If we refuse, the journey we undertake may become bitter by our own actions, whereas we could have had the sweetness of trusting and obeying Him (Psalm 119:103; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1-11; 1 Thess. 2:13).

The Preterist view: They see this passage as a reference to Ezekiel and his prophecy of the downfall of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek. 3:1-14). However, Jerusalem was destroyed shortly after his prediction in 586 BC by the Babylonians, so others in this camp say it is a template to the Roman invasion or that John is making a similar prophecy to Ezekiel's. *Sweet and sour* is seen to mean that some things that come to us will be sweet—things such as that we are glad when God intervenes and His hand gives us hope—and other times, things will be sour, as in those who refuse Him and stay in their sins and experience suffering. The *Little Book* is seen as more prophecy and from this some say it is the second half of Revelation, while others see it as extra information of and dimension into the coming events already told to us. *Many peoples, nations*, is seen as the New Covenant of Christ being offered to all people.

The Futurist view: They see “eat this book” as John’s allowing God’s Word to transform and affect him before he prophesies to others. God’s Word is sweet as is His promise; however, it will be bitter when God’s judgments commence. God will deal with the sins of humanity. Be warned; there will be a time when the delay is over and the judgments commence, so be warned and be prepared! This view on this passage is very insightful!

The Idealist view: They see this passage as an introduction to the prophecy John utters in chapters 11 and 12. The “sweet” is the sweetness of the Gospel’s proclamation and meaning while the “bitterness” is the persecution that arises from judgment. Others in this camp place the focus on John’s grasping and digesting the Word himself before he can be used to proclaim it. We experience its sweetness and its bitterness. The gospel must be qualified in us first before it can be impacting on others. This view also places the emphasis on our effectual Christian walk in Christ remaining trusting and faithful with our obedience. For a preacher, it does no good to proclaim a sermon when he is not impacted by the words he says or does not walk in what he asks of others. The woes of bitterness are from the reactions of others who hear our convicting words and instead of accepting them, they hate and persecute the faithful. The message is to go to all of humanity.

The Historicist view: They see this passage as the time period of the Reformation. The “little scroll” is the Reformation of the Bible and God’s principles to the Church from the Reformers. The “sweetness” is the message of the gospel in understandable language to those who receive it and the “bitterness” is the reception and opposition the Church gave to it. Prophecy means to preach; prior to this, the Church only used meaningless rituals in a language unknown to the audience, making Christianity meaningless and unattainable as well as a tool of manipulation. Now, the call is to preach the Word, not as a performance, but as a means of communicating to people His Word, with understanding, for conviction and application.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever tasted something that at first tasted great, but then made you sick?
2. How has God's Word been both sour and sweet to you? How has the Christian life been sour and sweet to you?
3. How have you seen God's Word convicting and moving people beyond where they thought they could do and go? What about you?
4. How have you seen bitterness become a barrier that some people refused to trespass? How has bitterness been an obstacle to you? What would it take to see bitterness as a challenge to go deeper and further with what Christ has for you?
5. Why do you suppose that the Gospel message and any biblical principle must first be taken, convicting and transforming us, before we can impart it to others? What happens when a Christian leader deduces that this doesn't apply to him or her and teaches what he or she does not believe or follow?
6. Are you afraid to ask yourself if God's Word and precepts are a part of you? If not, when will you ask?
7. What does it mean to you to be convicted? What should it mean? What does it take for you to experience conviction? How have you gone through this in the past? How has it been both bitter and sweet?
8. God has better means to make Himself known to people, but He still desires to use us. Why is that? How is being a messenger of His principles an

awesome privilege and responsibility? How is it that what we gain is so sweet? How is it bitter?

9. How is God's Word like food? Why do we need His Word as the prime instrument for us to survive and thrive? What happens when we seek to dilute or cheapen His Word? What impact would this have upon you and your church?
10. What needs to happen in your life and Christian walk for God's ways to go deeper within you, changing you from the inside out? How would your learning and obedience be a prime source of joy?
11. Why are God's precepts convicting and challenging to people? How are they challenging to you? What needs to happen to move from your means and ways to His Way? What is the "bitter," the toll on your will, satisfaction, resolution, and pride? What about the cost of your surrender? How can your surrender enhance and improve you beyond measure?
12. How is sin sweet at first and seem good? How does sin become bitter as it ferments and works its way upon us, corrupting and destroying? If sin is so destroying, why is it so alluring? Do you think people get away with sin?
13. How can a defense against sin help you avoid poor choices and willful disobedience?
14. How is this passage a warning from God to help us stay away from sin and seek Him?
15. How do our poor judgments and misdeeds accumulate and find their way back to us to harm us? Why do so many people make bad judgments and not think ahead?
16. Being faithful and obedient may have a cost that will "sour," or bring about our suffering for the cause of Christ. How does this make you feel?
17. Do you realize that in spite of whatever we endure, our reward will be far, far greater or sweeter? Do you also realize that our attitude and what we do can sow bitterness from our own actions when we could have the sweetness of trusting and obeying Him?
18. What can you do to take sin seriously and allow God's conviction to remove what is in the way of your growth? How can you do this? Who can help keep you accountable?
19. The Gospel must be experienced and impacting before we can be used to make it impact upon others. So, what are you going to do to allow God's

Word to first transform and affect you before you have an effect on others?

20. What happens to our personal lives and our lives collectively as a church, when God's Word becomes a greater part of us, affecting all we are and do? What would your church look like if its leadership and people operated this way? What will it take and how can you implement these precepts in your church? When will you do it? Who can help you?

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