

INTRODUCTION to REVELATION chapter 10

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1 THE THEME

THE SWEET AND BITTER TASK AND THE FINAL VICTORY OF THE CHURCH

The sweet task is proclaiming the good news about salvation to the penitent.
The difficult task is proclaiming God's warning about judgement to the impenitent.
The message 'must' be proclaimed!
God's eternal plan of salvation and judgement will be accomplished!

2 THE STRUCTURE

The book of Revelation contains extra revelations (interventions) that fall between the revelations under the sixth and seventh seals and trumpets.

a. The interventions between the sixth and the seventh

At this point in the book of Revelation, we expect the seventh trumpet and the description of the final judgement day. However, it is not definitely introduced until Revelation 11:15-19. There seems to be a delay between the sixth and seventh trumpet. These interventions in the book of Revelation describe two very important truths.

b. The intervention between the sixth and seventh seal (7:1-17)

The purpose of the intervention between the sixth and seventh seal is to encourage the Church amidst their trials (persecutions) and temptations (seductions). Before the seals of persecutions on the one hand (6:1-7) and the trumpets of judgement on the other hand (chapters 8 and 9) burst loose over all people during the whole New Testament period, all Christians of the Militant Church are sealed as a symbol that they are protected from everlasting doom (7:1-8). And all Christians of the Militant Church are clearly shown what their eternal destiny as Triumphant Church will be (7:9-17). After Christ's second coming the Church will share in the eternal glory of Christ!

c. The intervention between the sixth and seventh trumpet (10:1 to 11:13)

The purpose of the intervention between the sixth and seventh trumpet is to make the Church realise why there is a long delay before the fulfilment of the end. This delay has to do, not only with the preaching of the gospel as a testimony to all the nations (Matthew 24:14), with the fervent prayers of Christians (8:3-5) and with the sounding of the seven trumpets of judgements and warnings (chapters 8 and 9), but also with the speaking of the seven thunders. The contents of the seven thunders had to be sealed up, because the Church must realise that there are factors involved in the slowing down of the end-time which God has not revealed! Thus, no one can predict the end-time (10:3-4)! However, in the days when the seventh trumpet is sounded there will be no more delay (10:6-7).

The Church has been given the task to proclaim the gospel about salvation to those people who repent and to proclaim judgement to those people who disregard God's warning and remain unrepentant. Receiving the gospel and proclaiming the gospel (11:1-6) is a sweet experience. But the reaction of the godless, wicked and anti-Christian world against Christians will be a bitter experience. The Church will suffer during the execution of her task (10:9-10). And just before the end of history the Church will suffer destruction (11:7-10). However, in the days when the seventh trumpet is sounded God's eternal decree (plan) with regard to the Church and the world will be completely accomplished (10:6-7). The Church will ultimately be victorious (11:11-12) and the unjust persecution of Christians will certainly be avenged (11:13; cf. 11:18). God's judgements and the outpouring of his wrath will be completely justified, because the people of this world fail to give heed to God's trumpets of warning (9:20-21), reject the very clear and definite testimony of his two witnesses (11:7-10) and absolutely refuse to repent even when God's bowls of judgement are poured out (16:9,11).

3 THE CONTENTS

a. The New Testament period is long, but not endless

Throughout the execution of God's judgements (chapter 8 and 9), the gospel is proclaimed as well as opposed, the cause of Christ is advanced and resisted. The eating of the little scroll shows that the proclamation of the gospel is sweet, but the consequences will be bitter and of some duration (chapter 10). Although the New Testament period of proclaiming the plan of God is long, it is not endless. There is a delay, but the delay has a definite end (10:7). When the gospel has been proclaimed to all the nations (people groups) as a testimony to them (Matthew 24:14) the end will come. The seventh angel will blow his trumpet and God's eternal plan will be completed. When this will happen cannot be calculated or guessed.

b. The message of Revelation chapter 10

The message of Revelation chapter 10 is that the task of proclaiming what God revealed is sweet and bitter at the same time. The preaching of the gospel of salvation and the warning of the nations of the coming judgement will be of some duration. Christians must remember that there are also things that will take place in history that God has not revealed (the seven thunders). Therefore the present and the future history cannot be predicted. That is God's prerogative.

4 THE BACKGROUND

a. Allusions in Revelation chapter 10 to Daniel chapter 12

A mighty angel (10:1; Daniel 12:1)
The sealing up a particular message (10:4; Daniel 12:4,9)
An angel swearing by God in heaven (10:5-6; Daniel 12:7)
The final completion of all these things (10:7; Daniel 12:7)
A time of distress (10:10-11; Daniel 12:1)

The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are both apocalyptic literature. 'The apocalypse' means *revelations about grand (and violent) acts of God in symbolic language*. Both books use similar apocalyptic language and terminology. Both books use a similar parallel progressive structure. BUT THE MESSAGE of the book of Daniel is different than the message of the book of Revelation!¹ See the introduction to the book of Daniel in supplement 7.

b. Taking a scroll and eating it. It is sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the stomach

The Psalmist says that God's words are sweeter than honey in his mouth (Psalm 119:103). When God's words came to the prophet Jeremiah he ate them and they were his joy and his heart's delight. And yet he suffered unending pain (Jeremiah 15:16-18). The prophet Ezekiel saw (in a vision) a hand stretched out to him. In it was a scroll which the hand unrolled before him. On both sides of it were written words of lament

¹ John E. Goldingay, Daniel. Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 30, 1989.

and mourning and woe. God said to Ezekiel that he must eat the scroll and then speak God's words in the scroll to the house of Israel. Ezekiel ate it and it tasted as sweet as honey in his mouth (Ezekiel 3:3). Then Ezekiel had to go to the exiles in Babylon and bring them God's words. But the Israelites would be hardened, obstinate and unyielding (Ezekiel 2:9 to 3:11) and this would cause bitterness and anger in his spirit (Ezekiel 3:14).