

The Grace of Wrath

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Revelation 10:1-11

Topic

Before he continues to receive the Revelation
John eats a little scroll that is bitter in his stomach

Title

"Start Your Bellyaching"

Adele Edwards, an otherwise normal Florida mother of five children, has been eating the foam inside cushions for more than twenty years. She keeps pieces of foam in her purse to snack on throughout the day.

Last year she ate twelve couches

People with pica compulsively eat items that have no nutritional value. They might eat relatively harmless items.

Or they might eat potentially dangerous items, like flakes of dried paint or pieces of metal.

A 62-year-old Frenchman used his stomach as a piggy bank over the course of ten years, swallowing 350 francs and Euro coins totaling \$650. His family said he would steal coins when he visited others' houses to save for a snack. He needed every bit of it, and lots more, for the surgery to have them removed.

There are two Old Testament Bible characters who ate scrolls

1. Jeremiah said, "Your words were found, and **I ate them**, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts" (15:16).
2. Ezekiel wrote, "Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." **So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll.** And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness (3:1-3).

The apostle John ate a scroll

"Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand **and ate it**, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter" (v10).

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and John did not have prophet-pica

These prophets ate God's Word to strengthen them for their service.

John was at a crucial moment in the Revelation. He was about to hear the blast of the seventh trumpet. It will release seven angels to pour out upon the inhabitants of Earth seven bowls of the last of God's wrath in rapid succession. He was told, "there should be delay no longer" (v6). It makes sense he get some nourishment for the grand finale.

Before the finale, however, there will be a *slight* delay: John "must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" (v11). It makes sense he get some nourishment to finish strong.

Call it a 'gut check' to help John focus & finish

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 A Steady Intake Of God's Word Helps You Focus**, and **#2 A Steady Intake Of God's Word Helps You Finish**.

#1 - A Steady Intake Of God's Word Helps You Focus (v1-7)

- Monster promises you it will *Unleash the beast*.
- Red Bull *Gives you wings*.

Other energy drinks promise *Go full throttle or go home, AMP yourself, Enjoy the power, and The massive hit that improves you a bit*.

We can relate to times during the day when a hit of energy can help our focus. God's Word, empowered by the indwelling Spirit, gives us supernatural energy.

God's Word is compared to many foods. Milk, honey, bread, and meat are the most common.

Jesus frequently employed food as an illustration: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Jesus defeated the devil's wilderness temptations by quoting the Old Testament, "man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

God's Word provides 100% of our complete spiritual nourishment

Chapter nine ended with the blowing of the sixth trumpet. We are understandably excited for the seventh and final blast. Not so fast.

Rev 10:1 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from Heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

We don't know how many angels can dance on the end of a pin, but we can speculate that angels are on pins and needles waiting for the resurrection and rapture of the church. Once we are gone, their workload increases, and they are excited for it.

We've been suggesting that the things John sees are like a dramatic performance. Costumes and wardrobe make an important contribution to any dramatic performance.

This "mighty angel" is arrayed with impressive clothing and accessories befitting his mission:

- "Clothed with a cloud" is reminiscent of the cloud of the glory of God that guided and protected Israel during their Exodus from Egypt.
- The "rainbow" is reminiscent of the covenant God made with Noah after the global flood.
- A glowing face communicated that, like Moses, the mighty angel had recently been in the presence of God.
- A "pillar of fire" was over the camp of Israel at night.

More important than trying to nail down each symbol to one meaning is the big picture idea that the mighty angel was dressed for his part.

Every provision is made by God to fulfill His plan of redemption to the most minute detail of costuming

In Christ, we have outfits to choose from:

- We are the bride of Jesus and have opportunity to adorn our wedding garments.
- We have the whole armor of God to stand against our enemy.
- We are commanded to "put on Christ."

Bottom line: God equips you for your service. In Him, you lack nothing that is necessary.

Rev 10:2 He had a little book open in his hand.

Theories abound as to the contents of this “little book” (a scroll). We are not told, therefore we cannot know. The import of it is that it will be given John to eat. Whatever it contains is nourishment for him to focus and finish the work.

Rev 10:2 He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his left foot* on the land,
Whether this mighty angel was huge or regular sized is debated. John will approach him and take the little scroll out of his hand. He can't be too big.

His stance represents a claim upon the entire Earth.

Rev 10:3 and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.

The lion has the loudest roar of all the big cats. It can be heard from as far away as five miles. It is at once majestic and terrifying.

We don't know what the mighty angel “cried with a loud voice,” but the mention of the “lion[s] roar” reminds us that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ, is coming as King to rule His kingdom and none will be able to withstand Him.

C.S. Lewis got it right when he chose Aslan the lion to represent Jesus in his Narnia series.

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.*

Rev 10:4 Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.”

The “seven thunders” must have been intelligible because John was going to write down their content. God wanted the information sealed. One commentary suggests, “Besides the terrors foretold, there are others unutterable and more horrifying lying in the background... So terrible are they that God in mercy withholds them.”

There are things which you will never know in this life. While not knowing might confuse or frustrate you, sometimes it’s good not knowing:

- Not knowing keeps you *humble*. If you think you know everything, and have all of the answers, you have a tendency to get puffed up with pride. Not knowing some things keeps you humble as you must depend upon the Lord each step of the way.
- Not knowing keeps you *moving*. God has a plan for you, but the road can take some weird twists and turns. If you knew some of the difficulties you faced you might draw back. Not knowing keeps you trusting God through each one.

Leon Morris: “Let us not proceed as though all has been revealed.” It’s better to know *Who* rather than *how* or *why*.

Rev 10:5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to Heaven

Rev 10:6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created Heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,

If you are doing some reading on your own as we study the Revelation you might encounter commentators who say this is Jesus. It isn’t. He need not swear an oath.

Besides, when the mighty angel was first introduced John said he was “another,” a word meaning *another of the same kind*. He is an angel.

God's creation is a theme of the mighty angel's oath. God created the universe and put Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden paradise and declared, "It is good." Our original parents sinned and it became "bad." From that very moment until today God has been working providentially to redeem and restore what was ruined.

In the Book of Romans we are told that, "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now" (8:21-22).

It's the kind of thing that takes a few thousand years

When the seventh trumpet sounds, the timing will rapidly accelerate to the Second Coming of Jesus.

Rev 10:7 but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

The Old Testament prophets spoke often about the "finish," the glorious return of the Son of God and the establishment of His kingdom of righteousness and peace on the earth. The details, however, were not fully revealed to them.

In the Bible, a "mystery" is something you cannot know except by revelation from God. In Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10 Jesus tells His first century disciples that "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God..."

The apostle Paul tells you in First Corinthians 4:1 that you are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Let's go on a brief biblical mystery tour:

- First Timothy 3:16 says, "And without controversy great is **the mystery of godliness**: God was manifested in the flesh..." The incarnation of Jesus is a mystery revealed.
- In Colossians 1:26-28, Paul speaks of another mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations, but was then made manifest to the saints. He calls it the **mystery** of "**Christ in you.**"
- In his letter to the saints at Ephesus (3:1-11), Paul says that God by revelation made known to him the **mystery** which in other ages had not been made known, "that the Gentiles should be 'fellow heirs,' and of the 'same body,' and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." It was a revelation that God was going to, in this dispensation, take some Jews and some Gentiles and form of them a "new body" called the Church.
- The rapture of the church is a mystery revealed. "Behold, **I show you a mystery**; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (First Corinthians 15:51-52).

There are other mysteries, but you get the general drift. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself by means of a plan no one could ever have begun to imagine.

It was a mystery, but is fully revealed in the Revelation. It culminates in the end with the Lord reigning forever and ever.

Scholar Robert Thomas writes, "The mystery of God consists of the heretofore unrevealed details unfolded in the chapters from here to the end, chapters that tell of the institution of God's kingdom on earth and eventually in the new heavens and new earth."

It has become popular for churches to remove future prophecy from their menu.

If ever there was a time to retain a healthy portion of prophecy on your plates, it is now. At the very least, since prophecy overall occupies 30% of God's Word, at least that much ought to be in your meal plan.

Taking in prophecy keeps you focused on things above. Without it we tend to get Earth 'bound,' focusing on self and not service. We get spiritual indigestion. A daily dose of *Ready or not, Jesus is coming*, is the pick-me-up we need (pun intended).

#2 - A Steady Intake Of God's Word Helps You Finish (v8-11)

If Marie Osmond says, "Join NutriSystem," but looks just the same after as she did before, you're disinclined to join.

If God's Word isn't changing us, why would folks want to join?

We are to ingest God's Word, be nourished by it, then mature to become more like Jesus. Warren Wiersbe suggests that the illustration of eating the Word is intended to remind us to make the Word flesh; to make it incarnate for others to see.

Rev 10:8 Then the voice which I heard from Heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."

Same voice - God's voice. Hearing from God, directly, gave John boldness to approach a mighty angel and ask for the scroll.

The Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God in you will give you spiritual boldness

Ever been to a dinner theater where they involve audience members? John becomes a participant. Up till now he had been a spectator.

God will ask you to participate in ways you feel totally inadequate. In ways that require boldness that can only come from Him. He wants to prove His strength and sufficiency.

Rev 10:9 So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

Whichever version of the Bible you prefer, as you ingest God's Word it becomes the BSV - Bitter-Sweet Version. John was experiencing the sweet joy of having Jesus revealed to him, of seeing the future rule of Jesus on earth. Yet he was exiled on the Island of Patmos, being persecuted for the Word of God.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is inherently bitter-sweet. It is full of beasts and bowls and battles while simultaneously promising a blessing for reading it. Everything in it reveals God's mercy towards Christ-rejecting men but also His wrath against sin and His judgment upon it.

Our lives will be bittersweet until we are with the Lord.

Rev 10:10 Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.

Yes, we take this literally. Why not? For all we know this scroll was made from edible material. Even if it wasn't, you can eat paper. Didn't you ever get caught with a note that had been passed to you in class and have to eat it? Or swallow a spit wad to destroy the evidence?

Rev 10:11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

It was called, "The bellyache heard 'round the world." That was the name given to a peculiar malady that in 1925 felled none-other-than baseball's "Sultan of Swat," Babe Ruth.

John had a bellyache that is still being heard 'round the world.

So far as I can tell, the primary purpose of the Internet is to publish what are called Fails. These are video clips showing people wiping out, or some such failure. We shouldn't, but we laugh.

Fails of another nature are no laughing matter.

Too frequently "another one bites the dust" as a Christian leader finishes poorly. It's not an excuse, but a lot of our favorite Bible heroes bit the dust along the way, or in the end. Noah, Samson, Gideon, and David, are guys with huge fails. Let's learn from them, double-down, and finish well.

When we say that a steady intake of God's Word helps your focus and your finish, it doesn't mean reading the Bible stands alone. The Donut-Man gets it right when he sings, "I read it **and I do it.**" The balanced-Bible-diet should encourage you to pray, and to regularly fellowship in a local church, and to tell others about Jesus. Doing those things, in turn, tend to motivate you to stay in God's Word. They work together.

Do we suffer from pica? We mentioned the Frenchman who ate paper money and coins. If you are laying up treasures for yourself on Earth rather than in Heaven, it's pica.

Likewise anything that you turn to for strength or satisfaction that is not God's Word.

Since it is possible for a believer to suffer from pica, we need to occasionally perform a gut check.

Like Jesus, we have food the world knows nothing about - to do God's will and finish the work.

Jesus said, "he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from Heaven... He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:56-57).