

BITTER HONEY: THE REVELATION

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CHAPTER 10: CHRIST'S RETURN

Verses 1-7

Man has nearly destroyed the earth through his sin. The last scene of history will now be completed. As Chapter 10 opens, Christ returns in judgment. John saw a strong angel coming down from heaven. This angel was Christ. He can be identified by John's description. The angel was clothed with a cloud. Clouds were often associated with the presence of God (Ezekiel 1:4; I Kings 8:12; Lamentations 3:44), and Christ will return on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30). A rainbow was on the angel's head. This rainbow was the glory surrounding Christ's throne (Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3). The angel's face was as radiant as the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire. These commonly describe Christ (Ezekiel 1:27; Matthew 17:2; Revelation 1:15). The angel can also be identified as Christ by the fact that He is quoting Deuteronomy 32:39-44 where God lifted His hand to heaven. He swore by Himself that judgment would come.

The angel placed His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the land. The sea probably represented the sea of the gentiles, and the land was probably Israel. When He returns, Christ will place gentiles and Jews in subjection under His feet. Then Christ will reign as King over all of God's people. The angel cried out with a lion's voice because Christ is the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5). The angel lifted up His right hand to heaven and swore by Him who created all things. This is reminiscent of Daniel 12:5-7. In Daniel, Christ raised His hands to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever. Christ swore that the end of history would come after the final 3½ time periods after men had finished shattering the power of God's people. Daniel's prophecy is fulfilled in Revelation 10. The last of the 3½ periods has come, and God's people have been shattered for the last time.

In Revelation 10, Christ swore that there would be no more delay. This declaration is related to Christ's statement in Revelation 16:17, "It is done." History has been played out, and the full number of martyrs have entered Christ's presence in heaven. Christ's declaration in Revelation 10:6 may also be related to Hebrews 10:37. Paul was telling believers to hold on to the faith despite persecution because Christ will return. Paul wrote, "For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay." After Armageddon, Christ will no longer delay His return. The skies will roll back like a scroll, and Christ will descend on the clouds of heaven.

Revelation 10:7 promised that the seventh trumpet was about to sound. Then the mystery of God would be finished which He had preached to His servants the prophets. God expressed the course of history through His prophets, but He told it in a mystery. When Christ returns, this mystery will be finished. As history unfolds, the mystery will be accomplished and understood. When Christ returned in Revelation 10, John heard seven peals of thunder. John was commanded to seal up the things spoken by the thunder just as Paul heard heavenly words in II Corinthians 12:4 that he was not allowed to repeat. The book of Revelation unseals the course of history presented to Isaiah and Daniel. The only thing John was commanded to seal up was what Christ will reveal when He returns. History can be understood up to Christ's second coming. Prophecies about Christ's reign on earth can not now be understood because they are still sealed. Scripture spoke clearly about that time, but people today do not have the key to unlock the prophecies. When Christ returns, His people will understand what the Bible has been saying all along.

Verses 8-11

In Revelation 10:2, Christ had in His hand a little book which was open. This was the same book seen in Revelation 5:1. This book set forth the history of the last days. Now all seven seals had been broken open, and the book's contents were revealed. Revelation 10:8-11 talked about this book. John was told to take it from Christ's hand and eat it. The book was sweet as honey in his mouth. When he ate it, his

stomach was made bitter. This strange command was carried over from Ezekiel 2:8-3:3. Ezekiel had just described at length a vision of Christ on His throne. Now Christ gave him a scroll of a book written on the front and back with lamentations, mourning, and woe. The scroll was open for Ezekiel to read. Then Christ commanded him to eat the scroll. Ezekiel found the book to be as sweet as honey. Then Christ sent him to preach to Israel, saying, "Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I shall speak to you, and listen closely." Ezekiel was to fill his heart with the words of Christ and then speak them to God's people.

The book in Revelation 10 was also open. It was written on front and back with prophecies of destruction (Revelation 5:1). John was told to eat this scroll containing the prophecies already explained. John was to take Christ's words into his heart, to digest them, and to believe them thoroughly. Then the Lord told John, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." Just like Ezekiel (and Jeremiah's words in Jeremiah 15:16), John was given the scroll and was sent to prophesy further to God's people. The rest of Revelation will fill in details on the basic framework of history that John had already seen. Some chapters will view all seven "last days" from a particular perspective. Other chapters will detail only one or two periods. All will build on what had already been taught.