

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 10

IN REVELATION 9 WE READ OF THE TWO WOES - TWO TROUBLING SCENES DESCRIBING JUDGMENT UPON HUMANITY. WE SAW A TWO FOLD JUDGMENT - ONE WHICH SEEMED TO BE INSTIGATED BY THE FORCES OF EVIL WHICH INVOLVED SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL TORMENT UPON THE EARTH. THESE THINGS EMANATED FROM THE "ABYSS", (9:1-2) THE PLACE REVELATION DESCRIBES AS THE SOURCE OF EVIL AND MORE SPECIFICALLY DEVILISH THINGS. SECONDLY WE SAW THE 4 ANGELS WHICH HAD BEEN HELD BACK FROM BEING JUDGED (UNTIL THE SERVANTS OF GOD WERE SAFELY MARKED/SEALED) NOW BRINGING DESTRUCTION TO THE EARTH. BUT AS WE CONCLUDED CHAPTER 9 WE LAMENTED HOW EVEN IN THESE FINAL DAYS OF JUDGMENT BEFORE CHRIST RETURNS, HUMANS WILL REMAIN DEFIANT AGAINST THEIR CREATOR:

REVELATION 9:20-21 - THE REST OF MANKIND, WHO WERE NOT KILLED BY THESE PLAGUES, DID NOT REPENT OF THE WORKS OF THEIR HANDS, SO AS NOT TO WORSHIP DEMONS, AND THE IDOLS OF GOLD AND OF SILVER AND OF BRASS AND OF STONE AND OF WOOD, WHICH CAN NEITHER SEE NOR HEAR NOR WALK; 21 AND THEY DID NOT REPENT OF THEIR MURDERS NOR OF THEIR SORCERIES NOR OF THEIR IMMORALITY NOR OF THEIR THEFTS.

THE UNIVERSE IS WAITING FOR THE FINAL DAY OF JUDGMENT AND THE RETURN OF THE KING. AND AS IT RELATES TO WHAT JOHN SEES, IT IS COMING SOON. AS ONE READS REVELATION, WE WOULD ASSUME IT'S THE NEXT THING THAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN - BUT FIRST WE ARE GOING TO ENTER AN INTERLUDE OF SORTS WHICH COMMUNICATE SOME IMPORTANT AND TIMELY TRUTHS ON THE PRECIPICE OF THE COMING OF CHRIST.

REVELATION 10:1-4 - STRONG ANGEL

BOOK/SCROLLS, STRONG ANGEL
CLOUD, RAINBOW, SUN, PILLARS OF FIRE.
FEET ON LAND AND SEA. LION ROARING, THUNDER CRASHING.

WE'VE SEEN MUCH OF THIS IMAGERY BEFORE. SPECIFICALLY THESE ITEMS ARE RELATED TO THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE SCENE OF THE HEAVENLY COURT FROM REVELATION 4-5. IF YOU REMEMBER WHEN WE READ THOSE CHAPTERS WE SAW GLORIOUS IMAGES WHICH SERVED AS THE SETTING FOR THE LAMB OF GOD/LION OF JUDAH OPENING THE "BOOK/SCROLL". NOW WE SEE ANOTHER STRONG ANGEL HOLDING A "LITTLE BOOK" WHICH IS NOT SEALED UP BUT OPENED.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS ANGEL'S APPEARANCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT? WE ARE TOLD THAT 7 PEALS OF THUNDER RING OUT. AND WHAT DO THESE SEVEN PEALS OF THUNDER MEAN? WE HAVE NO CLUE! IN FACT WE ARE SPECIFICALLY TOLD THAT JOHN WAS ABOUT TO WRITE WHAT THESE 7 THUNDERS MEANT/SPOKE BUT WAS TOLD NOT TO!

Q - WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT?!

ONE THING IT TELLS US THAT EVEN WITH ALL THAT REVELATION COMMUNICATES, THERE IS A LOT WE DON'T KNOW. THE DEPTH AND WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE AND PLANNING OF GOD IS SO DEEP AND SO WIDE THAT EVEN WHAT WE DO GET A GLIMPSE OF IS ONLY THE SHALLOW END OF THE POOL. THERE IS STILL SO MUCH WE DON'T KNOW, EVEN WHEN WE ARE SHOWN SOME THINGS.

REMEMBERING THIS AT THIS POINT IN REVELATION REMINDS US THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL, HIS WILL IS GOING TO BE DONE AND THAT HE IS WORKING IN WAYS WE CANNOT SEE.

REVELATION 10:5-7 - WHAT JOHN DOES REPORT...

JOHN ISN'T PERMITTED TO TALK ABOUT THE 7 THUNDERS BUT HE DOES REPORT THAT THIS STRONG ANGEL COMMANDINGLY STANDS UPON THE EARTH (PLANTED FIRMLY ON BOTH SEA AND LAND) AND LIFTS HIS RIGHT HAND TO HEAVEN AND SWEARS TO GOD THAT HE WILL OBEY THE WORDS AND ENACT THE PLANS OF GOD.

THE OATH HE TAKES IS THAT THERE WILL BE "DELAY NO LONGER" AND REFERENCES THE SOUNDING OF THE 7TH (AND FINAL) ANGELIC TRUMPET. JOHN RECORDS THAT THE SOUNDING OF THIS SEVENTH ANGEL WILL MARK THAT THE "MYSTERY OF GOD IS FINISHED" - THE MYSTERY THAT WAS PREACHED TO THE SERVANTS AND PROPHETS OF GOD IN THE PAST. WOW.

IMAGINE READING THIS AS THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH. YOU JUST FINISHED READING OF THE TWO FIRST WOES IN REVELATION 9 AND NOW YOU HAVE A PAUSE WHICH SERVES AS AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GOD'S PLAN IS GOING TO BE ACCOMPLISHED AND THAT THE DELAY IN IT BEING ACCOMPLISHED IS NEARING ITS END!

WE SHOULD STILL BE MINDFUL OF THE IMPORTANT QUESTION ASKED BY GOD'S PEOPLE IN LIGHT OF ALL THE EVIL AND SUFFERING THAT CONTINUES TO PROPAGATE IN THE WORLD:

REVELATION 6:10 - ... "HOW LONG, O LORD, HOLY AND TRUE, WILL YOU REFRAIN FROM JUDGING AND AVENGING OUR BLOOD ON THOSE WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH?"

THE ANSWER IS BECOMING CLEARER. THE SOUNDING OF THE 7TH TRUMPET IS WHAT THEY (WE) ARE WAITING FOR AND THAT WILL END THE "DELAY." AND WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE OF THIS HAPPENING BECAUSE OF HOW THIS IS COMMUNICATED - THROUGH AN OATH/SWEARING CEREMONY BY THE STRONG ANGEL.

THERE ARE A FEW PLACES IN SCRIPTURE WHERE SWEARING HAPPENS IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY. LET'S REVIEW THEM QUICKLY:

GOD SWORE (BY HIMSELF) TO ABRAHAM THAT HE WOULD BLESS AND MULTIPLY HIS DESCENDANTS:

GENESIS 22:15-18 - THEN THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CALLED TO ABRAHAM A SECOND TIME FROM HEAVEN, 16 AND SAID, "BY MYSELF I HAVE SWORN, DECLARES THE LORD, BECAUSE YOU HAVE DONE THIS THING AND HAVE NOT WITHHELD YOUR SON, YOUR ONLY SON, 17 INDEED I WILL GREATLY BLESS YOU, AND I WILL GREATLY MULTIPLY YOUR SEED AS THE STARS OF THE HEAVENS

AND AS THE SAND WHICH IS ON THE SEASHORE; AND YOUR SEED SHALL POSSESS THE GATE OF THEIR ENEMIES. 18 "IN YOUR SEED ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED, BECAUSE YOU HAVE OBEYED MY VOICE."

GOD SWORE TO GIVE ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS THE PROMISED LAND:

EXODUS 6:8 - 'I WILL BRING YOU TO THE LAND WHICH I SWORE TO GIVE TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB, AND I WILL GIVE IT TO YOU FOR A POSSESSION; I AM THE LORD.'

GOD SWORE TO DAVID THAT HIS THRONE WOULD BE ESTABLISHED FOREVER AND SPECIFICALLY THAT THE MESSIAH WOULD BE A SON OF DAVID WHO WOULD RULE FOREVER:

PSALM 89:3-4 - "I HAVE MADE A COVENANT WITH MY CHOSEN; I HAVE **SWORN** TO DAVID MY SERVANT, 4 I WILL ESTABLISH YOUR SEED FOREVER AND BUILD UP YOUR THRONE TO ALL GENERATIONS."

PSALM 132:11 - THE LORD HAS **SWORN** TO DAVID A TRUTH FROM WHICH HE WILL NOT TURN BACK: "OF THE FRUIT OF YOUR BODY I WILL SET UPON YOUR THRONE."

THESE ARE SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROMISES IN SCRIPTURE. WE CAN TRUST ALL OF GOD'S WORDS, BUT WHEN GOD "SWEARS" SOMETHING WE SHOULD HAVE TREMENDOUS CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL KEEP HIS PROMISE. WITH THIS IN MIND WE REMEMBER THAT GOD'S ANGEL IS SWEARING BY GOD THE FOLLOWING:

"HE SWORE AN OATH IN THE NAME OF THE ONE WHO LIVES FOREVER AND EVER, WHO CREATED THE HEAVENS AND EVERYTHING IN THEM, THE EARTH AND EVERYTHING IN IT, AND THE SEA AND EVERYTHING IN IT. HE SAID, "THERE WILL BE NO MORE DELAY. 7 WHEN THE SEVENTH ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET, GOD'S MYSTERIOUS PLAN WILL BE FULFILLED. IT WILL HAPPEN JUST AS HE ANNOUNCED IT TO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS." (**REVELATION 10:6-7, NLT**)

WITH ALL OF THE INSTABILITY AND INCONSISTENCY, ALL THE UNCERTAINTY AND UNKNOWN, ONE TRUTH IS SURE - CHRIST WILL COME, THE WORK OF GOD WILL BE COMPLETED.

SIDE NOTE: THE KJV TRANSLATES THIS WORD "DELAY" AS "TIME"

REVELATION 10:6 - "THAT THERE SHOULD BE TIME NO LONGER"

THE WORD BEING TRANSLATED HERE IS THE GREEK WORD "χρόνος" (CHRONOS, <5550>) AND IT MEANS THE PASSAGE OF TIME, EITHER LONG OR SHORT. FROM THE CONTEXT AND THE BIBLICAL STORY GENERALLY, THE RETURN OF CHRIST DOES NOT END "TIME" AS WE KNOW IT BUT THE PASSAGE OF THE TIME, AS IN THE TIME WE'RE WAITING FOR CHRIST TO RETURN. THE HYMN "WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER" (JAMES M. BLACK, 1893) POPULARIZED THIS IDEA WITH ITS OPENING LINE "WHEN THE TRUMPET OF THE LORD SHALL SOUND AND TIME SHALL BE NO MORE..." SOME SUGGEST THAT TIME WILL STOP AS WE BEGIN A NEW SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE.

IN REALITY THOUGH, THERE WILL STILL BE THE PASSAGE OF TIME IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, IT WILL JUST GO ON FOREVER. THAT IS WHY ALL MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS USE THE WORD "DELAY" WHICH IS A WORD USED TO COMMUNICATE THE TIME THAT ONE IS WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN. THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSE AFTER CHRIST'S RETURN WILL STILL BE LIFE, JUST LIFE EVERLASTING.

REVELATION 10:8-11 - JOHN'S NEXT JOB

GOD REAFFIRMS HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS PROMISES AND THEN CALLS JOHN INTO A NEW MINISTRY CALLING TO "PROPHECY AGAIN CONCERNING MANY PEOPLES AND NATIONS AND TONGUES AND KINGS. (10:11)" JOHN HAS ALREADY BEEN CALLED TO WRITE WHAT HE SEES REGARDING THE "THINGS WHICH MUST SOON TAKE PLACE" (REVELATION 1:1) BUT NOW A NEW FACET TO THIS CALLING BEGINS. AND IT'S RELATED TO A WELL KNOWN AND IMPORTANT PROPHETIC MINISTRY OF GENERATIONS PAST.

IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL CHAPTER 1, EZEKIEL, A PRIEST WHO IS LIVING IN THE LAND OF BABYLON, IS GOING TO BE CALLED BY GOD TO SEE AWESOME AND TERRIBLE THINGS. HE IS LIVING EXILED FROM THE PROMISED LAND AND JERUSALEM BECAUSE GOD'S PEOPLE HAD TURNED FROM HIM AND PERSISTED IN THEIR WORSHIP OF IDOLS. EZEKIEL CHAPTER 1 TELLS THE CALLING OF EZEKIEL AND IN THIS CALLING HE SEES A VISION OF THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD (4 LIVING CREATURES, ANGELIC HOSTS, CRYSTAL EXAPASE, MAJESTIC DESCRIPTION OF THE THRONE OF GOD, FIRE, RAINBOWS AND MORE). SOUNDS FAMILIAR DOESN'T IT?

IN EZEKIEL CHAPTER 2 GOD SPEAKS TO EZEKIEL AND CALLS HIM TO BE A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED MESSENGER AND PROPHET. IN THIS CALLING GOD SPECIFICALLY TELLS EZEKIEL THAT HE WILL SPEAK THE WORD OF THE LORD [PERIOD]. THE LORD TELLS EZEKIEL THAT HIS PEOPLE ARE STUBBORN AND MAY NOT LISTEN TO WHAT EZEKIEL HAS TO SAY, BUT HE MUST STAY IT NONETHELESS.

EZEKIEL 2:3-5 (NLT) - "SON OF MAN," HE SAID, "I AM SENDING YOU TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL, A REBELLIOUS NATION THAT HAS REBELLED AGAINST ME. THEY AND THEIR ANCESTORS HAVE BEEN REBELLING AGAINST ME TO THIS VERY DAY. 4 THEY ARE A STUBBORN AND HARD-HEARTED PEOPLE. BUT I AM SENDING YOU TO SAY TO THEM, 'THIS IS WHAT THE SOVEREIGN LORD SAYS!' 5 AND WHETHER THEY LISTEN OR REFUSE TO LISTEN-- FOR REMEMBER, THEY ARE REBELS-- AT LEAST THEY WILL KNOW THEY HAVE HAD A PROPHET AMONG THEM.

EZEKIEL 2:7 - "BUT YOU SHALL SPEAK MY WORDS TO THEM WHETHER THEY LISTEN OR NOT, FOR THEY ARE REBELLIOUS.

AND BEFORE EZEKIEL GOES TO PROPHECY, SOMETHING VERY INTERESTING HAPPENS:

EZEKIEL 2:8-3:4 (NLT) - SON OF MAN, LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY TO YOU. DO NOT JOIN THEM IN THEIR REBELLION. OPEN YOUR MOUTH, AND EAT WHAT I GIVE YOU." 9 THEN I LOOKED AND SAW A HAND REACHING OUT TO ME. IT HELD A SCROLL, 10 WHICH HE UNROLLED. AND I SAW THAT BOTH SIDES WERE COVERED WITH FUNERAL SONGS, WORDS OF SORROW, AND PRONOUNCEMENTS OF DOOM.

3:1 THE VOICE SAID TO ME, "SON OF MAN, EAT WHAT I AM GIVING YOU-- EAT THIS SCROLL! THEN GO AND GIVE ITS MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL." 2 SO I OPENED MY MOUTH, AND HE FED ME THE SCROLL. 3 "FILL YOUR STOMACH WITH THIS," HE

SAID. AND WHEN I ATE IT, IT TASTED AS SWEET AS HONEY IN MY MOUTH. 4 THEN HE SAID, "SON OF MAN, GO TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND GIVE THEM MY MESSAGES.

GOD "FEEDS" EZEKIEL THE SCROLL WHICH SYMBOLIZES THE MESSAGE EZEKIEL WILL SPEAK. GOD DOESN'T JUST WANT EZEKIEL TO READ THE MESSAGE, HE WANTS HIM TO TAKE THE MESSAGE INSIDE OF HIM AND MAKE IT HIS OWN (CP. **JEREMIAH 15:16**). HERE'S HOW THE SEQUENCE CONCLUDES:

EZEKIEL 3:10 - THEN HE ADDED, "SON OF MAN, LET ALL MY WORDS SINK DEEP INTO YOUR OWN HEART FIRST. LISTEN TO THEM CAREFULLY FOR YOURSELF.

IN EZEKIEL'S CASE THE WORDS FROM GOD WERE EATEN AND TASTED SWEET. SO WHY DO WE READ THAT JOHN'S MEAL WOULD TASTE SWEET BUT MAKE HIS STOMACH BITTER? GEORGE LADD EXPLAINS:

"THE SWEETNESS AND BITTERNESS DO NOT REFER TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE (LITTLE BOOK) OR DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE WHICH FOR THE CHURCH, IS PARTLY A MESSAGE OF SALVATION AND PARTLY A MESSAGE OF PERSECUTION, SUFFERING AND MARTYRDOM. RATHER, THE SWEETNESS AND BITTERNESS REFER TO THE TWOFOLD REACTION ON THE PART OF THE PROPHET AS HE DIRECTS HIS MESSAGE AND UNDERSTANDS IT. IT IS A SWEET THING TO BE CLOSE TO GOD, TO BE THE RECIPIENT OF HIS WORD. THIS IS TRUE OF ALL BELIEVERS. THE WORD OF GOD IS "SWEETER ALSO THAN HONEY AND DRIPPINGS FROM THE HONEYCOMB (PSALM 19:10)..." IN THE SAME WAY JOHN FOUND GOD'S WORD TO BE SWEET AS HONEY IN HIS MOUTH. BUT AS HE DIGESTED HIS MESSAGE AND PONDERED ITS IMPLICATIONS, IT BECAME BITTER IN HIS STOMACH..." (GEORGE ELTON LADD, "A COMMENTARY ON THE REVELATION OF JOHN", PAGE 147)

AND SO JOHN IS COMING TO TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT HE'S NOT JUST A PASSIVE OBSERVER AND STENOGRAPHER - HE IS GOING TO BE PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE - BOTH THE SWEET (AKA SALVATION AND MERCY) AND BITTER (AKA JUDGMENT AND WRATH) PARTS OF THE MESSAGE TO THE WORLD.

IN THE CHAPTERS THAT FOLLOW, WE'RE GOING TO DIVE INTO SOME WILD PARTS OF THIS BOOK. IT'S GOING TO BE SWEET AND BITTER, BEAUTIFUL AND TERRIBLE, THINGS WHICH WE WILL LONG TO SEE AS WELL AS THINGS WHICH WE WILL LONG TO FLEE. BUT CHAPTER 10 COMES AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME.

AS WE RECOUNTED AS WE STARTED, WE JUST READ ABOUT THE WOES AND JUDGMENTS WHICH WILL COME UPON THE EARTH. WE HAVE READ ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF $\frac{1}{3}$ OF PARTS OF CREATION AND $\frac{1}{3}$ OF HUMAN LIFE. WE HAVE READ OF ENHANCED PLAGUES AND ANGELS OF DEATH. AND WE HAVE READ THAT THERE IS MORE TO COME BECAUSE HUMANITY REMAINS STUBBORN AND ARROGANT, REFUSING TO "REPENT OF THEIR EVIL DEEDS AND TURN TO GOD." (**REVELATION 9:20-21**)

SO WHAT DO WE NEED AT A TIME LIKE THIS? HOPE. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE LORD GIVES US. WE ARE REMINDED IN THIS INTERLUDE CHAPTER THAT THE TIME DELAY IN THE PLAN OF GOD FINISHING WILL NOT REMAIN FOREVER! JESUS IS COMING BACK AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COMING TO THE EARTH. ARE THERE DIFFICULT TIMES NOW? YES. ARE THERE EVEN MORE CHALLENGING TIMES AHEAD?

YES. ARE THERE SPIRITUAL BATTLES BREAKING OUT ALL AROUND GOD'S PEOPLE? YES. IS THE DEVIL ON THE PROWL? YES. DO EVIL PEOPLE SEEM TO WIN IN THIS EVIL AGE? YES.

BUT THAT'S NOT THE END OF THE STORY AND THE END OF THE STORY MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE! THE END OF THE STORY IS THAT THE "MYSTERY OF GOD IS FINISHED" (V. 7). GOD'S PLAN AND PURPOSES WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED AND HIS WORD IS SURE AND UNCHANGING. WHAT WE SEE AROUND US IS NOT ULTIMATE REALITY AND THAT'S WHY GOD'S PLAN IS A "MYSTERY" - THE CLUES ARE ALL AROUND AND FOR THOSE WHO KNOW THE FACTS WE CAN SEE HOW IT ALL CONCLUDES AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE REMINDED OF IN REVELATION 10.

WE HAVE HOPE THAT GOD'S KINGDOM WILL COME AND GOD'S WILL, *WILL* BE DONE - ON EARTH AS IT IS SURELY DONE IN HEAVEN. AND IN THIS CHAPTER WE SEE THE LOVE OF GOD, THE ONE WHO "LIVES FOREVER AND EVER, WHO CREATED THE HEAVENS AND EVERYTHING IN THEM, THE EARTH AND EVERYTHING IN IT, AND THE SEA AND EVERYTHING IN IT (10:6)" - THE LOVE OF THAT GREAT GOD.

WHY DO I SAY WE SEE HIS LOVE? BECAUSE THERE'S MUCH OF THE STORY STILL TO BE SHOWN TO JOHN AND US - BOTH SWEET AND BITTER THINGS - BUT GOD, IN HIS LOVE FOR HIS CHILDREN, PAUSES THE STORY TO REMIND US OF HIS FAITHFULNESS AND THE END OF THE STORY - GIVING US HOPE.

REVELATION IS GOING TO CONTINUE ON UNTIL CHAPTER 22, WHEN WE SEE HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO BE MADE RIGHT IN THE END, BUT IN CHAPTER 10, NEARING THE HALFWAY POINT THE STORY, HE PAUSES TO SAY - KEEP YOUR MIND AND YOUR HEART ANCHORED IN THE END OF THE STORY - KEEP YOUR FAITH IN THE HOPE.

SO AS WE READ ON AND DISCOVER THE WRATH TO COME AND THE JUDGEMENTS ON THE EARTH, AND AS, PERHAPS, WE EXPERIENCE THE UNFOLDING OF SOME OF THESE THINGS IN OUR OWN LIFETIME - DO NOT BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL. LET IT BE THE ANCHOR THAT HOLDS YOU IN PLACE, NOT JUST IN THE SWEET CALM WATERS, BUT IN THE TORRENTS AND FLOODS, WHEN THUNDER IS PEALING OUT AND DARKNESS COVERS THE SKY.

THOSE ARE THE TIMES WHEN ANCHORS, THOUGH UNSEEN AND BELOW THE SURFACE, DO THEIR BEST WORK.