

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 2 THE EARTHLY DRAMA

STUDY EIGHT

A Strong Angel, A Strange Assignment

Revelation 10:1–11

Much of God's truth is full of hope and promise and forgiveness and grace and relief and joy and love—the things we feed on as His children. Yet much of His truth is still very hard to accept.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THERE is no experience quite like enjoying a delicious meal. The smell rising off the plate causes you to salivate in anticipation of the dining experience. As you chew, flavor explodes in your mouth. You swallow and then prepare to repeat the experience with another bite.

Yet some meals—no matter how delicious in the mouth—don't sit well in the stomach. Some people have sensitivities to certain meats, dairy products, or spicy foods. For these people, a sweet culinary experience can turn sour in an instant.

God's truth sometimes is like a meal that is delightful in one moment and difficult in the next. This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study will explore one man's encounter with a revelation from God that was both sweet and sour. This passage will reveal how we can enjoy the most wonderful portions of Scripture while embracing the most challenging aspects of God's will.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In the space below, write your own prayer. Before you open God's Word, thank Him for it—all of it. Ask Him to give you the courage to listen to His Word even when you find it difficult to accept.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Before the conclusion of the first cycle of judgments in Revelation, John experienced an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals. This intermission offered a refrain of hope before the Lamb opened the last seal and began a new cycle of judgments.

The second cycle follows the same pattern: six trumpet judgments, an interlude, then a seventh trumpet announcing a new cycle of judgment. *Revelation 10:1–11* opens this interlude with a vision of a strong angel who gives John a very strange assignment.



Observation: An Interlude amid the Fanfare

Some portions of Scripture leave you scratching your head and wondering, *What is going on here?* This passage may feel perplexing at moments, but don't let that send you running. Start with a small step: observation. As you read *Revelation 10:1–11*, pay careful attention to each word, each phrase, each sentence. For now, don't ask, "What does this *mean*?" Instead focus first on answering, "What does this *say*?"¹

A Strong Angel—Revelation 10:1–7

According to *Revelation 10:1*, how did John describe the appearance of the "mighty angel"? According to *10:2*, what did this angel hold?

When this strong angel spoke, the "seven thunders" responded (*Revelation 10:3*). We do not know what this thunderous chorus said because John didn't write down what he had heard. In fact, God commanded him to "keep secret" what these seven thunders conveyed (*10:4*).

Remember, John wrote down his vision *exactly* as God wanted it recorded. Every sentence of Revelation is included for a reason—both the encouraging and the challenging.

Yet John did still record some of the conversation. In your own words, summarize the main point of this angel's message in *10:6–7*.

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A Strange Assignment—Revelation 10:8–11

What did the voice from heaven command John to do in *Revelation 10:8*?

What then did the angel command John to do in *10:9*? What did the angel say would happen when John carried out this command?

What happened in *10:10* when John obeyed the command of the angel? Was the angel's prediction correct or incorrect?

From the outpouring of judgment and wrath on unbelievers, we come to a brief reprieve of consolation and encouragement. Here, we learn that there will be no further delay. The judgments will run their course, and they will finish with the triumphant presence of Christ who will come to deliver His people.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Sweet and Sour Truth

This vision begins with an extraordinary—and perhaps frightening—image of a mighty angel. Reread John’s description of this angel in [Revelation 10:1](#). Pick one or two of these descriptions and consider what they might represent. If you need help, use your Bible-study tools, like Pastor Chuck’s commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable’s Notes*, which is available for free at netbible.org.² In what way does the angel’s appearance enhance his message?

While students of Scripture debate what exactly this small scroll represented, we know that it contained—at least in part—God’s divine revelation because it was passed down to earth from heaven. In what sense is God’s revelation “sweet as honey” ([Revelation 10:9](#))? In what sense is it “sour” after consumption?

This passage clues us into the whole unfolding of God’s plan and an understanding of why He does what He does. We realize how wrong and right work together for our good and ultimately for God’s glory. All of that will be finished and unfolded and unveiled when Jesus returns.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: A Feast of Scrolls

Believe it or not, this isn’t the first time in Scripture that God commanded someone to *eat* a scroll. When God called Ezekiel to prophesy against the people of Israel, the prophet saw “a hand reaching out” that “held a scroll” ([Ezekiel 2:9](#)).

According to [Ezekiel 3:1](#), what two-part command did the voice from heaven give Ezekiel?

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After Ezekiel ate the scroll, he observed that “it tasted as sweet as honey” (*Ezekiel 3:3*), just like John observed. Yet, unlike John, Ezekiel did not say it felt sour in his stomach.

In *3:4–10*, God gave Ezekiel a glimpse of what His prophetic ministry would hold for him. How would the people of Israel respond to Ezekiel’s call to repent and turn back to God? Why would they react this way? How does this predicted reaction reveal the “sour” nature of this particular scroll? How does it help us understand the purpose of John’s scroll?

Why is it significant that God told both Ezekiel and John to “eat” His message? How is this metaphor instructive for Christians today who seek to read, understand, and apply the Bible?

Often, we read God’s Word and feel encouraged by its truth and excited to follow Jesus. Yet after the message settles in our soul, we realize that Jesus’ call to self-denial is never easy. And, just like that, the sweet truth turns sour. Yet in application, we will see how embracing the entirety of Jesus’ call works for both God’s glory and our good.



Application: Embracing the Sweet and the Sour

Though John received a strange assignment from this strong angel, he still recorded this moment in his account of his vision from Jesus. That means these words will always be valuable for Jesus’ followers—including us! As you consider the personal implications of this vision, reflect on these three timeless truths.

1. Much of God’s truth tastes sweet and is pleasant to hear.
2. Some of God’s plans turn bitter and are hard to accept.
3. All of God’s ways are right and reliable and deserve our complete respect.

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Which aspects of God’s revelation taste like sweet honey to your soul? Who in your life needs to experience this truth? Write some names in the space below. What steps can you take to offer a morsel of this truth to these people?

What aspects of Jesus’ calling are most difficult for you to accept? Remember, He referred to His way as the “narrow” way—a path with difficult, rocky terrain that few dare to walk (*Matthew 7:13–14*). How can you embrace these truths and put them into action in your own life?

Right now, what does it practically look like for you to trust God with both the comforting and challenging truths from the Scriptures as well as during seasons of blessing and trial?

John’s vision was not yet over. After John ate the scroll, the angel said, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings” (*Revelation 10:11*). In the following verses, John will announce a message to all humanity—one that will be both sweet and bitter. We will look at this complex truth in the next study, but until then, we can reflect on God’s faithfulness and His Word’s truthfulness.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I confess that I sometimes like to treat Your Word like a buffet. I take what I like and leave the rest behind. Yet You have assured me that You have breathed out all Scripture, and therefore, all Scripture is useful for my own growth (2 Timothy 3:16). Remind me of this truth when I struggle to accept the more difficult aspects of Your revelation. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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