

Eat the Scroll!

Revelation 10

The Angel and the Little Scroll

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, 3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." 5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, 7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. 11 And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

Eat the Scroll!

Revelation 10 primarily teaches us about the Word of God.

Our understanding of God, salvation, the church, ourselves, relationships, and life itself hinges on how we read the Bible. There are several teachings about the Bible that we affirm at Venture that would be helpful to review in a discussion about the Word of God.

The Bible is the Word of God

The fallacy of liberal post-enlightenment Christianity says that the Bible contains the Word of God or that it becomes the Word of God as it is read.

Many will object that Scripture itself calls Jesus the Word of God made flesh (John 1). Jesus himself answers this objection in John 5:39 saying that the Scriptures themselves testify of Him.

We honor the Bible as God's testimony and revelation of Himself to us. This is fundamental to everything else we believe and practice as a church. Priority is placed on the teaching of the Bible in public worship and in Life Groups because it is God's Word.

We believe that Bible is faithful and perfect in all of its words because they are the very words of God.

The Bible is Authoritative

The common mood of today is to read the Bible and then decide whether we like it or not.

Americans tend to focus on the passages of Scripture that make us feel good and then ignore or reject those passages with which we disagree.

This buffet mentality works fine if you think the Bible merely *contains* the Word of God. The parts we like must be from God and the distasteful parts must have been added by human authors.

Passages such as Revelation 10 should cause us fear in taking such an attitude.

If the angel carrying the scroll is God's representative with authority over dry land and sea, then it should go without saying that the scroll, as God's Word also has authority over us.

We don't judge God's Word. God's Word judges us.

The scroll is sweet to the taste and bitter to the stomach. This is an apt description of the delights and harshness of God's Word.

The Bible is Meant to Be Read!

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The churchy term for this is called the perspicuity of Scripture. In other words, the Bible can be plainly understood by an average reader.

William Tyndale was arguably the most influential translator of the Bible into English. He is famous for debating the stuffy-headed church scholars of his day who wanted to keep the Bible out of the hands of common people.

In those days, the clergy were not doing a good job of teaching the Bible to people. But, they didn't want the people to read the Bible for themselves, either.

In a moment of rage, Tyndale decried "If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

Tyndale spent most of his adult life on the run from the King of England. He is also credited with creating the modern English language (pre-Shakespeare) Bible. All of this so that average, ordinary people could read the Bible for themselves.

We don't need special glasses and seer stones to discern God's Word. This is how the Latter Day Saints claim the Book of Mormon was translated into something readable from an unreadable heavenly language.

In fact, we don't even need a seminary degree to understand God's Word.

Through careful reading, prayer, attention to context and common sense every person can gain a plain understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Advanced education is a great asset, but every person capable of reading can understand the Bible for themselves.

The Bible is complete in what it teaches.

God's Word is perfect. If we can trust that God tells us everything we need to know then we don't have to fret that God withholds from us exactly what John heard in the thunder.

Our faith can be OK with some of the mysteries of God because we trust that He has perfectly revealed everything we need to know in order to live in covenant with Him.

We can ask tough questions of God, but we should be able to accept that some mysteries will be become plain to us only in some future age. What we are told about God is enough to keep us occupied in pursuing Him for the rest of our lives.

It's comforting to know that Scripture is a well that never runs dry. BTW, the churchy term for this is the sufficiency of Scripture.

I often have a difficult time applying this to my own life. Believing that God's Word is enough presents a real test of my faith.

We often see this in the realm of counseling. When someone has a problem in their life, turning

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to Scripture is often a last resort. They ask family, doctors, therapists, friends, co-workers, and, yes, even their pastor, for advice long before they ask God to give them advice from His Word.

Even pastors often send people to a secular therapist before letting the Word of God sink in and make changes in the life of the one seeking counsel.

I'm not saying that God never provides help through means other than Scripture, but we ought to go to Scripture first and let it guide us to other means of help He may send.

His Word is sufficient for everything that we face.

So, how should we read Scripture?

Read Together

Bible reading is traditionally a community activity. Meditation is typically done in private and reading in public.

As we study through Revelation, you may have noticed that Austin has made a point to give the reading of the text a more prominent place in our worship gathering. This is to reflect the view of Scripture held by the apostles.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't read Scripture in private. You must absolutely read on your own, too. But don't neglect the power of hearing the Word of God together in your church, life group, community of friends or your family.

I remember visiting my great-grandparents in Iowa every summer. The most important part of their day was reading through the Bible together.

My great-grandfather was a gruff old man, even after he became a Christian. I'm sure the habit of Bible reading helped create a fruitful marriage that lasted about 65 years. Reading together has the ability to strengthen any relationship.

Pray Over the Scripture

Ask God to help you understand what you're reading. Ask Him to make His Word a reality in your life moving forward.

Meditate

Most of us have a hard time with this part. Meditation is especially difficult to our ADD world. But it is absolutely necessary to gain anything more than a surface understanding of God.

- Study the background of Scripture.
- Ask yourself and your friends questions about what you just read.
- Memorize verses.
- Go to a quiet place and give yourself time to reflect on what you just read.

This is all part of “reading” God’s Word.

Live it Out

Finally, live out God’s Word in your community. The book of James is very clear that all knowledge of God is useless if it makes no difference in how you live.

Discussion Questions

- What are the greatest difficulties you have with the Bible?
- How have you found the Bible to be pleasant? How have you found it to be bitter?
- Do you find it difficult to talk about the Bible to other people? Why?
- Describe a time when you didn’t want to let the Bible be authoritative? How did that situation resolve itself?
- How can you make reading the Bible corporately a bigger part of your life?
- How do you meditate on the Bible?
- Give an example of how the Bible has changed your life in the last week?