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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

I heard a story about a guy who went to work for a circus wearing a gorilla suit. He cavorted around and was making funny noises and the crowd just loved it. He got bolder and bolder and more active. He was really getting into his job. He got to swinging one day on his tire and suddenly he swung out over the crowd and the rope broke and he flew into the cage with a lion. The big, hungry lion pounced up on him and put his forepaws on his shoulders. The guy said, "Man forget it. I'm going to give up this pretense." He began to holler, "Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me! I'm not a gorilla I'm really a man." Suddenly a voice came out of the lion, "Shut up, dummy! Or we'll both lose our jobs!" Now the times are pretty bad when it is like that!

Revelation chapter 10 is one of the most interesting chapters in all of the book. It is different than any other section and is really like an interlude. It comes almost exactly halfway in the prophecy. John has been in heaven watching the events of the Tribulation: the seven seals being opened, the first six trumpets having been sounded, and all of the turmoil, all of the pain, all of the wrath of God poured out on the earth. He has been looking at that from heaven's perspective. But suddenly in chapter 10 he begins to write again from the perspective of earth. There are many, many explanations for this and I think the best one is that John is receiving a vision from God and in this vision he has been transported into heaven and what an intense vision it is! You have to remember the entire time he is writing this, he is on an island in the Mediterranean Sea in exile on the island of Patmos. He has been writing, writing, writing, it's as if in chapter 10 God gives him a little break. It's almost like his vision fades a little bit and God speaks to him directly. You'll see that in a moment and then it's like he gets a second wind and from chapter 11 on to the end of the book it is nothing but the vision he receives from heaven.

I want to talk about "The Bitter-Sweet Book," because that's what this chapter is all about.

Revelation 10:1-2. "Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land."

We have been talking about symbolism. Anytime you hear that word "like" it means it's something that *looked* like it and to the best of John's ability he uses concepts and descriptive terms at his usage to try to describe what he has seen. First, notice where this chapter stands in the entire book of Revelation. Verse 14 is the longest interlude in the book of Revelation. It is what we call a parenthetical section from the Word, parentheses. Have you ever been writing and you come to a change of thought and you put a parenthesis there in that sentence? You're saying something in between two main thoughts. That's what John is doing here. This parenthetical section begins in chapter 10 and continues halfway through chapter 11. Look over at chapter 11, verse 15. You see we are between the sixth and the seventh trumpet and the seventh trumpet does not sound until chapter 11:15. "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet." So we have this parenthetical passage.

Last week we looked at trumpets five and six of the terrible tribulation and we finished by talking about all the terrible sins during the Tribulation. You would think people would fall on

their knees and repent before God, but instead they get more and more evil.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ANGEL

The first thing we want to notice in this chapter is the description of the angel. What is his name? I have read many, many commentators on Revelation. I like the advice of that great theologian, Johnny Cash who said, "The Bible sheds a lot of light on the commentary." A preacher preached one Sunday and the next morning one of the ladies in his church brought him some potatoes and said, "Pastor, these are very rare potatoes. They are a strange brand of potatoes. You have never had these before, but I want you to eat them because I know that regular potatoes make you sick." He said, "You're really nice to bring me these potatoes, but why did you bring me these rare potatoes and why do you think that regular potatoes make me sick? She said, "Yesterday you said in your sermon that the common 'taters don't agree with you."

In this section I'm here to tell you the "common 'taters" don't agree with each other. Some of them say, "Do you know who this angel is? It's a picture of Jesus and his return." I don't believe that because here in the book of Revelation Jesus is never veiled he is *unveiled* as the Lamb of God. I think this is a mighty angel. Some people say his name is Jesus. I don't believe that. Many commentators don't believe that. We really don't know what his name is. Do you know why they say it's Jesus? It's in the description of the angel in verses 1-2. "He was robed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head." Can't you just see this shining brilliance of different varicolored lights? "His face was shining like the sun. His legs were like fiery pillars." and this great angel stands with one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth. Somebody says, "That can only be the Lord, Jesus Christ." Here's one thing they forget. Most of us have never seen an angel. Angels are a very close interest of my heart. The book of Revelation has over sixty references to angels. There are more references to angels in Revelation than any book except Psalms. Isn't it interesting that the two books of the Bible that speak more about angels are Psalms and Revelation—where there is more praise and more worship than in any other book in the Bible? It could be this is an ordinary angel who is so beautiful and so powerful, that that is what an angel is.

A. His name

What's the angel's name? For instance, you know Michael is one of the two good angels named in the Bible. Michael means "one like God" If you are named Michael, that is what your name literally means in Hebrew Micah-El. "El" is the name for God-like. Micah-El means "one who is like God." In other words, angels are so powerful in their beauty and their appearance that if you saw an angel, you would say, "Wow! That looks like God to me!" So this angel is not named but if it is an angel, it could very well be one like Michael.

B. His position

What is his position? We see he is standing over all the earth. He is standing with one foot on the land and one foot on the sea. That's a picture of his overall vision, his provision, his omnipotence as he is empowered by God to deliver this message. Nothing can stand in his way. He stands over all the earth.

II. THE DECLARATION OF THE ANGEL

I want to talk about the declaration of this angel. What is he going to say to John? Verses 3-11: "and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.' Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore by him who lives forever and ever," That's why I believe this is not Jesus—why would Jesus swear by himself? This angel swears by the one who lives forever and ever. "who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, 'There will be no more delay.'" The word in Greek is *chronos*, from which we get our word *chronology*. The King James Bible says, "no more time," but literally the best rendering of it is "no more delay." "But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

So what did this angel say to John? He made a declaration. It says in verse 3 "he shouted and the shout was like the roar of a lion." If I were to ask you how many of you have ever heard a lion roar? You'd probably say, "Sure, I've been to the circus. I've heard a lion roar and I've watched a movie and they had this picture of this lion that comes on with MGM and roars." I want you to know that when you go to a circus and you see a lion tamer, you don't hear a lion roar—you hear them growl a little. People who have lived in Africa have said when a lion really roars, it is an awesome, terrifying sound! I'm told by those who have studied this that before a lion pounces on its prey, it roars so loudly and the noise is so deafening, it paralyzes the prey for just a moment. They are so frightened, they are frozen and the lion pounces. At night in Africa it has been said you can hear the roar of a lion two and three miles away on a still night. There is such volume when this angel spoke, John said, that's what it sounded like. It was so loud *nobody* could miss the declaration of this angel.

A. "Seal up the prophecy."

This angel said two things to John. First he said, "Seal up the prophecy." What do the words "Seal up" mean? They mean to "cover it up" to "hide it." What is he sealing up? When this angel spoke, it sounded like the roar of a lion. There were seven thunders that spoke. What are these seven thunders? I don't know. No one else does either and the message they spoke no one else knows either, except God. Do you know why we don't know? Because God told John not to write it down; He had John seal it up. Had he written it down, this would have been one more series of sevens in the book of Revelation. There would have been seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, and then seven bowls of wrath. For some reason God told him, "Seal it up, John. Don't write it down." If you read the book of Daniel you will know there was a prophecy God gave to Daniel that said, "Daniel, this prophecy is going to be sealed until the appointed time. It won't make any sense to you or to anybody else until the appointed time."

That's an interesting thing about prophecy in the Bible. There are some things in this Bible that have been prophesied for hundreds and thousands of years and have made absolutely no sense but, today in our time they are beginning to make sense. They were sealed up until the appointed

time. What am I talking about? The biggie is the nation of Israel. You've heard me and other preachers refer to Dwight L. Moody. I have read a lot of D. L. Moody's works. When he and other preachers in his time wrote about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, they didn't understand anything about Israel, because there was no Israel. There has not been a nation of Israel since 70 A.D. when the Roman General Titus came in and destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed Israel. Today when I say "the nation of Israel" and when the Bible says "the nation of Israel," it makes sense to you. Because there is an Israel today and God predicted there would be a time when he would re-gather his people together. That prophecy made no sense at all until 1948. Some of the prophecies are sealed up until their appointed time. That's the first thing he said, "Seal it up!"

B. "No more delay!"

Number two he said, "There will be no more delay." Let me tell you what this is talking about. In verse 6 God is saying "All right, John. When the seventh trumpet sounds, it is a turning point and there is not going to be any longer delay." Then verse 8 says, "the mystery of God will be completed, accomplished." What do you think the mystery of God is? Many people believe it is referring to the question a lot of us have today: "Why, O Lord aren't you punishing wickedness? Why, O Lord, do the righteous suffer? Lord, I don't understand it. Why do evil people seem to prosper so well? Where is your judgement against them? Why is it, Lord that good, godly people suffer and hurt? Why is that?" It's a mystery to us today but it won't always be a mystery because the Bible says the time is coming when that mystery is going to be fulfilled. That has been a mystery throughout all the ages.

Turn to Psalm 2. Psalm 1 is a great, great Psalm, the only problem with Psalm 2 is that it is unfortunate enough to be after a great, great Psalm that everybody reads and sometimes they skip Psalms 2. Psalm 2 asks that question, "Why do wicked people thrive?" Doesn't that bother God? Doesn't it give God Excedrin headache #777 that wicked people are thriving in this world? Not at all! I want you to see Psalm 2. The psalmist asks the question "Why do the nations the heathens rage?" That word *rage* means *party, celebrate*. Why are the wicked people of the world celebrating? Keep reading, "Why do the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One."

Why is it in our world that it seems like everything is turning more and more against God? We are taking prayer out of the schools, taking Bible study out of the schools and saying you can't sing Christmas songs in public gatherings any longer. Why does it seem our world is getting further and further away from God? "Why do the kings and the rulers gather against the Anointed One?" They are saying. "Let us break their chains, they say, and throw off their fetters."

Humanists today are saying Christianity is a chain around the neck of educated, enlightened humankind. What we need to do as enlightened humans is to throw off the chain of Christianity, throw off the chain of antiquated, outdated religion and let's be free to believe and think whatever we want to. How do you think God responds to that? Psalm 2:4, "The One enthroned in heaven laughs;; the Lord scoffs at them." He finds it humorous that these people think they are going to get away with this without the righteous judgement of God being poured out. Verse 5

"Then he rebukes them in his anger and he terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." Then it goes on to say God is in control.

Back to Revelation 10. The question of the mystery is, "Why, Lord? Why do the wicked prosper? Why do good people suffer?" That's a mystery but one day God is going to say, "No more delay! My punishment will not be delayed any longer!"

Today, we are living in the "days of delay." It is as if God's judgement is being stored up and it is pounding against a dam and building up higher and higher and higher but, right now God is letting his mercy override his justice. So He is saying, "This is the time of Grace. This is the time of my mercy. Please come to me! Please accept my love and my tenderness now! One day there will be no more delay and his judgement will be predominant.

There are people who are saying, "That'll never happen!" It says in 2 Peter 3:3-4, "...in the last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised?'" If you went out into the world today and talked to people who are not Christians, and you told them you believe Jesus Christ is going to come back, they would probably laugh at you. They would laugh at you for believing that but that's exactly what the Bible says they will react! And so he declares, "There will be no more delay!"

III. THE DIRECTIONS FROM THE ANGEL

Notice the direction from the angel. The angel gives John some very specific directions. This is where we talk about "The Bitter-Sweet Book." Verse 8-11. "Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: 'Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.' So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, 'Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.' I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.'"

A. Digest the tragic message

There are two basic directions the angel gave John. Number one, "I want you to digest the tragic message." This is not new. If you know the Bible, you know there is another experience where one of the prophets of God is given directions to eat the word of God. In Ezekiel 2 and 3, Ezekiel is asked to do what every preacher fears he is going to be asked to do—He has to eat his own words, eat his own sermon, and that's exactly what he does. He preaches a sermon, writes it down and God tells him to take that sermon and eat it! And the Bible says "it was sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his stomach." That's the same experience John has here. What is it talking about? This is all symbolic. He's talking about the little scroll being the message of God, the entire counsel of the word of God. And he says, "John, I want you to digest it and when you taste it initially, it will be sweet but, when you swallow it and you really begin to assimilate it into your life it is going to be bitter." Isn't that true of the word of God? The Bible says in Psalm 119, that "thy word is like a honeycomb, oh Lord sweet to the taste." There are some really sweet parts of this book and we love to read it. Don't you just love to get into this word and squeeze all

the honey out of it you can, and just eat it because it is so sweet? What are some of those sweet, sweet passages?

- The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want
- I will never leave you Or forsake you
- Trust in the Lord with all your heart Lean not on your own understanding.
- In all your ways acknowledge him And he'll direct your path
- For God so loved the world That he gave his only begotten son

I could go on and on and on about the sweetness of the word of God but, there is more to the word of God than the sweet promises of God. There is the distasteful reality of the judgement and the wrath of God.

When you first sit down at the table and you begin to devour the word of God you say, "Oh, this is great! This is wonderful! This is so sweet!" Those of you who have studied the word for decades and decades know there are parts of this word that are not as sweet as the first parts you took. To be honest, I don't enjoy preaching on Hell. I don't enjoy preaching on the wrath of God poured out during the Tribulation. I don't enjoy preaching on one fourth of the world's population being killed at that sixth trumpet! But I do it because it's in the word of God, because I'm bound to declare the entire counsel of the word of God. But let's face it. Anybody who enjoys that is just a little bit off. There are parts of the word of God that when you first taste it, they are sweet but when you digest it, it becomes a little bitter. It almost makes you sick to think about how terrible the destiny of those who reject the love of God is. So it's sweet to your taste but, sometimes it makes your stomach sour when you really digest all of the word of God.

There's another part of that too. When you first enter the Christian life, you say, "Oh, this is easy! My sins are forgiven. My name is written down in heaven. I'm going to heaven when I die. I'm not going to burn in hell forever. Boy that's wonderful! This is great!" Have you ever noticed the deeper you go into the Christian life, the more you find the demands of discipleship? You get to the point where Jesus starts talking about denying yourself taking up your cross daily following him. That's not as sweet as "only believe!" There are some difficult demands of discipleship. When you really digest it, it is not as much fun as you first thought. So it is sweet to the taste, but bitter sometimes in the future.

B. Deliver the tragic message

The second thing the angel said is, "It is up to you to deliver the tragic message." Look at what it says in verse 13, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." This is a great message of encouragement to John who is exiled on that island. He thinks, "You know it may be that I'll never preach again." John is an elderly man. Tradition tells us when he receives this vision he is over 90 years old. He had been boiled in oil by the Roman emperor, Domitian, and then when he did not die in that execution, they exiled him to the island of Patmos, and as far as he knew he would never get to preach again. But what are we doing tonight? We're studying the prophecy God gave to him. This is being fulfilled. Through the written word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, John is delivering the prophecy to many people many nations many languages and kings.

I've had the experience a lot of you have. There has even been a Southern gospel song written about this. When I was a kid, I loved "The Hardy Boys" mystery books. That's when I really became a voracious reader. I suppose I was only in the sixth grade, but I read about the mystery of the old sawmill and things like that and I loved to read those at night before I would go to bed. My mother would catch me right in the middle of one of those books, and I mean it was so tension-filled! Frank and Joe Hardy were in some kind of a mess, like they were tied down to a log that was going down the conveyor belt to a big buzz saw and she'd say, "David. Put that book up right now and go to bed. I'm not going to tell you again!" How can you put the book down when Joe and Frank Hardy are going to die? So I would do what a lot of you have done—I'd turn over to the very back page real quick and it would say something like, "and Joe and Frank sat down to a turkey dinner with their Mom and Dad." I'd close the book and go to bed. I didn't know how it was going to happen I didn't know all the details but I had read the last page and I knew that in the end they were going to be okay.

Don't you ever doubt! I've read the last page; I've read the last chapter and I've read the last book and in the end we win! And God is going to get the glory!

OUTLINE

(vs. 10:1-11:14 is the longest interlude in Revelation)

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ANGEL (vs. 1-2)

- A. His name. "Michael" means "one like God."
- B. His position. Standing over all the earth.

II. THE DECLARATION OF THE ANGEL (vs. 3-7)

- A. "Seal up the prophecy."
- B. "No more delay!" We are living in the days of delay.

III. THE DIRECTIONS FROM THE ANGEL (vs. 8-11)

- A. Digest the tragic message
- B. Deliver the tragic message