

Sweet and Sour

By Mark Mayberry
5/9/2010

Introduction

Revelation chapter 10, verses 8-11, say, *“Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.” So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”* (NASB95)

Take and Eat It

John was told to take the little book and eat it. Various passages describe God’s Word as something that can be consumed (Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 2:8-3:3; Rev. 10:8-11).

Eating the book signifies that John was to thoroughly master its message. The one who would effectively preach the gospel to others must first assimilate the truth, making it a part of himself (Acts 20:25-35; 1 Tim. 4:6-16).

The Word of God is Sweet

As John ate the book, it was sweet as honey in his mouth. There is joy in receiving God’s Word, delight in being entrusted with a heavenly message. It brings personal benefits and public blessings (Psa. 19:7-11; 119:103-104; Prov. 24:13-14).

The Word of God is Bitter

After John ingested the book, it made his stomach bitter. In other words, the apostle experienced considerable sorrow in delivering his message. The duty of being God’s watchman is sometimes bitter. John warned of impending persecution that would be poured out upon the righteous, and impending punishment that would be poured out upon the wicked. Both messages filled him with foreboding.

Consider the example of Jeremiah: though judgment must come, the prophet shares in the people’s affliction (Jer. 15:1-21; Lam. 3:1-6, 15-18, 19-23).

In like manner, note Ezekiel’s call and commission: though sent to a stubborn and rebellious house, the prophet must not be afraid or dismayed (Ezek. 2:8-3:21).

Conclusion

God has made provision for your spiritual needs, but how will you respond (Eph. 4:11-16)? What is your attitude toward truth? Will you love it more than anything else? Will you obey it or reject it? Eternity itself hangs in the balance (2 Thess. 2:10-12; 1 Pet. 1:22-25).