



river west church

Take and Eat the Scroll
Revelation 10
Pastor Christopher Coffman
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Unusual Intermission: A Giant Angel and a Little Edible Scroll

In the best sense of the word, the book of Revelation is unusual. The sights and sounds John recorded stretch our imagination and demand our attention. The visions are so intense they're almost too much to take in. Scattered throughout the book are three intermissions—moments where the action in Heaven settles a bit. During these times, no seals are broken, no trumpets are blown, and no bowls of wrath are poured. Instead, the focus turns to the church—God's people living on the earth (Ch 7; 10-11:14; 20:1-6). The aim of these intermissions is to show us our place in the divine drama. What is our fate and future in this story? And what, if any, role are we supposed to play? God answers this second question in Rev 10 by sending an angel to John. A giant angel holding a tiny scroll to be exact (10:1-7). Although the angel is massive and "mighty" (v 1), he turns the attention away from himself to the little scroll in his hand. The scroll is open and, as it turns out, edible as well.

Unusual Invitation: Take and Eat the Scroll

Up until this point in Revelation, John has played the role of recorder—writing down the things he heard and saw. However, in Rev 10 John is given a different role to play: "Do not write it down" the angel instructs (v 4). Instead of writing down what he sees, a voice from Heaven tells John to approach the angel and take the scroll. John responds to this unusual request by approaching the angel and asks for the scroll (v 9). The angel instructs John to eat the scroll and lets him know that taste as "sweet as honey" but will make his "stomach bitter" (v 9). John eats the scroll and, just like the angel said, it tastes sweet but eventually turns his stomach sour. Now, like so many other things in Revelation, on the surface this interaction between John, the angel, and the edible scroll seems totally strange. However, upon reflection this encounter teaches us two powerful, practical lessons about the role God's Word is supposed to play in our everyday lives.

Lesson #1: A Message to Digest

Throughout scripture, the metaphor of eating is used to describe the attitude men and women are supposed to have toward God's Word. For instance, in Deuteronomy we're told that God gave the people of Israel manna in the desert so they'd come to know that *"...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord"* (Deut 8:3). You and I were created to rely and trust on the words God speaks. The truths in scripture are meant to be digested. This is why John is told to "take and eat" the scroll in Rev 10. God intends for His Word to go down deep inside us and transform us from the inside out!

Lesson #2: A Message to Deliver

Although this might surprise us, Rev 10 is actually not the first time that God told someone to take and eat a scroll in the Bible. In fact, the events in Rev 10 are almost identical to an encounter an Old Testament prophet named Ezekiel once had (Ezek 3:1-3). Like John, Ezekiel was visited by angel and told, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." (Ezek 3:1). Both John and Ezekiel are given the same marching orders: eat and go speak (cf Rev 10:11). Both men digested God's Word and went on to deliver God's Word to an unbelieving world. God's plan for you and I is the same. He wants to make us messengers of reconciliation in a broken world (2 Cor 5:18-21). The process will not be easy or "sweet as honey" every step of the way. However, in the end, "the mystery of God (will) be fulfilled" and Christ will have the last word (Rev 10:7)!