

**Sermon – 15/07/2007 am**

## **Prophetic Commission Renewed**

Study Text: Revelation 10:8-11

As Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time he wept over the city. He cried out *how often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing* (Matthew 23:37). Jesus came to his own people but they did not receive him. In love God sent his only son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus wept because the alternative for those who rejected this salvation was condemnation and eternal death. Thinking of such a horrific end for these people brought tears to the eyes of Jesus.

Jesus was entering Jerusalem to die for those who would be saved. Yet he knew that his death would also bring judgment upon those who rejected the grace of God. We have often referred to the following chapter in Matthew where Jesus tells his disciples about what will happen in the end. He also told them what would happen to Jerusalem. Divine judgment was coming upon this city. It would soon be destroyed and the people scattered. Entering Jerusalem was a bitter/sweet experience for Jesus.

### **Eat the Book**

In the passage before us John saw another strong angel coming down from heaven. He was standing with one foot on the land and the other on the sea – a picture which reminds us of for the third time in this chapter. He reminds us that this angel, who appears to represent Christ, has dominion over the whole world – over all nations and all creation. God the Father exalted his son Jesus and put everything under his feet when he raised him from the dead.

This strong angel had a little book open in his hand. A voice from heaven told John to take this book. *Take and eat it and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth* (10:9). John was not the first prophet to eat a book. Ezekiel was similarly told to *eat this scroll and speak to the house of Israel* (Ezekiel 3; 1). Ezekiel found the words as sweet as honey in his mouth. Jeremiah, the prophet of doom, ate the words of the Lord and they were *as joy and rejoicing* to him (Jeremiah 15:16). The Psalmist also speaks of the word of the Lord as being as sweet as honey (Psalm 119:10, 119:103).

How and why was this little book as sweet as honey in the mouth? The word of the Lord is a word of grace to those who are being saved. John knew of the wonderful grace of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood (1:5). He knew the joy of the Lord in his own heart just like David, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The word of God was his desire and his delight day and night. Nothing was sweeter to him than the wonderful gospel of salvation by grace alone. Is this gospel as sweet as honey in your mouth? Is it your desire day and night?

This gospel is not only for you of course – it is for the whole world. If you find something this is deliciously sweet do you not share it with those around you? We naturally share good things with those we love. Is not the gospel of Jesus Christ the sweetest thing you have ever tasted? Taste and see that the Lord is good. Is this the truth that you know and love?

Those who know and love the Lord will have a love for all who are made in his image. They will have a passion to share this good news with people near and far away. Jeremiah said the word of the Lord was a fire shut up in his bones – he could not hold it back (Jeremiah 20: 9). Jesus wept over Jerusalem saying if only you had known even you especially in this day the things that made for peace (Luke 19:42). Jesus longed for the people of Jerusalem to know forgiveness and the peace of God. He prayed and he preached the Kingdom of God with heartfelt concern for the Lord.

The word of the Lord was sweet to John as he tasted it in this vision. It was the sweetest thing he had ever tasted. It was this word that brought him life. It was this word that sustained him even as he was imprisoned on Patmos for this very word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (1:9).

### **Digest the Book**

The gospel of grace comes with a flip side, the wrath of God. Many fail to declare this truth in our day. They present the gospel as the good news and exhort people in all sorts of ways to believe in Jesus. But they dare not tell the flip side, the consequences of unbelief. They dare not declare the whole counsel of God. Either they are not convinced themselves of the wrath of God against sin (Romans 1:18), or they do not want to upset their hearers. Such preaching is deceitful, and dangerous, for it leaves people content in their sin. They think that hell is a myth and that everyone will go to heaven in the end.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel would have loved to proclaim ‘all will be saved in the end’. They would not have suffered as they did if they had preached such a message. When Ezekiel ate the book it was sweet in his mouth but it would not be sweet to all who heard it. He was told to go and speak to a rebellious and hard-hearted people, to people who would reject his message. He went away in bitterness, in anger of my spirit but the hand of the Lord was strong upon him (Ezekiel 3:14).

The book that was sweet to John’s mouth became bitter in his stomach. As he digested this word from the Lord he understood the implications it would have upon the compromisers in the church, and upon the persecutors outside the church. John had just spoken about the sixth trumpet in which one third of the human race was killed. The seventh trumpet was about to sound and when this happened the wrath of Christ would come in judgment upon his enemies (11:18).

Telling of the coming divine judgment, prophesying of the wrath that is coming upon an unrepentant generation is not a pleasant task. But it is the unavoidable task of a true prophet of God.

Notwithstanding the unpleasantness of this task, those who like John have suffered for the gospel do feel vindicated when the wicked are finally judged. They believe in divine grace but also in divine justice. Grace means nothing if there is no justice, no penalty for sin.

‘You did not know the time of your visitation’ said Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem. He knew that the day of salvation was fast coming to an end. He called upon the people to repent and believe in him for this is the only way to escape divine judgment. Divine judgment means the end of grace; it means the lake of fire forever and ever. A more bitter end cannot be imagined.

## **Prophecy**

John was told *you must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings* (10:11). His eating of the little book was renewal of his prophetic commissioning. In his first vision he was told to write what he saw and send it to the seven churches (1:11). In this vivid image he is commissioned in the same way as the prophet Ezekiel, who prophesied to Israel in exile and to a number of other nations.

The word translated 'about' means 'with regard to', or even 'against', as was the case with Ezekiel. To translate as 'before', does not bring out the force of this word. The message John has to proclaim is primarily one of judgment, final judgment upon the rest of mankind that refused to repent.

We often hear that a particular preacher is popular? A popular preacher is almost a contradiction in terms. Can you find a prophet or preacher in the Bible who was popular with the people? When a prophet eats or digests the word of God he must prophesy the truth regarding salvation and judgment. The word becomes part of his being. He cannot but speak of what he has heard. It becomes a fire in his belly as it were.

Do you come to church to hear emotional make-me-feel-good messages? Do you come to be entertained and uplifted? Or do you come to hear the truth? Do you love to hear the glorious gospel of salvation and judgment? This gospel has the power to reveal your sin and bring you to repentance and life in Jesus Christ.

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