

THE BITTERNESS OF EATING FROM THE SWEET BOOK

BY J. VERNON MCGEE

- (Revelation 10:8–10 KJV) And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

This order comes from Christ in heaven as He is directing every operation recorded in the Book of Revelation. He is in full charge. Revelation is the book that glorifies our wonderful Savior. He is the Judge of all the earth here, and we see Him as God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name. If the voice here is not Christ's, then He has given the order to the angel to speak from heaven.

John becomes a participant in the great drama which is unfolding before us. He is required to do a very strange thing, one that has a very typical meaning. He eats the little book at the instructions of the angel, and the results are bittersweet. Eating the little book means to receive the Word of God with faith.

The part of the Word of God taken by John was judgment. It was sweet because the

future is sweet. In Genesis 18:17 we read, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do...?" It is sweet to know what God is going to do, but when you find out that judgment is coming, it is bitter. John eagerly received the Word of God, but when he saw that more judgment was to follow, it brought travail of soul and sorrow of heart. It was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his digestive system. If you and I can take delight in reading this section of the Word of God and the judgments that are to fall upon the earth, then we need to do a great deal of praying to get the mind of God. It is sweet to know the Book of Revelation and what God intends to do, but when we find out that judgment is coming to the Christ-rejecting world around us, we cannot rejoice in that. The prophecy becomes bitter.

There is another very real application of this. Many folk begin the study of prophecy with enthusiasm, but when they find that it is applicable to their life and that it makes demands on them personally, they lose interest, and it becomes a bitter thing. Many people say, "I don't want to hear about the Book of Revelation. I don't like prophecy. It frightens me!" May I say to you that it is supposed to do that, but it should be in your mouth sweet as honey. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who like to study prophecy because of the natural curiosity to know the future, but they will discover that there is nothing in the Word of God that ministers

more to a holy life than the thoughtful study of prophecy. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself..." (1 John 3:3). To be a student of prophecy and live a dirty life will only lead to abnormality. The reason we hear so much abnormality in the interpretation of prophecy in our day is that the Word of God is not having its way in the hearts and lives of the folk who study it. It is unfortunate that people will get interested in prophecy but not in Christian living.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. (v. 11)

You can be sure of one thing, that John was properly integrated. He believed that all nations, all peoples, all tongues, and all colors ought to hear the Word of God. They need to hear it because they need to be warned that judgment is coming. If they go through the Great Tribulation, they will soon recognize that it is not the Millennium — in fact, they will feel as if they have entered hell itself. This is the part that made John sad. This is the reason this little book became bitter to John: He must prophesy against many before Christ comes to His Kingdom.

My friend, the study of prophecy will have a definite effect upon your life: It will either bring you closer to Christ, or it will take you farther from Him.

—From Edited Messages on Revelation by J. Vernon McGee [<http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/thru-the-bible-with-j-vernion-mcgee/read/articles/the-bitterness-of-eating-from-the-sweet-book-12140.html>]

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