

An Education Worth Getting – Rev 10

Rev 10. Not all educations are worth getting these days. Have you noticed? From kindergarten to college, secular worldviews and unbiblical ideologies make some educations worthless and even harmful.

But some aren't. Some educations *are* worth getting. And Rev 10 is one of them. Another interlude, like Rev 7, between the 6th and 7th trumpet judgments. And the *point* of this chapter is that once The Great Tribulation starts, God's not going to belabor it. He's not going to let it drag on. That's the thrust of this chapter.

And embedded in it, are 4 lessons. Lessons from the Apostle John. An education from *his* example and *his* experience, that we'd do well to apply in ours. An education worth getting, for sure. Let's see if we can find it.

➤ V1 – *Then I saw another mighty angel* [John says; like those who blew the trumpets] *coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud* [maybe to shroud God's overwhelming glory; like Moses used to do with a *veil*, when *he* came from the presence of God], *with a rainbow over his head* [maybe to convey beauty or a sense of protection; like the rainbow after Noah's flood], *and his face was like the sun* [reflecting and revealing God's brilliance], *and his legs like pillars of fire* [strong and awe-inspiring].

[2] *He had a little scroll open in his hand* [different from the scroll in chapter 5, and open; its contents revealed]. *And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land* [probably indicating his authority over *all* creation; the *whole* earth], [3] *and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring* [commanding attention and authority]. *When he called out, the seven thunders sounded* [probably more judgments; because thunder in Revelation is often connected with divine vengeance]. They sounded. They were revealed.

[4] *And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write* [John says], *but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."* (ESV) Seal them up, as in don't reveal them; don't disclose them; don't record them. And that's all we hear of it. The seven thunders aren't mentioned again.

And it not only shows us that John did what he was told, but implies that he was good with it. Just as content to keep it under wraps as God is. There's no objection on his part, no questioning, no agonizing; nothing. Just silent contentment in the face of *God's* silence.

Which leads us to our first lesson.

1. Are you just as content with God's silence as you are his guidance? (v1-4)

Are you just as content with his silence in your life, as you are his leading? Just as content with what God *hasn't* revealed, as you are with what he has? Whether in your life, or the Bible, or the world, or the future. Are you just as content with his *lack* of words, as you are his abundance? Or does it bother you to no end? Are you good with it, or do you struggle with it; object to it?

I hope not. Because some things are not for us to know. Dt 29:29 says – *The secret things belong to the LORD our God*. The information God withholds is not intended for us. Sometimes because we wouldn't understand, it's too high for us (Ps 139:6); and other times because we might not be able to handle it; it's too shocking or tempting to abuse.

This seems to be one of those times; the thunders. So God says seal them up; don't reveal them.

I'll never forget a particular church meeting when I was a teenager. It was a small church, and there were about 30 people in the room. And when the pastor asked if anyone had any prayer requests, one of the women said she was struggling because she hadn't heard from God in a long time; or at least it felt that way. He was *silent*, she said. And it bothered her. Greatly. And though I don't remember the pastor's response, that's how it is sometimes.

There are times in our walk with the Lord, when he doesn't communicate any more than he already has; in his word. His Spirit is silent. And if he does speak, he doesn't explain everything, or reveal everything. Only enough for the step we're on. Only enough for our good. And if we don't learn to be content with that, we're going to struggle, lose heart, and make a mess of things.

All of which emphasizes the need for contentment. That's lesson #1.

• Learn to be content

Learn to be just as content with what God *doesn't* reveal, as what he does. What he *doesn't* say, as what he speaks. Learn to be okay with what we can and *do* know, instead of frustrated with what we can't and don't know. After all, 1 Tim 6:6 says – *Godliness with contentment is great gain*. Godliness *with* contentment. It's fruitful; advantageous; blessed.

Unfortunately, contentment doesn't come naturally. We struggle with it. Always wanting more money, more influence, more leisure, more stuff, and more information. Oh do we want information. Why do you think social media is so popular? Why do you think 24-hour newsfeeds are so prevalent? Why do you think it's the first thing you look at when you wake up? We want to know everything, and we want it now. And if we don't get it, we're not happy.

But that's not how God works. When he does reveal things, he usually reveals them over time. Like his work of redemption. Revealed over the course of thousands of years, with long stretches of silence. And the same is true in our lives.

So the best thing we can do is learn to be content with it. As content with his silence as we are with his guidance. That's the first lesson in this education worth getting.

➤ The second comes from v5-7. [5] *And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven* [a biblical way of expressing an oath] [6] *and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay*. There's the point of the entire chapter. God's not going to belabor his judgment and coming. Based on the all-creating, all-powerful, always-existing God, there will be *no more delay*. It doesn't *get* any more certain.

V7. The angel swore there would be no more delay, [7] *but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel* [the last of the judgments], *the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets*. The *mystery of God* refers to the establishment of his kingdom here on earth. His physical rule and reign over

all. A mystery, not because it wasn't *announced* or anticipated, but because nobody knew exactly how it was going to happen.

Like when God spoke through the prophet Nathan in **2 Sam 7**. Speaking to King David he said – *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name [a place of worship], and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.* (2 Sam 7:12-13) And though it was partially fulfilled in Solomon, David's *first* son; it was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, David's greater son (Heb 1:5). Establishing a kingdom and a place of worship in the *church*, now; and over the whole world when he returns.

That's the mystery in v7, that's going to be fulfilled at the end of The Great Tribulation, without delay.

And sure enough, John hears of it in the very next chapter. Rev 11:15 – *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* First in the Millennium, on *this* earth; and then in the eternal state, on the new earth. Jesus will reign. The mystery will be fulfilled.

The question is, do you believe it?

2. Are you firmly confident God will fulfill his promises, or quietly doubtful? (v5-7)

Are you absolutely certain of it, or cautiously optimistic? Is your hope firm, or laced with cracks of doubt? I hope it's firm. Because it should be.

Has God not fulfilled his prophecies *thus* far? Has he not kept his promises until now? His promise to send a Messiah, a Savior? His promise to build his church? His promise to save and sanctify us? His promise to love and bless us?

He has. Over and over again. From the promises made and kept in the Old Testament, to the promises made and kept in the New, we can be confident of his promises in the future. Doubt has no place in our thinking, quiet or not. God is faithful. His word is true.

So whatever you do . . .

• Learn to trust him

If you're going to be firmly confident that God will fulfill his promises, you have to trust him. That what he says, he does. What he starts, he finishes. You have to trust that he's the same yesterday, today, and forever, and can't *not* fulfill his promises. He has to. It's part of his nature; perfect and holy.

But that trust isn't automatic. You have to *choose* to trust God. Just like you trust your spouse, or your parents, or your friend. Sure, they've proven themselves to be trust-worthy, but you still have to make a decision. And God is no different.

Part of learning to trust him, is choosing to do so. Just like you chose to trust him with your forgiveness and life, choose to trust him for the future. That indeed his kingdom *will* come, and his victory will be won. Choose to trust that he will welcome you home when you take your last breath, and raise you up when he returns. Learn to trust him, and put your doubts to rest. It's lesson #2.

➤ #3 is found in v8-9 – *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven [in v4] spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." [9] So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it.*

Eat it, as in internalize it. Read it and take it in. Make it a part of you. A part of your thinking; your worldview; your heart. That's the idea. And John did. V10 – *I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it.* He didn't just skim it; he didn't just think about it. He devoured it.

How about you?

3. Do you internalize God's word, or just sample it? (v8-9a)

Do you meditate on it, or just read it? Do you think about it, or forget it? Devour it or sample it? Like an ice cream shop? "Could I try a little bit of 2 Samuel please? It's right next to the cookie dough. And how about some 1 Timothy? Is that any good?"

Is *that* how you eat the word of God? Or do you marinate in it? Is it in one ear and out the other, or taken in deep, for good? I hope it's the latter.

But here again, it's a learned thing. If you're going to *internalize* God's word, you have to learn *how*. You have to . . .

• Learn to learn

That's the lesson. So let me give you 6 ways. 6 ways to learn to learn.

1. By watching and listening to others. Especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; 1 Tim 5:17. Our pastors and directors. Watch what *they* do. Listen to how *they* internalize the Bible. Pay attention to the things *they* pay attention to.

2. By gathering with others. Not to chat, or catch up, or socialize, but to learn. Not that those things are bad, or unnecessary; but that they're secondary. If you want to learn how to internalize the Bible, gather with others who want the same. It's one of the reasons we have men's Bible studies, and women's Bible studies, and all the other ministries around here.

3. By studying yourself. On your own. A workman who needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). Study *yourself*. Apply yourself. Do the work.

4. By understanding the big picture. The meta-story of Scripture. God's *overall* work of redemption. So that you can fit the parts *into* the whole, and see the beautiful mosaic. It's the difference between sampling each *ingredient* of a recipe, and putting them together for an exquisite meal.

5. By thinking critically. Not negatively, but deeply. Inquisitively. Asking questions of the text. Determining the flow of thought. Considering what it means and why.

6. By memorizing verses. Storing them in your heart. Not just to recall them at *pertinent* times, but dwell on them all the time.

6 ways to *internalize* God's word, instead of just sampling it.

And last, the last lesson in this education worth getting:

4. Do you apply God's word no matter *what*, or only selectively depending on the cost? (v9b-11)

[9] *So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."* [10] *And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.* [11] *And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."*

That's why it made him nauseous. He had to tell the whole world a whole bunch of terrible things. From judgment and woe to destruction and suffering. And it made him sick. *Knowing* it was sweet. *Knowing* what was going to happen was good. But proclaiming it was bitter. And yet he did it. Difficult and costly as it was, he did it.

What about you? Do *you* apply God's word? No matter *what*? Or only selectively depending on the cost; the cost to you or those around you? Is your faithfulness based on God's command, or your sacrifice? Are you all in no matter what, or does it depend on the effort?

I'm not talking about being a missionary here; though that applies. I'm talking about moments in your life when you're teetering between sin and righteousness. Succumbing to temptation or denying yourself. I'm talking about situations where you have to give up *your* desires for God's desires. Does the *cost* of following Jesus determine your obedience, or his call; his command?

I hope it's the latter. I hope you . . .

• **Learn to obey**

More and more. Because once again, it doesn't come naturally, does it? Just like *toddlers* have to learn obedience, *we* have to learn obedience. And keep learning.

That's what I'm learning these days. That just because I obeyed yesterday, doesn't mean I'm going to today. And sometimes I have to learn all over again.

Because learning to obey is a constant process. Our sin nature doesn't like it in the first place, and we're prone to forget. We *come* to the Lord with *authority* issues, and we *walk* with the Lord with *memory* issues. Forgetting how good it was to obey, and how bad it was to sin. Sometimes from one day to the next. Which makes *learning* to obey a constant process.

Especially when it's interrupted by our blatant rebellion. Those times when every fiber of our being screams *dis*-obedience. "I don't *want* to deny myself. I don't want to do what's right. I don't want to pray. I don't want to tithe. I don't want to love."

But the more we do, the more we obey, the more we learn. So that when the Spirit nudges us the next time, and the cost is even greater, we don't hesitate. We do what he says, and apply God's word, no matter what.

It's an education worth getting. Learn to be content, learn to trust God, learn to learn, and learn to obey.

Prayer – Father, forgive us in this. We fail miserably at times. Forgive us and help us. Fill us with your Spirit and settle our hearts no matter what you reveal. Increase our dependence and trust in you. Sharpen our minds to learn, and give us a hunger for it. And spur us on to more and more obedience, no matter the cost. For your glory.

You are loved