



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 10:1-11

"The Little Book"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning to chapter 10 in the Book of Revelation for the continuation of our exposition of the apocalypse, and we are reading the entire chapter, the eleven verses of it for our Scripture reading. Revelation chapter 10, verse 1 through verse 11. In spite of what people say, the Book of Revelation is one the easiest of the books of the Bible to read and understand in its major teaching. It beautifully outlines, and consequently you can follow the flow of the apostle's thought very simply. There are some things in it, of course, that are difficult to understand, but the book as a whole is really what it claims to be, an unveiling, a revelation, or an apocalypse.

After an opening vision in chapter 1 in which John is given a vision of the risen Christ, there are seven letters that our Lord writes to the seven churches that are at Asia Minor. In chapters 2 and 3, and then in chapters 4 and 5 we have the great vision of the throne in heaven and the little book in the right hand sealed with seven seals, evidently a testimonial disposition of the affairs of the earth. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the Scriptures say, has prevailed to open the book. John turns to look at the lion and sees a lamb and hears the recounting of the way by which he has prevailed, by the suffering and death of his cross. And then in chapter 6 the seals of the seven sealed book are opened one after the other until the six is reached near the end of the chapter. And when that

seal is opened, it is quite plain that the final consummation is evidently come, the great day of the wrath of God. And the apostle hears the words, "Who shall be able to stand?"

Characteristic of this book is, too, that its major flow of thought is interrupted every now and then for an interlude and intermission. In chapter 7, we have one in which John has visions of the one hundred forty-four thousand of the tribes of Israel and of the great multitude, which no man could number, that come out of the great tribulation of the future. In chapter 8, the seventh seal is opened and instead of the consummation being described at this point, seven angels stand before God and to them are given seven trumpets, so it's evident that the seventh seal is to be further characterized by seven trumpet judgments. So we have seven sealed judgments and seven trumpet judgments, and we have been in that section of the book. In chapter 8, a number of the trumpets sound their message. In chapter 9, two more, the fifth and the sixth, and now in chapter 10 we have another interlude before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. John writes,

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, (evidently they said something, for John says,) I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (That too is characteristic, as you know, of apocalyptic language. Daniel was given similar commands.) And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: (Now we would suspect that that is a mistranslation,

because obviously we are not dealing with eternity. As a matter of fact, there is question about whether we can actually say that there is no time in eternity, rather endless time might be a much better way to speak of eternity. But this word that is translated time in the Authorized Version here is a word that may mean delay, and that appears to be the sense here. It is almost unanimously agreed by commentators and translators that this should be rendered, that there should be delay no longer. In other words, as John recounts the future, we are drawing near his recounting of the things that will finally wind up the program of God.) But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the secret (or the mystery of God) should be finished, (That probably should be rendered shall be finished. For those of you who read Greek and there are a few in the audience, then we are looking at something that is proleptic in force, and in the light of the context and the way in which the apostle writes this, we should render this shall be finished.) as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (One of the most interesting things to me is that word translated declared by the Authorized Version is a word that is used of the preaching of the gospel, so we are justified in saying, "as he has evangelized to his servants the prophets.") 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. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before (And if I may again be permitted to make a slight change that should be rendered over literally, or concerning or about.) many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

And the remainder of this book gives some of the details of those prophecies that the apostle will utter. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together.

[Prayer] Father we are indeed grateful to Thee that we have the Scriptures of truth before us, and that through them we may come to understand Thy purposes, Thy mind with reference to the affairs of this earth. We are thrilled to realized that thou hast given us, through the infallible Scriptures, confidence that the things that happen all around us through the years lead on to the great consummation of the last days, climaxed in the second coming and kingdom and eternal state of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we ask Lord that we may be responsive to the word of God, and as we listen may the Holy Spirit bring to us illumination, understanding, and application of the truth to our own personal lives, for we so need it.

Lord, we confess the many failures that characterize us day by day. Oh to be delivered from the sin principle that dwells in our members since the fall in the Garden of Eden. We look forward to the deliverance, the liberation, the freedom that shall ultimately be ours.

We especially give Thee thanks for the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that he has overcome this lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and has redeemed to God a people out of every kindred tongue, tribe, and nation. We are thankful; we look forward to the glorification of our triune God in the future.

Bless Lord, the whole church of Jesus Christ today. We pray that Thou would give guidance and direction to each member. Build us up in our faith.

We pray for the sick. We especially remember some who are suffering, and those who are in the hospital. We bring them before Thee. Give, if it please Thee, healing and give wisdom and guidance to their family and to the physicians who minister to them.

Bless in our service. May our hearts respond to the word of God and to the life in Christ that Thou has given to us. Bless this assembly for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today in the exposition of the Book of the Apocalypse is, "The Little Book." Most of us in this auditorium would agree, no doubt, that life is in our day somewhat difficult. It is inexplicable as we look out over the affairs of our lives and the experiences that many of us in our generation are having, evil is rampant. We read our newspapers and that cannot help but be one of the responses that we make. The apocalypse assures us of a coming showdown, a kind of cosmic-wide Jobian experience, if we may like it to the experience of the patriarch.

When Job had finally had his experience with the Lord, he concluded his account of his saying, "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted." That is so important to realize that. That fundamental principle of Christian theology that we so often forget, that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted, an unfrustratable deity. I am afraid that the presentation that we often give of God in heaven is of a frustratable deity of whose purposes can be thwarted. But the patriarchs, and the apostles, and the prophets affirm that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. But Job goes on and says, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore, have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me which I knew not. Here I beseech thee, (He's speaking to the Lord in heaven.) and I will speak. I will ask of Thee and declare Thou unto me."

Now here is the climax. After his experiences he says, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." There is a great international or universal showdown coming, and this universe of which we are a part shall see itself as it really is.

We are in the tribulation section of the book that John has given to us. We saw in the seal judgments that there are great judgments in the future that are to be poured out upon the earth, a kind of panoramic view of the future. Then when the trumpets begin to be sounded, we have the details that are set before us with Gentile emphasis, and finally,

in the last of the series to which we have not come, the bowl judgments, we shall further details with emphasis upon the consummation of things with reference to the Nation of Israel.

Now in chapter 10, as I mentioned in the Scripture reading, we are in another interlude. This interlude, between the sixth and seventh trumpet, perhaps to introduce the heralds of the Second Advent, the two witnesses of whom we shall study and read in our next study. It's rather interesting, I think, that when the Lord Jesus came, John the Baptist began his ministry as the ambassador of the king. It was his duty to announce the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And of course, our Lord came and John was his ambassador. Now in the Second Advent of our Lord, it appears that there will also be ambassadors. In this case, two ambassadors, and those witnesses of our Lord's ministry to come, are called in the very next chapter, part of this particular chapter incidentally, the two witnesses. So, we are in an interlude. We are leading up to the testimony of the two witnesses who shall testify before our Lord's Second Advent.

One of the things that we learn from the gospels, and especially the 17th chapter of the gospel of John, is that our Lord says that he does not pray for the world. That is a startling statement and no doubt you, I certainly have, puzzled over what our Lord does mean when he says, "I do not pray for the world." He says, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world Father. I pray for them which Thou hast given me for they are Thine." In other words, the high priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is limited to those whom he represents. But now it's also true that our Lord will pray with reference to the world if I understand Holy Scripture correctly.

In the second of the psalms, the messianic second psalm, the psalmist writes giving the language of the Lord God in heaven, "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, (that is the unbelievers in the latter days) and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," he says, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." And then these

words, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." So it appears from this that our Lord is still in the future to pray a prayer and his prayer will be, "Father, give me the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession." So, I think it's fair to say that our Lord does not pray for the world at the present time, he prays for his saints. But there will come a time when he will pray with reference to them, but it will not be a prayer for their salvation. It will be a prayer that the purposes of God be accomplished in judgment and his kingdom shall be brought in.

Now the tenth chapter is an important little chapter. I think if you read through this chapter you might think, well it doesn't seem so important to me, but there is one statement in it particularly, that is extremely important. And we'll try to lay stress upon that seventh verse when we come to it, but in the mean time the opening part of the tenth chapter; in fact the verse seven verses have to do with the revelation of the might angel. And John writes,

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."

Let me stop for just a moment here. The description of the angel is rather striking. In fact, it is so striking that some have thought that perhaps this angel is really the angel of the Lord, or our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, "He's clothed with a cloud." That is usually associated with deity. "A rainbow was upon his head, his face as it were the sun,

and his feet as pillars of fire." So, the description is such that one could easily see that this individual is a diving being. But there is one fact about it that makes it, I think, an impossible interpretation. He says in verse 1, "I saw another mighty angel." Now that little word, another, is a word that is used of another of the same kind. So, the fact that this angel is like another angel of the same kind rules out our Lord Jesus Christ as being the reference, because you could not say of him that he is another of anything, because he is the unique Son of God. So, we are to understand this as a strong angel, another mighty angel.

When Aquinas spoke about how individuals often debated how many angels could stand on the point of a pin, I don't know whether they discussed whether that discussion ought to gather around mighty angels or just ordinary angels standing on the point of a pin. But this is a strong angel, and the fact that a rainbow is upon his head may be significant, because you read the Bible and when you come to Genesis and you read about Noah and the flood and then you read about the covenant that God made with Noah and the sign of it was the rainbow, that there would be no further destruction of the world by a flood. And we the Noahic covenant as being that statement and covenant by the Lord God. Perhaps the fact that this angel is clothed with a cloud and a rainbow was upon his head is designed to remind us that there is ultimately to be peace between God and men.

The little book that is referred to here is probably not the little book of chapter 5, because this one has no article. It's not, "He had in his hand the little book open." That is the one that we know about previously, but a little book and evidently representative of claims of God upon the earth. The one in chapter 5 covers the whole of the remainder of this Book of Revelation, giving us the testamentary disposition of the affairs of the earth. This one, evidently, is related to the things that will happen when the seventh trumpet is blown. It is a kind of title deed, a claim. When you buy property and the property becomes yours, you receive a deed, a title to your property. And this is a kind of title

deed, evidently, the kind of thing that one might make when he claims something.

Those of you who are familiar with our explorers remember in your studies, that Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary was the first to be at the North Pole, and when he was at the North Pole, he wrote about it and he actually telegraphed back his famous message from Labrador on the return journey in 1909, and said, and I'm quoting, "The stars and stripes have been nailed to the pole." That was his way of claiming for the United States of America what he had been able to discover. Richard E. Byrd, the first to fly over the South Pole was another explorer who made many significant, no doubt, claims. But this is a title deed and a claim and John says that he put his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth. So, the purpose of this was to signify that the angel is taking possession, for God, of his creation. He is specifically, he swears in the seventh verse, "by the one who created heaven, earth, and the sea, and the things that were in them." It's again a visible way of pointing out that the earth belongs to the Lord and the fullness thereof.

When Satan came to our Lord in his test, in his temptation, and said that he would give him all of the kingdoms of the earth if he would bow down and worship him, he was giving something that of course did not really belong to him. It is God himself, who owns the kingdoms of this world, and this is his way of saying, in his symbolic way, in his vivid apocalyptic way, that God is the one who controls the affairs of this universe and the time is coming when this universe will be altogether his in reality. Now we know that it is his now, but there are a lot of usurpers about, and the usurpers under the great usurper, Satan. But the time is coming when the kingdoms of this world shall truly be the Lord's. In fact, we will read about this in the very next chapter, for that matter.

Well, "The angel cried with a loud voice," John says, "like a lion roaring." That word, in the original text, is a word that suggests a cow mooing, and so it is a voice with a great deal of resonance. You can just think of him speaking in that kind of language. Woody Allen, one time was talking about the Lord God. It's rather striking how Woody

Allen has said a number of interesting things, humorous things, about the Lord God. But he said something like, "There was no one who could produce a rumble in the desert like the Lord God." How true that is. No one can. And when the angel here speaks like a lion roaring, or like a cow mooing, you get the sense of a resonant voice. When he spoke the seven thunders uttered their voices, and when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, John got his pen out, and he was going to write down what they said. But he said, "I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not."

Now what did those seven thunders say? That's one of the mysteries of the Book of Revelation. What did they say? Well you know Bible interpreters; they will have some way of telling us what they said. Though, John the Apostle was told not to write it down, we have the benefit of very wise interpreters who will tell us what the seven thunders were. For example, in interpreting the Revelation, there are a number of interpreters who have suggested that the way to interpret the Book of Revelation is to take the Book of Revelation and compare it with past history. That's called a preterist interpretation, and that was very popular until relatively recent times. And in the interpreting of the book in this way, you go back over history and seek to pinpoint facts of history and show that John was really giving us information about past facts of history. So, the seven thunders, it has been said that the seven thunders are the seven papal bulls that were uttered against Martin Luther and the Revelation. Now if this is so, then God sealed the book in vain for all know what the bulls that the pope uttered against Luther were. Many look at this passage and interpret it that way, and interpret it along these lines.

The angel descends, what does that mean? Well we are asked to believe that that means that that's the son of righteousness or the Lord Jesus Christ rising over Europe. The angel descends, but that means Christ rising over Europe in the reformation. The cry like a lion is the preaching of Luther. Well, Luther's preaching was somewhat like a lion in a symbolic way, figurative way. Others tell us, as I say, that those thunders are the

papal bulls issued against Luther. Still others, that it was the shout of the Wittenbergers that is, Luther's friends in Wittenberg, when he burned the pope's bull that was the thunder. These voices, of course, are voices that come from heaven; they don't come from earth. John was commanded to seal them up.

Luther made it known, so we don't have to go further. These thunders did not come from Germany. They did not come from the earth at all. What they were, we really do not know, and its best, I think, to leave it that way. You may have some sanctified explanation, later on I'll be happy to listen to it. It would be interesting if you could just prove it, then you could write another book on the Book of Revelation and give us new information. Pastor Russell, of the Jehovah's witnesses, wrote seven volumes and it was said that they were the seven thunders, but I don't think that's more of an explanation than the seven bulls that the pope issued against Luther.

Some years ago, I was in Pennsylvania preaching and this subject came up. We were having a panel discussion, and I had been teaching through the years the Book of Revelation from the great text in the seminary. And so I made reference to this and Luther's bulls, and one of the Bible teachers came up to me afterwards and said, "You know, Lewis that was a lot of bull." [Laughter] Well, it is, so far as understanding is concerned. The seven thunders, we don't really know what they are.

But the angel at this point then stands upon the sea and the earth and lifts up his hand to heaven and swears by the one who lives forever and ever, that is swears by the eternal God who created the things in the heavens and on the earth and under the earth, that there would be delay no longer. Now, it is clear that this word time, in the Authorized Version, means delay, and what he is suggesting is that we are at this point in the unfolding of judgments and of the events of the Revelation, we are drawing near the climax of the divine program. That's rather interesting isn't it? Because right from the beginning we have statements of Scripture made that the consummation is near at hand.

We have reasons to believe that the believing men of the Old Testament believed things were soon to come to pass.

Take Cain, when Cain was born to Eve, and Eve and Adam had been given the promise of a Redeemer, according to Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15, Eve it seems relatively plain, thought at first that Cain was the promised one. She said that she had gotten a man with the Lord. In fact, some have sought to render that she had gotten a man that is a child, even the Lord. That is, that he was the Lord. But at any rate, she evidently felt that the consummation would be soon, but there was a delay now of thousands of years.

When the Lord Jesus was born and he was taken into the temple and Simeon was there, and Simeon took the child in his arm and said, "Now Lord, let thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen the Lord's salvation." And there is no evidence that he thought of anything other than that this is the promised one who will bring to pass all the great promises of the Old Testament. But it's been almost two thousand years from that time now.

In other words, the writers of the Bible set forth the events as though taking place imminently. There's a great difference between believing in the imminent return of our Lord, and the immediate return of our Lord. The Bible speaks of immanency, but the immanency lies in the hands of God so far as time is concerned. John the Baptist, when he preached, thundered with his rugged calls to repentance. There is no evidence that he thought that there would be two thousand years before he and his king that he represented should see the consummation of all things. The early Christians were lively in their expectations that even in their day the standard of the coming king of kings might be unfurled in the sky. So, when John says that there shall be no longer delay, here is finally the statement that when these events begin to transpire, it really is not long until things come to pass.

Now I want you to notice the seventh verse carefully. He says, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel." That is, who blows the seventh trumpet, notice the

plural, in the days of the voice of the seventh trumpet. We don't usually think of a man who blows a trumpet as blowing it for days, so that plural is rather significant. What he seems to mean is that when finally the seventh trumpet judgment begins, it will not be consummated immediately. That is it will take some days for it to be accomplished.

Now that's rather important. It means that things will begin, the final climax, but it will take a bit of time. Now reading the rest of the Book of Revelation, we can see how that is certainly true. It will take some time. He says, "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished." The mystery of God.

Now some of you at least, maybe most of you, are biblical students enough to know that the term mystery is a special biblical term. My old teacher used to like to say the term mystery does not refer to anything mysterious. It doesn't refer to something Agatha Christie might write, a mystery. But it's a word that means a secret, but what is significant about it is that it is a secret that only God can unfold. In other words, it is a divine secret, and one needs divine illumination to understand. So the mystery, or the secret of God, is something that only he can expound. And he had expounded it in the word of God through the prophets, but one needs the illumination of the Holy Spirit in addition to the mere statements of Scripture. That's what we need when we understand spiritual truth. We not only need the word, but we need the Spirit to illumine us. That's why we say truth comes through the word and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Many people read the word of God, many people who don't understand anything about the word of God read the word of God. Some read it and read it very accurately. It may even be a New Testament exegete, but who has not yet come to a personal faith in Christ. He reads it, he may read it very accurately, if he knows Greek and Hebrew and the other things necessary and reads widely, he may read it very carefully, but understanding it in the spiritual sense is only the province of the Holy Spirit. So, it is the secret of God.

What is the secret of God? Well, it's clear, it seems to me, from the reading of this book and especially the things that follow is that the secret of God is the whole purpose of God in history. That's the point, so what he is saying is, we've now reached the end of the divine program of God, and things are going to come to their conclusion soon. You might say it's nothing more, nor less than the final sum of all God's revelations and doings for the reinstatement of men into his lost inheritance. When God created man in the Garden of Eden, he promised him that he would rule and reign in the earth. He would have dominion over the affairs of this earth, over the creation. He lost that right in the Fall. The program of God through the years has been his way of bringing man back into the possession of what the father intended him to have. And remember, his purposes cannot be thwarted. And so the secret of God then is the whole purpose of God in history, by which man is finally given what God intended him to have. Of course that's not for every man, that's for the people of God, but never-the-less that's the secret of God.

But now, he goes on to say, "As he hath evangelized to his servants the prophets." I think that's rather startling. I can understand of course, that in the Book of Genesis in the very first chapter God should create man in his own likeness and image and say of him that he is to have dominion in this earth in which he has been planted. And then of course, the fall takes place, and one might have some questions about what is going to happen in the light of the Fall. I can understand, as the program of God unfolds, particularly when we come to the New Testament, that it's God's intent to give man back control over this universe.

And then of course in the very next chapter, we will read of the sounding of the seventh angel, "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Messiah; and he shall reign for ever and ever." So, the things that man lost in the Garden of Eden because of Adam's sin shall be regained by our Lord Jesus, the last Adam, the second man, and man shall have his intended inheritance. So, he will have it, but what's

interesting about this is that John says that it was the prophets who preached this gospel. I say that's interesting, because there are lots of people who think the Old Testament is an old testament and therefore, it has not a whole lot of relevance to us today.

But never forget this, my Christian friend; the Old Testament was the Bible of the apostles. When Paul wanted to prove something, to what did he go? To the New Testament? There was no New Testament. He went to the prophets, Moses and the prophets, and then we know from reading him that he went also to the psalmist. But those great parts of the Old Testament were the things to which he appealed. He proved that Jesus was the Messiah from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. So, when John says here, "As he had evangelized to his servants the prophets," he is telling us, among other things, that what we are reading about in this book is found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Listen to what Amos writes, "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets." So, if you are going to study Scripture, you must be a student of the Old Testament as well as the New. As a matter of fact, one of the greatest insights that one has into the Book of Revelation is the knowledge of the Old Testament. But that's evangelism, that's gospel, and it's through his servants the prophets. In other words, it's true gospel. It's true good news.

Now I don't mean this is the gospel in the sense in which Paul uses the term in 1 Corinthians 15, but this is good news. It's the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. What God has made known in his great plan and purpose for this creation is good news. It is glad tidings. Sometimes people shake their heads and say we are quite beside the gospel, and in fact beside ourselves when we preach about the second coming of Christ and the end of all things, but the angel who gave us this revelation has a different mind on these points. He speaks as if these things are gospel things.

And as a matter of fact, what he says is, that if you will look at the divine program and look at it in the light of Scripture, you must include what the prophets say on this

matter, and I think its further to say, and further correct to say, that if an individual drops from his message the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and repudiates the second advent as a central theme of the word of God and of one of the great truths with reference to the consummation of all things, then what he tells us is that his gospel is not all together gospel. In other words, you cannot faithfully preach the word of God in the sense in which God wanted it preached and the sense in which the prophets wanted it preached and the apostles wanted it preached, you cannot preach that word if you do not preach both of the comings of our Lord, his first coming in his redemptive work, and the completion of it in his second advent by which he brings the whole creation into submission to the Lord God in heaven.

That's why you cannot be faithful to the word of God if you do not preach prophecy. I do not mean all the time. Of course, there are a lot of quacks and fanatics out there. Some of them who only preach the Book of Revelation, because it's sensational and a lot of people will come to it. We've avoided that in Believers Chapel, and as you well know, this is, I think, the first time that it's been preached in our services since 1964, 1965, when some of you were running around as little children. But it's very important, this prophetic word. It's truly good news. It's truly gospel.

Now at this point there is a request of the voice from heaven. The eighth verse says, "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 then John responds, and we read about the result. "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." Now the reason that he uses this figure of eating is because eating is a figure of appropriation and assimilation. We use it in that sense, don't we? We say as we leave this meeting this morning, we walk out into the hall and we say to our friends, "Well Dr. Johnson was preaching today, but he was way over my head." That's

permissible incidentally. [Laughter] But you might go out and say, "That was very interesting, but I didn't get everything in it, and I'm going to think about so that I might be able to digest it." And when we say digest, we're using the same figure of speech. We've transferred the eating metaphor into spiritual response, assimilation. So, John here takes the little book and he eats it up.

Incidentally, this is all derived from the Old Testament, really as a figure, because this is what Ezekiel did in chapter 3 of Ezekiel. But you are all familiar with Ezekiel, so I didn't have to tell you that; assimilation, receiving of knowledge, eating. So John ate it, and it was in his mouth sweet as honey, "And as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." And John looked around and said, "Where are the Tums?" [Laughter] Well no, this is all vision, but it's similar to Ezekiel's experience.

One might ask the question, legitimately I think why is it sweet and then bitter? Well, John doesn't give us a full explanation of this, so my explanation does not have anything other than whatever sanctified imagination or whatever sanctified interpretation I can suggest to you. There are two things that come to my mind. The seventieth week, the week of the great tribulation, the seven years that lie ahead of us, in which we will read a good bit in the remainder of this book, was a seven year period of time that had two characteristic parts to it. The first half of the week is relatively peaceful, but the last three-and-a-half years are called the great tribulation by our Lord. So, perhaps there is some reference to that. He eats the book and it tastes good, the first half of the week, but then it becomes bitter because of the stupendous judgments of the last part of that week, or the great tribulation.

On the other hand, it may be a reference to the simple fact that the kingdom of God is to come through sufferings. Now, our Lord told the apostles that when they were surprised that he suffered. He said, "Oh fools and slow of heart not to believe all the things that the prophets have written. Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things and then to enter into his glory." So perhaps there's a reference to that.

But finally, the chapter concludes with verse 11, the interpretation, "He said unto me, You must prophesy of or concerning many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." That's the meaning of the eating of the book. You are going to have to prophecy. You can tell from this that the prophecies are prophecies of judgment primarily. So, John is an individual who will eat the book. He's not going to be a parrot, but he's a prophet. He enters into an understanding of what he's talking about.

One of my old teachers used to say, "John the Baptist said that he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He was a voice, not an echo." So, John is really to enter into the experience of what he is talking about.

Well, the preparation has now been made for the completion of the mystery of God, and in chapter 16 we will read the words, "And it is done." Further unfolding of the trumpet judgment will issue in the seven bowl judgments and details in connection with it. Our preparation ought to be made for escape from that bitter judgment. To immutable things proclaim the end: the promise of God, and the oath of God. And the very fact that this angel swears, and the very fact that God in the word of God gives his own oath with reference to the fulfillment of his word should indicate to us that it is sure to come to pass. We've suffered many delays. There have been many delays that others have suffered. Other events may occur, it may not be next week that this great program begins to come to its consolation, but those things don't drive us into the ranks of the scoffers. The great day of consummation is sure to come.

You of course, need by God's grace, to recognize your lost condition and flee to him and his saving work that you may be delivered from the judgment that is sure to come. Some years ago I was attending a meeting, which Jack Whertson was one of the teachers and I was one of the teachers, and Jack had a ministry with the West Point cadets, and as many of you may know, he had a very significant ministry with young people in the city of New York. He went down to West Point for a Bible class, and there was a West Point cadet who one night had been very, very troubled and finally

determined that he was going to make an end of his life, and so he left his room. He walked out, very disturbed and depressed, making his way down to the palisades to throw himself over the palisades to death, and on the way met a friend who said, "Why don't you come over to the Captain's house for Bible study tonight?"

"Bible study," he said. "Yes, come on with me and you'll enjoy it." Well, he came. He was wonderfully converted. He became a very radiant Christian and afterward, he asked his friend, "Do you know what I was on my way to doing tonight?" He said, "No." "I was on my way to suicide." When Jack told the illustration, he said, "That individual, by the way, who was about to commit suicide then became a Christian, married one of the young ladies in the Word of Life work, and he is now in Panama as a missionary of the Lord Jesus. Not as a professional missionary, but as a West Point graduate serving in the Army in Panama, but Jack liked to say, "He was in uniform as a missionary of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he is a missionary at government expense." [Laughter] That's the decision that we all need to make.

May God, in his grace, call to our attention what we really are, sinners; to our attention what Christ has done, saved sinners through the sacrifice of himself. Come to him. Confess your need for him, and receive as a free gift the eternal life that God offers to sinners. May God help you to come. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful for the blessings that our Lord Jesus Christ has made available for us through the blood that was shed. We give Thee our thanks; Lord for all that Christ has done for Jesus sake. Amen.