



THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study 27

Text: Rev. 10:8-11

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2. What the text means.

Eating the Scroll, pt. 2

Greek NT	Gute Nachricht Bibel	NRSV	NLT
<p>8 Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἦν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ’ ἐμοῦ καὶ λέγουσαν· ὕπαγε λάβε τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ ἐστῶτος ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. 9 καὶ ἀπῆλθα πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναι μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον. καὶ λέγει μοι· λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό, καὶ πικρανεῖ σου τὴν κοιλίαν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἔσται γλυκὺ ὡς μέλι.</p> <p>10 Καὶ ἔλαβον τὸ βιβλαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου καὶ κατέφαγον αὐτό, καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκὺ καὶ ὅτε ἔφαγον αὐτό, ἐπικράνθη ἡ κοιλία μου. 11 καὶ λέγουσίν μοι· δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς.</p>	<p>8 Dann sprach die Stimme aus dem Himmel, die ich zuvor gehört hatte, noch einmal zu mir: »Geh und nimm die offene Buchrolle aus der Hand des Engels, der auf dem Meer und dem Land steht!« 9 Ich ging zu dem Engel und bat ihn, mir die Buchrolle zu geben. Er sagte zu mir: »Nimm sie und iss sie auf! Sie wird dir bitter im Magen liegen, aber in deinem Mund wird sie süß sein wie Honig.«</p> <p>10 Ich nahm die kleine Buchrolle aus seiner Hand und aß sie auf. Sie schmeckte wie Honig. Aber als ich sie hinuntergeschluckt hatte, lag sie mir bitter im Magen. 11 Dann sagte mir jemand: »Du musst noch ein weiteres Mal als Prophet verkünden, was Gott mit den Völkern, Nationen, Stämmen und Königen vorhat.«</p>	<p>8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven 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 it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, when you swallow it, it will but sweet as honey in your mouth."</p> <p>10 So 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 Then they said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."</p>	<p>8 Then the voice from heaven called to me again: "Go and take the unrolled scroll from the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I approached him and asked him to give me the little scroll. "Yes, take it and eat it," he said. "At first it will taste like honey, but it will make your stomach sour!"</p> <p>10 So I took the little scroll from the hands of the angel, and I ate it! It was sweet in my mouth, but it made my stomach sour. 11 Then he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings."</p>

INTRODUCTION

In this continuation of the first scene (10:1-11) of the Interlude in 10:1-11:14, the focus shifts again from *εἶδον*, *I saw* (v. 5), to *ἤκουσα*, *I heard* (v. 8). This continues the literary strategy of signaling new directions -- something which is found throughout the book of Revelation. Notice the pattern in chapter ten: *εἶδον*, v. 1; *ἤκουσα*, v. 4; *εἶδον*, v. 5; *ἤκουσα*, v. 8.

This time John hears a voice directly from God

telling him to take the scroll from the angel and eat it. What? Eat a papyrus scroll? Not something pleasant for food, to be sure. But this symbolic action signaled that John must master the contents of the scroll in order to be able to proclaim the contents to others. Some of the OT prophets such as Ezekiel had to do the same prior to beginning ministry to Covenant Israel. What an interesting image for learning the revelation of God to His people!

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

Here again the background issues play a minimal role for the interpretation of this text. The image of a man eating a scroll has antecedents among the OT prophets, but this is more an exegetic issue than a background issue.

Historical Aspects:

External History. In the history of the hand copying of this passage up to the time of the printing press in the fifteenth century the only uncertainty present in vv. 8-11 concerns the use of βιβλαρίδιον or βιβλίον in verses 8, 9, and 10 (also v. 2). Various editions of the UBS adopt alternative readings:

Dominant patterns in printed GNTs:

GNT:	V.8	V. 9	V. 10
UBS 1st	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
UBS 2nd	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
UBS 3rd	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
UBS 4th	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
UBS 4th rev	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
Nes 25th	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
N-A 26th	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
N-A 27th	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
N-A 28th	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
SBL GNT	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
W-H 1881	βιβλίον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
Tichend.	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
Byz. MT	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλίον
TR 1881	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
TR 1624	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον
TR 1550	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον	βιβλαρίδιον

The current UBS 4th rev ed does not list this in the Text Apparatus, even though the companion Textual Commentary contains a listing, indicating that in previous editions the variant reading in verse 10 was included in the apparatus.¹

The problem here does not relate to definitional meaning since both βιβλαρίδιον and βιβλίον have the same technical meaning of 'little' or 'short' scroll. The variations of both βιβλαρίδιον and βιβλίον, as well as the alternative

¹"In view of the variation between βιβλαρίδιον in verses 2 and 9 and βιβλίον in ver. 8, it is not easy to decide in ver. 10 between βιβλαρίδιον (A C P al) and βιβλίον (κ 046 1854 al). A third reading, βιβλιδάριον, has only minuscule support, including 1006 1611 2053. On the basis chiefly of the weight of external evidence the Committee preferred βιβλαρίδιον, to which also P⁴⁷ seems to point with βιβλίδιον." [Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 671.]

spellings of βιβλίδιον, βιβλιδάριον, and βυβλάριον that show up in isolated mss, plugs us into developing tendencies inside the Greek language during the first eight to ten centuries of the Christian era. At most times the use of diminutive forms which is represented by the -ιον suffix was considered inferior Greek and to be avoided. Technically all of the above listed spellings are diminutive forms of βιβλος. Added to this problem is that when necessary to use a diminutive form (as was true here) the spelling using -ιδάριον represents classical Greek, while -αριδιον is post-classical and not preferred by writers concerned with using eloquent Greek expression. Consequently the wide variations of spelling reflect the efforts of copyists to update the wording of the text to suite contemporary cultural and linguistic demands.

Although the above variation is the most significant one, several others surface in the examination of the existing texts of vv. 8-11. The text apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev ed) list eleven places where variations surface.²

Careful examination of these reveals either careless copying or inten-

²Offenbarung 10,8

* φωνην 1006. 1841. (1854). 2053. 2329. 2344 al ar (gig) vg^{cl}; Tyc Prim (φωνη ἦν is replaced)

* bis -σα 2351 M^K (alternative spelling for λαλοῦσαν)

* βιβλαριδιον κ P 1. 2344. 2351 al (βιβλίον is replaced)

| βιβλιδαριον M

| βιβλαριον 2329

| txt A C 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2053 pc lat

Offenbarung 10,9

* δος 2053. 2329 M^A (δοῦναι is replaced)

* βιβλιον P⁴⁷ κ 1006. 1841. 1854. 2053 pc latt (βιβλαρίδιον is replaced)

| βιβλαριον A* 2329

| βιβλιδαριον M

| txt P^{115vid} Ac C P 1. 2351 al

* 3 1 2 P^{47.85} κ* 2344 (sequence of και κατάρφαγε αὐτό is changed)

*¹ καρδιαν A 2351 pc sy^{hmg} (κοιλίαν is replaced)

Offenbarung 10,10

* βιβλιον P^{47*vid} κ 1854 M^K lat (βιβλαρίδιον is replaced)

| βιβλιδιον P^{47c} pc

| βιβλιδαριον 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053 al

| βιβλαριον 2329

| txt A C 2344. 2351 M^A

* εγεμισθη P^{115vid} κ*; Prim (ἐπικράνη is replaced)

| εγ. et ἔπικριας κ^t 1854. 2329 pc gig sy^{hmg}; Tyc Bea

Offenbarung 10,11

* λεγει 1611. 1854. 2053 M^A it (vg^{cl}) sy sa bo^{ms}; Tyc Prim (λέγουσιν is replaced)

* ἐπι 2351 M^K sy^h (ἐπι is also inserted before ἔθνεσιν)

[Eberhard Nestle et al., Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 651–652.]



tional stylistic improvements. None of the changes impact the meaning of the text. Thus we can exegete the adopted reading of the passage in full confidence that it was the original reading.

Internal History. No internal history issues surface here that are best treated as a background issue. The few that do emerge are exegetical issues more than background history issues.

Literary Aspects:

Here the literary aspects will center on the context and internal structure.

Genre: Only the broad genre of apocalyptic vision continues to play a significant role in the interpretive process. Although echoes of Ezekiel's eating of

a scroll stand in the background, it doesn't not play a role beyond setting an example for John to utilize in the second scene of vv. 10-11.

Literary Setting: As a continuation of 10:1-7, this passage occupies the same literary setting. Chapter ten forms the first part of the two part Interlude in 10:1-11:14, which stands between the sixth and seventh trumpets in John's series.

Literary Structure: The block diagram below of the passage highlights the internal thought relationships based on the syntax of the Greek text, rather than an English translation. Consequently, the translation given in the diagram will be excessively literal in order to preserve the grammar of the Greek text.

10.8 And
318 a voice . . (was) . speaking
 which I heard |
 out of | heaven
 again
 with me

 and
319 they say,
 Go
 take the scroll
 in the hand of the angel
 who is standing
 on the sea
 and
 on the earth.

10.9 And
320 I went
 to the angel
 telling him
 to give me the little scroll.

 And
321 he says to me,
 "Take
 and
 eat it,
 and
 it will make your stomach bitter
 but
 in your mouth
 it will be sweet
 like honey.

10.10 And
322 I took the little scroll
 out of the hand
 of the angel

 and
323 I ate it,
 and

324 **it was**
 in my mouth
 like sweet honey
 and
 when I ate it,
 325 **my stomach was made bitter.**

10.11 And
 326 **they say to me,**
 "It is necessary for you again to prophecy
 to people
 and
 nations
 and
 tongues
 and
 kings
 many.

Analysis of Rhetorical Structure

The internal arrangement of thoughts revolves around the instructions of “the voice” in statements 318-319 and 326, and the angel with the scroll (#s 320-325). The passage is an interaction of John with these two sources of divine instruction. He is totally compliant to both sources of instruction. The interaction is a 1 2 1 pattern.

Exegesis of the Text:

Consequently the most natural approach to exegesis of the passage is in the 1 2 1 sequence described above. John is the common denominator in the interaction between the heavenly voice and the mighty angel in three scenes that give framing structure to the text.

Clearly behind the scenes described here stand the earlier experience of the prophet Ezekiel 2:8-3.3 especially:³

2.3 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με γιὲ ἀνθρώπου, ἐξαποστέλλω ἐγὼ σε πρὸς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ τοὺς παραπικραίνοντάς με, οἵτινες παρεπίκρανάν με αὐτοὶ καὶ οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας,† 4 καὶ ἐρεῖς πρὸς αὐτούς· Τάδε λέγει κύριος† 5 Ἐὰν ἄρα ἀκούσωσιν ἢ πτοηθῶσιν — διότι οἶκος παραπικραίνων ἐστίν — , καὶ γνῶσονται ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.† 6 καὶ σύ, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, μὴ φοβηθῆς αὐτούς μηδὲ ἐκστῆς ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν, διότι παροιστρήσουσι καὶ ἐπισυστήσονται ἐπὶ σέ κύκλῳ, καὶ ἐν μέσῳ σκορπίων σύ κατοικεῖς· τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν μὴ φοβηθῆς καὶ ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν μὴ ἐκστῆς, διότι οἶκος παραπικραίνων ἐστίν.† 7 καὶ λαλήσεις τοὺς λόγους μου πρὸς αὐτούς, ἐὰν ἄρα

³Not to be excluded is **Jeremiah 15:16**. ὑπὸ τῶν ἀθετούντων τοὺς λόγους σου· συντέλεσον αὐτούς, καὶ ἔσται ὁ λόγος σου ἔμοι εἰς εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαρὰν καρδίας μου, ὅτι ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά σου ἐπ’ ἐμοί, κύριε παντοκράτωρ.†

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.

ἀκούσωσιν ἢ πτοηθῶσιν, διότι οἶκος παραπικραίνων ἐστίν.† 8 καὶ σύ, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, ἄκουε τοῦ λαλοῦντος πρὸς σέ, μὴ γίνου παραπικραίνων καθὼς ὁ οἶκος ὁ παραπικραίνων· χάνε τὸ στόμα σου καὶ φάγε ἃ ἐγὼ δίδωμί σοι.† 9 καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ χεὶρ ἐκτεταμένη πρὸς με, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ κεφαλὴς βιβλίου·† 10 καὶ ἀνείλησεν αὐτὴν ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα ἦν τὰ ὀπισθεν καὶ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν, καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς αὐτὴν θρῆνος καὶ μέλος καὶ οὐαί.†

3.1 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με γιὲ ἀνθρώπου, κατάφαγε τὴν κεφαλίδα ταύτην καὶ πορεύθητι καὶ λάλησον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ.† 2 καὶ διήνοιξα τὸ στόμα μου, καὶ ἐψώμισέν με τὴν κεφαλίδα.† 3 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με γιὲ ἀνθρώπου, τὸ στόμα σου φάγεται, καὶ ἡ κοιλία σου πλησθήσεται τῆς κεφαλίδος ταύτης τῆς δεδομένης εἰς σέ. καὶ ἔφαγον αὐτὴν, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκάζον.† 4 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με γιὲ ἀνθρώπου, βιάδιζε εἰσελθε πρὸς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ λάλησον τοὺς λόγους μου πρὸς αὐτούς·† 5 διότι οὐ πρὸς λαὸν βαθύχειλον καὶ βαρύγλωσσον σὺ ἐξαποστέλλῃ πρὸς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ† 6 οὐδὲ πρὸς λαοὺς πολλοὺς ἀλλοφώνους ἢ ἀλλογλώσσους οὐδὲ στιβαροὺς τῇ γλώσσῃ ὄντας, ὧν οὐκ ἀκούσῃ τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν· καὶ εἰ πρὸς τοιοῦτους ἐξαπέστειλά σε, οὗτοι ἂν εἰσήκουσάν σου.†

2.3 He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God.” 5 Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them. 6 And you, O mortal, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions; do not be afraid of their

words, and do not be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 7 You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house.

8 But you, mortal, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you. 9 I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. 10 He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

3.1 He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3 He said to me, Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey.

4 He said to me: Mortal, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them. 5 For you are not sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel— 6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to them, they would listen to you.

For Ezekiel, this vision (cf. 1:1-3) came as a call to ministry experience.⁴ Chapter one contains his depiction of heaven seen in the vision, and chapters two and three focus on the job assignment that God gave to the prophet in direct appearance to him as the Voice speaking to him (φωνὴν λαλοῦντος, 1:28).

A scroll (κεφαλὴς βιβλίου) was placed in front of him and he was told to eat it (2:8-3:3a). The scroll had writing on the front and back with the content being θρήνος καὶ μέλος καὶ οὐαί, lamentation and mourning and woe (2:10). Once he had eaten the scroll the Voice instructed Ezekiel to go speak to the house of Israel (3:1). He complied and ate the scroll with it tasting like honey in his mouth (ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκάζον, 3:3b). No mention is made of it becoming bitter in his stomach as per John's experience; only that the scroll would fill up his stomach (ἡ κοιλία σου

⁴“Vv 8–10 are modeled after Ezek 2:8–3:3, in which God serves Ezekiel an unpalatable scroll to eat, and, like an obedient child, Ezekiel does as he is told. Here in Revelation, the author amplifies the narrative in Ezekiel by introducing a second speaking part. It is God who addresses Ezekiel in Ezek 2:8–3:3 and tells him to ‘open your mouth and eat what I give you’ (2:8), and it can then be inferred that the outstretched hand is none other than the hand of God. In Revelation it is an unidentified heavenly voice (the voice of God?) that commands the seer to approach the mighty angel and take the little scroll lying open in his hand, though the voice does not indicate what the seer is to do with it. The mighty angel is given a speaking part, and it is he who tells the seer to eat the scroll and predicts what it will taste like in his mouth and in his stomach.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 570–571.]

πλησθήσεται τῆς κεφαλίδος ταύτης τῆς δεδομένης εἰς σέ, 3:3a).

The similarities of Rev. 10:8-11 to Ezek. 2:8-3:3 are remarkable. But one must not overlook the differences as well. John interacts with both the Voice and the mighty angel, while Ezekiel does so only with the Voice of God. While eating the scroll fills up Ezekiel's stomach, for John it turns bitter in his stomach. Ezekiel's vision and eating of the divine scroll was to prepare him for ministry to Covenant Israel in exile. But John's similar experience is to prepare him to preach to many that God's wrath and judgment is coming in full force at the end of time.

Despite these differences, the similarities offer helpful background insights into much of the symbolism contained in these scenes.

A. John and the Voice, part 1, v. 8

8 Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἦν ἠκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ' ἐμοῦ καὶ λέγουσαν· ὕπαγε λάβε τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ ἐστῶτος ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven 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.”

John begins by referencing the Voice heard initially in v. 4: ἠκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν, I heard a voice out of heaven saying. This is additionally signaled by the use of the definite article ἡ that identifies this φωνὴ as the same φωνὴν in verse four. The highly elliptical manner of this introductory statement moves it toward a formula oriented header:

ἡ φωνὴ...	(verb missing)
ἦν ἠκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ	(Relative clause)
πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ' ἐμοῦ	(Ptc phrase)
καὶ λέγουσαν·	(Ptc phrase)

The consistent use of the accusative case -- ἦν and -σαν -- in connection to the nominative case φωνὴ poses grammatical challenges,⁵ which several ms copyists sought to correct.⁶ But this kind of grammar irregularity

⁵The way around this rather awkward grammatical construction is to see the two participles λαλοῦσαν and λέγουσαν attached to the relative pronoun ἦν due to their common accusative case. The accusative case of ἦν is due to its being the direct object of ἠκουσα: **which talking and speaking I heard**. The anarthrous participles used in such a manner would be uncommon in ancient Greek.

And this still leaves a very clumsy syntactical construction, not to mention the evident ignoring of the direct object options of the genitive and accusative cases for ἀκούω where the accusative object merely specifies hearing meaningless sound. The genitive case is what is meant here by way of contextual signals.

⁶“The solecism seems to go back to the Seer himself. If he had had the opportunity of revising his MS. he would probably have

is not uncommon in Revelation.⁷ In part two the use of λέγουσιν in the third person plural for φωνή continues this pattern of irregularity, and may point back to 4:5 with *the seven spirits of God*, ἅ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ, in mind. Also in 9:13, the φωνήν μίαν ἐκ τῶν [τεσσάρων] κεράτων τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τοῦ χρυσοῦ τοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ, *one voice from within the four horns of the golden altar before God*, is a part of the background here. Not much distinction should be made between the φωνή in vv. 4, 8 with αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, *the seven thunders*, n v. 4. Clearly the image does allude to God speaking, and the backdrop for this is Ezekiel's experience.

John asserts three points about this Voice:

1) ἦν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. It was the voice that he had heard out of heaven referenced in v. 4 that instructed the sealing up of the scroll in the hand of the angel.⁸ Thus God speaks to John a second time with instructions.

2) πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ' ἑμοῦ. This voice is talking with, not to, John (=μετ' ἑμοῦ rather than). This reflects a more pleasant tone of conversation. The adverb πάλιν, again, most likely modifies λαλοῦσαν, but could be taken to modify ἤκουσα. Although somewhat redundant πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ' ἑμοῦ stresses conversation between the Voice and John as being significant.

3) καὶ λέγουσαν. This somewhat Hebraistic idiom introduces the direct discourse that follows.

In the interaction between John and the heavenly voice the emphasis is upon John listening and the Voice speaking. But this is standard in Revelation. John mostly listens -- and sees -- what takes place in his vision. He does very little talking himself.

What the Voice says to John is ὕπαγε λάβε τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ ἐστῶτος ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, *Go take the open scroll in the hand of the angel stand on the sea and on the earth*.

written ἐλάλησεν ... λέγουσα or λαλοῦσα μετ' ἑμοῦ, λέγουσα. (Cf. 4:10, 17:1.) The reading of the majority of the cursives, λάλουσα ... καὶ λέγουσα, is simply a scribal correction and not in our author's style. Nor is the text read as in 7 vulg^{cle} s¹ Prim., καὶ ἤκουσα φωνήν, aught else than a correction, though it is in keeping with our author's style." [R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 267.]

⁷"These participles are used in an exceptional manner as independent indicative verbs. This participial usage probably reflects Semitic style (see below).²¹³ As such, they strengthen the backward-looking function of v 8 with respect to v 4, where one of the participles has occurred, also followed by imperatives." [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 549.]

⁸For additional references to a voice out of heaven, φωνή ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, see Rev. 11:12; 14:2, 13; 18:4; 19:5; 21:3.

Quite interestingly in Ezekiel 2:8, God tells the prophet, χάνε τὸ στόμα σου καὶ φάγε ἃ ἐγὼ δίδωμι σοι, "Open your mouth and eat the things I give to you." The prophet looked and saw the outstretched hand of God to him holding the scroll: καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοῦ χειρὸς ἐκτεταμένην πρὸς με, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ κεφαλὴς βιβλίου (2:9). God then ἀνείλησεν αὐτὴν ἐνώπιον ἑμοῦ, *opened it up before me* (2:10a). Ezekiel then was able to see the contents of the scroll (2:10b). Once he saw the contents, then God καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, κατάφαγε τὴν κεφαλίδα ταύτην καὶ πορεύθητι καὶ λάλησον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ, *and He said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll and go and speak to the sons of Israel* (3:1).

But John is told by God to take the scroll from the hand of the angel. And the angel then instructs John to eat the scroll. John reflects in this structuring of the scene the later perspective of the transcendence of God working a lot through more indirect mediums of angels.

τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον (v. 8) stands in an interesting sequence of references:

v. 2, καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ἠνεωγμένον, *and holding in his hand an open scroll*.

v. 4, σφράγισον ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς, *seal up what the seven thunders said and do not write them down*.

v. 8, τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου, *the open scroll in the hand of the angel*

v. 9, δοῦναι μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον, *to give me the scroll*.

v. 10, ἔλαβον τὸ βιβλαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου καὶ κατέφαγον αὐτό, *I took the scroll out of the hand of the angel and ate it*.

v. 11, δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς, *it is necessary for you to prophecy again to the people*.

Initially the scroll is open (v. 2), then sealed (v. 4), and now open again (v. 8). John ate the open scroll rather than a sealed scroll. In the background is the Ezekiel image of eating an open scroll which implies awareness of its contents. Even though it was momentarily sealed up, when John eats it the scroll will be open to signal knowledge of its contents. These contents then are πάλιν προφητεῦσαι, *again to be prophesied* (v. 10) to the world.

Again the question arises about the identity of this βιβλίον, that is also called a βιβλαρίδιον. The manuscript variation in the terminology used in vv. 2, 8, 9, and 10 (see above [External History](#)) reflects ancient confusion about its identity as well as in our day.

Not to repeat the discussion in the previous study on 10:1-7, but as a reminder that even though many seek to equate the scroll of chapter five containing the seven seals with this scroll, the weight of evidence is against such an identification.⁹ Assuming that the chap-

⁹"Since the scroll with seven seals was the central focus of

ter ten scroll is not identical with the chapter five scroll, one then has to ask what were its contents? Although these were first sealed up (v. 4), the scroll that John eats (v. 9) is τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἡνεωγμένον. In the previous study our conclusion was that the contents related to details of the very end time events connected to the seven bowls of wrath with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. This legitimately raises the question of whether or not any of chapter eleven was contained in this scroll? The speculation about the contents is wide ranging among modern commentators.¹⁰ But since John does not pro-

the throne scene in Rev 5 and the opening of each of the seals was the structuring device for the first series of seven plagues in 6:1–8:1, it is important to ask whether the author intends the audience to identify the two scrolls. Some have recently argued for this identity (Mazzaferri, *Genre*, 265–79; Bauckham, “Conversion,” 243–57): (1) βιβλίον (used in Rev 5:1–9; 10:8) and βιβλαρίδιον and βιβλιδάριον (used in Rev 10:2, 9–10) are synonymous. (2) The phrase “I saw another mighty angel” (10:1) refers back to the phrase “I saw a mighty angel” in Rev 5:2, thereby linking the two passages. (3) The scroll in the hand of God in Rev 5:1 is modeled after Ezek 2:9–10, which is also the model for Rev 10:8–10; the allusions to Ezek 2:8–3:3 indicate that the seer intends to tell a single story in Rev 5 and 10 of the prophecy he received symbolized by the scroll. (4) Identifying the scrolls of Rev 5 and 10 solves the problem of the nature and content of the scroll introduced in Rev 5, for its contents cannot be identified with the narrative in 6:1–8:1 since the scroll cannot be opened until all seven seals are broken; the last seal of the scroll introduced in Rev 5 is broken at 8:1 and thereafter appears opened at 10:2. (5) The relationship between Rev 10 and Dan 12:6–9 indicates that John regarded the scroll of Rev 10 as one that had been sealed but had now been opened. (6) Since the revelation that John’s prophecy is intended to communicate is contained in the scroll he received in Rev 10, the real content of the scroll is only revealed following Rev 10.

“There are, however, weighty arguments against identifying the scrolls of Rev 5 and 10: (1) A strong grammatical argument against their identity is that while τὸ βιβλίον in 10:8 has an anaphoric article (referring back to the synonymous βιβλαρίδιον in 10:2), the term βιβλαρίδιον introduced in 10:2 is anarthrous and therefore cannot refer to the βιβλίον of Rev 5. (2) The scroll in Ezekiel is open, while the scroll in Rev 5 is sealed with seven seals, which are gradually opened (6:1–8:1), and is then brought down from heaven to the seer opened (10:2a). (3) The mission of John, as described in 10:11, is to ‘prophesy again against peoples and nations and languages and many kings,’ not to them.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 571.]

¹⁰“Whether or not the scrolls of Rev 5 and 10 are the same, the question still remains, Does the scroll in Rev 10 contain any or all of the following visionary narrative beginning with Rev 11? Since the scroll with seven seals provides the structure, if not the content, of Rev 6:1–8:1, it is worth considering whether the same is true for the little open scroll of Rev 10. Since the author provides no clear literary indications that might aid in the solution of this problem, the answers to this question are necessarily speculative. The content of the scroll in Rev 10 has been identified with the following segments of Revelation: (1) **Rev 10–11** (G. Bornkamm, “Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis,” in *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Munich: Kaiser, 1959] 217), (2) **Rev 11:1–13** (Charles,

vide us with clear signals on this point we must content ourselves with only a broad depiction of its contents focused on the very end time events. How many of these were included is not known.

B. John and the angel, vv. 9-10

9 καὶ ἀπῆλθα πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναί μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον. καὶ λέγει μοι· λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό, καὶ πικρανεῖ σου τὴν κοιλίαν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἔσται γλυκὺ ὡς μέλι. 10 Καὶ ἔλαβον τὸ βιβλαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου καὶ κατέφαγον αὐτό, καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκὺ καὶ ὅτε ἔφαγον αὐτό, ἐπικράνθη ἡ κοιλία μου.

9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, “Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.” 10 So 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.

Once God told John to take the scroll from the hand of the angel, the narrative underscores his obedience to this command. And in the process John received further instructions from the angel, that match those given to Ezekiel directly from God.

καὶ ἀπῆλθα πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναί μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον, and I departed to the angel telling him to give me the scroll. Although somewhat repetitive as per ancient semitic linguist literary pattern,¹¹ the core verb ἀπῆλθα from ἀπέρχομαι denotes movement away from and that is pointed toward something as marked by the preposition πρὸς with the accusative case. Thus John moved away from the position he was located in when the Voice spoke to him, wherever that may have been. The point of ἀπῆλθα combined with πρὸς is to underscore distance between point A (the Voice) and point B (the angel). This is most always lost in English translation.

John’s movement πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον, to the angel, underscores both spatial and psychological barriers being overcome. In John’s visionary dream, did he ‘fly’

1:260, 269; Schrenk, TDNT 1:618; Lohmeyer, 87, 89; Lohse, 60–61), (3) **Rev 11:1–15:4** (Schüssler Fiorenza, CBQ 30 [1968] 565–66; id., CBQ 39 [1977] 363), (4) **Rev 12:1–22:5** (Bousset [1906] 312), (5) **Rev 12 or 17** (Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 26), (6) **Rev 15:1–22:9** (Giblin, NTS 30 [1984] 455 n. 10), and (7) **Rev 20–22** (Beasley-Murray, 82).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 571–572.]

¹¹“The narrative at this point is extremely repetitive, following biblical (and hence ancient Near Eastern) literary traditions. Each action of the narrative tends to be first mentioned in speech and then descriptively narrated.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 572.]

up to face the angel directly? Or, did he just stand in front of this gigantic angel with one foot planted on land and the other in the sea (v. 8c)? This we don't know, since in visions all kinds of movements are possible beyond normal human actions. The psychological barrier would have been standing in front of this huge angel and telling him what to do.

Perhaps this is why John couches his words to the angel not in direct discourse with imperative verbs, but rather in indirect discourses using an infinitive rather than a finite verb: λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναι μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον. The use of the very polite form of discourse here underscores that the participle λέγων has in English the sense of 'asking' rather than 'telling.' This connotative meaning comes contextually over the cognitive definition of 'telling.'

Thus John requests the βιβλαρίδιον in the angel's hand. Again from the context it is unquestionably clear that John is using τὸ βιβλίον (v. 8) and τὸ βιβλαρίδιον (v. 9) interchangeably to refer to the 'little scroll' in the angel's hand. This is easily possible because of the diminutive nature (-ιον suffix) of both Greek words.

The angel grants John's wish -- mainly because it was a request that originated in God's command to John. And the angel speaks to John as he gives him the scroll: καὶ λέγει μοι· λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό, καὶ πικρανεῖ σου τὴν κοιλίαν, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἔσται γλυκὺ ὡς μέλι, and he says to me, "Take and eat it, and it will make your belly bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet like honey." The use of the present tense¹² λέγει in a narrative context surrounded by past time aorist verbs -- ἀπῆλθα (v. 9) and ἔλαβον (v. 10) -- highlights the perceived divine nature of the angel's speaking to John and draws attention to it. This although it departs from the LXX rendering of לָקַח אֶת הַסֵּפֶר in the Qal imperfect from אָכַל as εἶπεν πρὸς με depicting God speaking to Ezekiel with the same essential command in Ezek. 3:1.

Very Hebraistic is λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε, take and eat. More importantly it has echoes in Jesus' words in connection to the last supper: λάβετε φάγετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου, Take, eat, this is my body (Mt. 26:26 // Mk. 14:22). But the LXX of Ezek. 2:8, χάνε τὸ στόμα σου καὶ φάγε ἃ ἐγὼ δίδωμί σοι, open your mouth and eat what I give you, and 3:1, κατάφαγε τὴν κεφαλίδά ταύτην καὶ πορεύθητι καὶ λάλησον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ, eat this scroll and go and speak to the sons of Israel, frame the same idea somewhat differently. Only κατάφαγε intersects both texts.¹³ Clearly the image of eating a scroll con-

¹²This is an example of the so-called aoristic present tense verb function in ancient Greek. It is a regular feature in the Johannine gospel for God speaking or doing something.

¹³"The phrase 'take and eat' has a parallel in the eucharistic words of Jesus (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22 [var. lect.], λάβετε φάγετε, 'take, eat'), as well as in the story of Aseneth, who is given a heavenly honeycomb (with virtually sacramental connotations since its

taining words is a symbol for 'digesting'¹⁴ the contents of the book (pun intended!).¹⁵

The two pronged nature of eating the scroll is interesting. In John's mouth the angel indicated the scroll would taste γλυκὺ ὡς μέλι, sweet like honey. This compares to Ezekiel's description of his similar experience (3:3): καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκάζον, and it became in my mouth like sweet honey. Jeremiah's experience of eating the words of the Lord define the significance of this action.¹⁶ His 'eating the words of the Lord' turned into joy and delight. Often in the OT the commands of God are characterized as "sweet as honey."¹⁷

The words of God written on the scroll become spiritual nourishment and encouragement comparable to eating honey. Thus John delights in coming to an understanding of the content of the scroll. It becomes encouragement to him.

But once the contents of the scroll reached his κοιλίαν, stomach, they made it sour. This compares to Ezekiel's experience (3:3): ἡ κοιλία σου πλησθήσεται τῆς κεφαλίδος ταύτης τῆς δεδομένης εἰς σέ, your stomach will be filled with this scroll that I have given to you. Given the depressing contents of the scroll described in 2:10 -- θρήνος καὶ μέλος καὶ οὐαί, words of lamentation and mourning and woe -- the eating of this scroll most likely didn't set well in Ezekiel's stomach either.¹⁸ (consumption bestows eternal life) by an angelic figure and told "'Eat!' And she ate [καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ φάγε. καὶ ἔφαγεν]" (Jos. As. 16:15). Here the sweetness of honey in her mouth is clearly symbolic of the supernatural origin and benefits of the honeycomb." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 572.]

¹⁴In John's world this centered on quick memorization of contents as the first step in comprehending the ideas.

¹⁵What is interesting is that κατεσθίω / κατέσθω is used five times in Revelation (10:9, 10; 11:5; 12:4, 20:9), but only in 10:9-10 does it have a positive meaning. Elsewhere it implies destruction.

¹⁶**Jeremiah 15:16.** ὑπὸ τῶν ἀθετούντων τοὺς λόγους σου συντέλεσον αὐτούς, καὶ ἔσται ὁ λόγος σου ἐμοὶ εἰς εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαρὰν καρδίας μου, ὅτι ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά σου ἐπ' ἐμοί, κύριε παντοκράτωρ.†

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.

¹⁷"The metaphor 'sweet as honey' is occasionally used of the commands of God in the OT (Pss 19:10; 119:100-103) and is a metaphor used for agreeable speech (Prov 16:24). The phrase 'sweet of speech' or 'sweet words' was widely used for agreeable or pleasing speech in antiquity and was a metaphor particularly favored by Pindar (*Iliad* 1.247-49; *Pindar Nemean Odes* 3.78; *Olympian Odes* 1.19; *Sir* 12:16; 27:23)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 572.]

¹⁸"The bitterness of the scroll after it is eaten is a detail not based on Ezek 2:8-3:3 though it may be the author's interpretation of the description of the scroll as filled with 'dirges and laments and words of woe' (Ezek 2:10). γλυκύς, 'sweet,' and πικρός, 'bit-

The symbolism of this bitterness -- πικρανεί (v. 9) and ἐπικράνθη (v. 10) -- underscores having to deliver messages of judgment and punishment.¹⁹

Thus John having first seen the contents of this opened scroll, but instructed to seal it up, now is able to digest its contents as a prelude to later proclaiming them in his own scroll that we call Revelation.

C. John and the Voice, part 2, v. 11

11 καὶ λέγουσίν μοι· δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς.

11 Then they said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”

This final statement raises several questions. First, and perhaps foremost, is why did John say λέγουσίν μοι, they say to me, rather than either the angel or the voice says as λέγει would imply?²⁰ Although it could imply both the Voice and the angel spoke in tandem, the much more likely meaning is the so-called Hebrew plural of majesty, i.e., the ‘indefinite plural’ via Aune’s label. It goes back to the Voice in verse eight as a reflection of God speaking which in Hebrew expressions is virtually always in the plural form. The commissioner, were frequently used as antonyms (Herodotus 4.52).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 572.]

¹⁹One interesting image in the background here comes out of Greco-Roman culture and suggests the ‘eating of a scroll’ implies sudden or premature death:

In Oneirocritica 2.45, Artemidorus discusses book symbolism in dreams; a book can represent the dreamer’s life, as well as the remembrance of past events (which are recorded in books), while “eating books [βιβλία] signifies benefits for teachers, sophists, and for all those who earn a living for words or books. But for others, it portends sudden death” (tr. R. J. White, Interpretation). Bauer has therefore suggested that for gentile Christians in Asia Minor, the phrase ἐσθίειν βιβλία would suggest dream books in which the phrase was interpreted as an early death (BAGD, xxv). For Victorinus, “eating” a book meant memorizing it (Comm. in Apoc. X.3; ed. Haussleiter, Victorinus, 92).

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 573.]

²⁰“The plural form of the verb is problematic. Several solutions are possible: (1) The mighty angel (vv 1, 9) and the heavenly voice (vv 4, 8) are speaking to John in tandem (B. Weiss, *Johannes-Apokalypse*, 184). (2) The angel of v 1 and the fictive *angelus interpres*, who mediates the entire vision of John and who is introduced by the editor in 1:1, are addressing John together (J. Weiss, *Offenbarung*, 42, attributes this verse, along with 10:8–11 to a redactor). (3) The indefinite plural is a substitute for the passive, an idiom that occurs in Hebrew and Aramaic (GKC § 144g; Rosenthal, *Aramaic*, § 181; Moulton-Howard, *Accidence*, 447–48; Doudna, *Greek*, 66–70; Black, *Aramaic*, 126–28; Wilcox, *Semitisms*, 127–28); see 13:16; 16:15 (see Notes on both passages); see Charles, 1:269. The third possibility is probably correct.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 573.]

ing of John to preach this message comes directly from God just as it did to Ezekiel in chapters two and three.

The difference between Ezekiel’s commissioning stated repeatedly but typified in 3:4 is the targeted audiences: καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, βιάδιζε εἰσελθε πρὸς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἀλάησον τοὺς λόγους μου πρὸς αὐτούς, and He said to me, “Son of man, get up, go to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.” In the LXX the verbs ἐρεῖς (2:4), λαλήσεις (2:7), ἀλάησον (3:1), and λαλήσεις (3:11) are used as a defining background for John’s προφητεῦσαι here. Thus to ‘prophesy’ (10:11) is nothing more than ἀλάησον τοὺς λόγους μου πρὸς αὐτούς, speak my words to them (3:3). Here the words to be communicated were contained in the little scroll that John ate, which will surface beginning in 11:14 and following.

The imperative of doing this is presented in a highly specialized grammar structure: δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ... The impersonal verb δεῖ references strong necessity and among NT writers this necessity comes directly from God Himself.²¹ The voice of God speaking to John here lays on the apostle a divine commission to resume preaching the message of God.

The adverb πάλιν, again, comes out of the context of the passage. John already had been commanded by God to write down what he saw (1:1-2; 19; the seven γράψων in chaps 2-3). Then in this scene John was told by the heavenly voice not to write (10:4). Now after having digested the contents of this little scroll which he had seen already open he is to resume this writing ministry of proclaiming the mystery of God.

Of considerable importance is the correct translation of the preposition ἐπὶ with multiple objects, λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς, all in the dative case of the Greek. Although ἐπὶ with a dative object can mean ‘about’ or ‘concerning’, it more commonly with the dative case means ‘against.’ The NRSV translates it as “about,” but this is not the best translation via the context.

What John is to proclaim is a message of judgment and the wrath of God that is against the evil people of this world.²² John is thus called upon by God to deliv-

²¹“The verb δεῖ, ‘must,’ suggests the unavoidable necessity of prophesying (not considered in Grundmann’s discussion of δεῖ in TDNT 2:21–25), while the adverb πάλιν, ‘again,’ suggests that this is a renewal of a mission that has already begun. The term δεῖ, ‘one must, it is necessary,’ is sometimes used in literary accounts of divine commissions (Acts 9:6; 27:24) and is perhaps related to the theme of divine compulsion to proclaim the message of God sometimes expressed by prophets or attributed to them (Amos 3:7–8; Jer 4:19; 6:11; 20:7–9; Sib. Or. 3.162–64; Eccl. Rab. 8:1; 1 Cor 9:16–17; see Sandnes, Paul, 122–29).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 573.]

²²“It is of critical importance to decide how the preposition

er this message to non-believers, while Ezekiel, Amos, etc. in the OT line of prophets were to deliver a similar message of divine wrath and judgment upon covenant Israel for their evil ways. Note God's call to Ezekiel in 25:2 (LXX), προφήτευσον ἐπ' αὐτούς, *prophecy against them*.²³

Who is it that John is to preach against? These people are defined as λαοὶς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς, *peoples and nations and tongues and kings who are many*. Listings similar to this one are found commonly inside the NT as inclusive of all humanity in the world of the first century.²⁴ This fourfold

ἐπί is used in this verse. There are at least two possible meanings of ἐπί + dative in this context: 'against' (reflecting a more typically negative apocalyptic attitude toward the ungodly nations of the world) or 'about, concerning' (reflecting a relatively neutral, perhaps prophetic, attitude toward the nations). The negative way of construing ἐπί is supported in part by the exclusively negative contents of the scroll mentioned in Ezek 2:9–10 (to which this passage alludes), which are described as "words of lamentation and mourning and woe" (Ezek 2:10).

(1) The translation "against" adopted here reflects the usage in which ἐπί + dative (or accusative) functions as "a marker of opposition in a judicial or quasi-judicial context" and means "against" with the dativus incommodi (Louw-Nida, § 90.34). Since John's message to the nations is primarily one of judgment, the use of ἐπί with the dative in 10:11 is best understood in the sense of "to prophesy against the people." In LXX Jer 32:30[MT 25:30] we find καὶ σὺ προφητεύσεις ἐπ' αὐτούς τοὺς λόγους τούτους, "and you will prophesy these words against them." This reflects the Hebrew idiom על ניבבּā·al (Jer 25:13, 14; Ezek 4:7; 11:4; 13:16; 25:2).

In LXX Ezek 25:2 the prophet is told προφήτευσον ἐπ' αὐτούς, "prophesy against them" (the same meaning of προφητεύειν ἐπί is found in Ezek 4:7; 6:2; 11:4; 13:2, 17; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 34:2; 35:2; 38:2; 39:1); see Newport, BT 37 [1986] 330–31. According to Sib. Or. 3.162–64 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP 1:365–66), "Then the utterance of the great God rose in my breast and bade me prophesy concerning [i.e., 'against']; προφητεύσαι κατά every land and remind kings of the things that are to be" (doublet in 3.298; partial doublet in 3.491).

(2) ἐπί + genitive can mean "about, concerning" (Louw-Nida, § 90.23). Rev 10:11 is frequently appealed to as a parallel to ἐπί + dative in Rev 22:16 (Bousset [1906] 166; Charles, 1:cxxxiii; Allo, 360; Prigent, 357 n. 19; Kraft, 281; Bauer-Aland, col. 582 [II.1.b.δ]), so that this view construes the phrase to mean "to prophesy about the people."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 573–574.]

²³In the LXX the sense of 'prophecy against' is expressed with ἐπί using both the dative and accusative case objects along with κατά and the accusative case.

²⁴"Construing ἐπί as 'against' is confirmed by the negative character of the Christian witness described in Matt 10:18, 'And you will be brought to rulers and kings for my sake for a testimony against them and against the Gentiles [εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν]' (= Luke 12:11). Here αὐτοῖς and τοῖς ἔθνεσιν are probably datives of disadvantage (*dativus incommodi*). A close parallel is found in the Olivet Discourse in Mark 13:9, 'and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony against them [αὐτοῖς]' (= Luke 21:12). These sayings may be allusions to Ps 119:46(LXX 118:46), 'I will speak of your tes-

ethnic list is found seven times in Revelation.²⁵ The

timonies before kings.' Predictions that Paul would bear witness to his faith before rulers is found in Acts 9:15 (Paul will carry the name of Jesus before Gentiles, kings, and Jews; cf. 1 Clem. 5:7), fulfilled in Acts 25:13–26:32 and in Acts 27:24 (Paul is told that he must stand before Caesar). The 'kings' referred to in Rev 10:11 are probably those referred to in 6:15; 16:12, 14; 17:2, 9, 12, 14; 18:3, 9.

"On the fourfold list of ethnic units, which occurs seven times in Revelation, see Comment on 5:9. Here the first three nouns, "peoples, nations, languages," occur in the form regularly found in Daniel (3:4, 7, 29[LXX 96]; 5:19; 6:25[LXX 26]; 7:14). The universal character of John's prophetic witness is underscored by this list. This witness is in a sense fulfilled in 11:13 with the conversion of those in the city where the two witnesses were killed, who are earlier identified as representatives from the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations of the world (11:9)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 574.

²⁵"This polysyndetic list of four ethnic units, which cumulatively emphasize universality, is probably based on the frequent mention of the three ethnic groups of 'peoples, nations, and languages' in Daniel (3:4 [LXX has four ethnic units], 7, 29[LXX v 96]; 5:19; 6:25[LXX v 26]; 7:14; cf. Jdt 3:8, 'nations, languages, and tribes'). The LXX expands the threefold Danielic phrase into a fourfold phrase in Dan 3:4, ἔθνη καὶ γῶραι, λαοὶ καὶ γλώσσαι, 'nations and lands, peoples and languages.' The Tg. Esth I. 1:1 has a similar enumeration of four synonymous nouns: עממי ארמיא כל ולישניא ואפרכיא כל, 'all peoples, nations, languages, and provinces' (see Grossfeld, Esther, 5, 40; id., Two Targums, 28), while the Tg. Neb. Joel 2:25 has 'you were pillaged by peoples, tongues, governments, and kingdoms' (tr. Cathcart-Gordon, Targum). Bauckham points out that Gen 10:5, 20, 31, in the context of the table of nations, contains the only list of four ethnic units in the OT, e.g., v 31, 'These are the sons of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations,' while another fourfold phrase is used in 4 Ezra 3:7 to describe the descendants of Adam: 'nations and tribes, peoples and clans' ("Conversion," 328). The number seventy, used in Judaism for the total number of nations of the world, is derived from the total number of nations mentioned in the Table of Nations in Gen 10.

"Similar lists of three or (more frequently) four ethnic groups are found in six other passages in Revelation, always in a polysyndetic list, but always in a different order (see Bauckham, "Conversion," 326–37): (1) Rev 7:9, nations, tribes, peoples, tongues; (2) Rev 10:11, peoples, nations, tongues, kings; (3) Rev 11:9, peoples, tribes, tongues, nations; (4) Rev 13:7, tribe, people, language, nation; (5) Rev 14:6, nation, tribe, tongue, people; (6) Rev 17:15, peoples, crowds, nations, tongues. The terms 'people,' 'nation,' and 'tribe' are used in Josephus Ant. 7.356 as synonyms for Israel or parts of Israel. Isa 66:18 predicts the gathering of 'all nations and languages,' while Zech 8:22 expects 'many peoples and strong nations ... to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem.' Shorter lists are more frequent, e.g., 'peoples and nations' (Pss. Sol. 17:29). These lists are meant to emphasize universality. The fact that Christians were drawn from many ethnic groups in the Roman empire but did not (unlike most Hellenistic religions) constitute an ethnic group themselves led early Christian authors to refer to Christianity as a new people or a tertium genus, 'third race,' in contrast to Jews and Greeks (Origen Contra Cels. 8.2; Justin Dial. 119; Diogn. 5–6; Tertullian Ad nat.M 1.8). Paul referred to 'Jews, Greeks, and the

sense of universality from this list underscores the inclusiveness of God’s projection for wrath in this final end time event just prior to the return of Christ.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

How does this apply to us in the twenty-first century? Although at first reading not much seems applicable, closer examination of the concepts being presented through the apocalyptic visionary imagery are vitally relevant and important for believers in service to God in today’s world.

REVELATION 10:1-8 Contextual Setting



The contextual setting does remind us of some important aspects of religious belief set forth here. Rev. 10:8-11 comes as a continuation of the first part of an interlude between trumpets six and seven. It is inside the span of the 4 + 3 pattern with both the seals and the trumpets. This second set of 3’s generally stresses God’s protection of His people in the midst of the pouring out of His wrath, the basic theme of the first set of 4’s. That theme of divine protection of God’s people rises to the surface very prominently in part two (11:1-14) of the Interlude with the role of the “two witnesses.”

In 10:8-11, we discover how God asserts His authority on earth with the declarations of the “mighty” angel (ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν). What God has in mind in wrap-

Church of God’ (1 Cor 10:32), and Christians also regarded themselves as aliens whose true citizenship was in heaven (Phil 3:20; 1 Pet 1:17; 2:11; see Elliott, 1 Peter, 21–58). Ignatius claimed that Christianity (Χριστιανισμός, the first use of that term) was made up of people from πᾶσα γλῶσσα, ‘every language’ (Magn. 10:3). A similar series of two social groups is found in a decree of the koinon of Asia from the first century B.C. (Reynolds, Aphrodisias, document 5, line 24, τοῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ πᾶσιν δῆμοις τε καὶ ἔθνεσιν, “to every people and nation in Asia”).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 361–362.]

ping up human history at the very end is contained in the “little scroll” (τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον). The angel thunderously announces God’s presence and power, but signals to John that exactly what God was going to do will remain a secret for a while longer. John as God’s spokesman is permitted to see God’s plans in the scroll, but can’t record them just yet.

The pagan world will never grasp God’s plans for they remain τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, *the mystery of God* (v. 7). But God’s spokesman is given the command to ‘eat’ the book containing these plans. He then not only knows what God intends to do, but fully grasps the spiritual impact of these pending actions. His final charge from the heavenly voice is to then make all this known to humanity, which John proceeds to do in subsequent chapters of Revelation. The people of God will then come to have some idea of these plans, even though the pagan world would realize them until they actually unfold in the final stage of human history.

From this we discover once more that our God is indeed in control of human history. Evil may seem to reign, but it has a shocking surprise in store. In comparison to God’s might, evil is utterly powerless. A really challenging time is ahead for the people of God on earth at the end. But God’s protecting hand is present upon them. For the rest of humanity enveloped in its evil and rebellion against God, the final blast of temporal judgments lies just around the corner and will have devastating impact. They will experience moments of seeming victory over God’s people, but these will be indeed short lived and only a prelude to their utter destruction in Hell for eternal torments.

Also we should discover that much of what God is up to in our world remains mysterious and is not well understood even by the people of God. But God is not hiding valuable information from us! Instead, He is helping us reach out to Him in deeper faith and confidence. Yet, through His servants like John He has made known a lot of details, just not all of them. Too much information is not a good thing! I don’t really want to know exactly what God intends to do at the very end. I do know Him, however, and fully realize His profound commitment to His people and their eternal blessing. And that’s enough! Our journey of faith rather than sight continues right on through the end.