

Revelation 9

- v1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.**

We must expect special things with these three trumpets in light of the three woes of 8:13. There is a new atmosphere that surrounds this fifth trumpet, and all signs point to *demonic activity* (e.g. "bottomless pit" and the "star falling" cf.. Revelation 12:4; 12:9). In the gospels we are told that Israel would experience such demonic activity because they sinned in rejecting the light of Christ and His gospel (Matthew 12:24-29, and esp 12:43-45).

The verse says "to him was given the key." This might be the angel that has the key or the star, symbolic of a demon. Most likely it is the star/demon that is given authority to open and unleash that which is in the bottomless pit**. The devil can only do that which God permits (see Job chapters 1,2), and we have already been told that *Christ* is the one who has the keys (Revelation 3:7). The star/demon will be used to accomplish God's wrath upon Israel. God will allow seven more demons to enter the nation (cf.. Matthew 12:43ff), the end of which will be destruction and desolation (Matthew 23:36-38).

** Ultimately, of course, Christ ever has all authority regardless of whether a secondary agent (angel or demon) is used.

- v2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.**

Compare Isaiah 14:28-31

Smoke blocks out light, the implications of which we saw in Revelation 8:12. The smoke that comes out of the pit of fire has similar implications to that of Isaiah 14:31. There we see imagery of thickness and abundance such that the sun and air (sky) are blotted out. What follows will obviously be overwhelmingly awesome in its terror.

v3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Nahum 3:15 and Joel 1:4 provide the basis for the language that we find here. Joel 1:6 in particular tells us that such a judgment that will amaze is brought against Israel in Joel's day, and we must remember that such incredible statements in the Old Testament that God made to Israel regarding the many times He judged them cannot be compared with the horror of the great tribulation in 70 A.D.. Such was the horror of this judgment that our Lord said, "such (tribulation) as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, *nor ever shall be*" (Matthew 24:21). This seems particularly true in light of this unusual demonic element. Great hoards moved by Satan are coming against Israel with the abundance of locusts and the terrible power of scorpions. The onslaught is so great that men will be seen longing for death (9:6).

v4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

A command comes to the locusts not to hurt anything, but only those who are not the Lord's; that is, those without the seal of God. Again, the seal is a sign of identity, ownership, and authenticity (Matthew 22:20-21; Revelation 22:4; John 6:27). The decree may come from the devil but of course all things are in God's hands, even evil (Proverbs 16:4). Thus the Lord is sovereign over all of these events.

Instead of tribulation falling upon the land *and* people (as often occurred when God judged His covenant nation, see Joel 1:10ff), the object of the wrath of God here (through the means of the Roman Empire) is the *people* (Jews). There is an odd twist here in that the living things (grass, green things and trees) are preserved and yet men, created in the image of God, are to be hurt. Moreover, the locust are told not to hurt the very things they would by nature hurt - plants/crops etc., and to hurt the very things they would not hurt by nature - men. This gives us all the more reason to believe that the locusts are symbolic of men, a great multitude moved by the powers of darkness.

v5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment [was] as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

The same locust that are commanded not to hurt grass, trees etc., are now given to hurt but not kill for a period of five months. Now such horrors as God threatened in Deuteronomy shall come to pass because of Israel's disobedience (see Deuteronomy 28:15 cf.. 28:20-61)**. If the exposition we have seen through the first eight chapters is correct, then we should be able to find an historical period of approximately five months when the account we are reading fits the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem.

We find such an account by Josephus in his "Jewish wars" of the final five month period in Jerusalem from April thru August 70 A.D.. This was the final siege of the holy city by Titus and the Roman legions as recorded by Josephus. Starvation, warring factions from within, as well as the Romans without made this period intensely anguishing. The most intense suffering came at the end, when the conflict between Jew and Jew for control of food and the temple was combined with the ruthless Romans army and their demolition and slaughter of Jerusalem as they broke through the city walls.

** Deuteronomy chapter 28 **MUST** be studied to understand the wrath of God against Babylon and her whoredom (unfaithfulness). All of the language Revelation uses implies a relationship (such as marriage, see Jeremiah 3:8 etc.) between the people that are the objects of God's anger and God Himself. Israel was that nation, that people. There was no other nation that had a covenantal relationship with God to be unfaithful to!

v6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

The armies of the Romans, like locusts, came. Titus and his legions laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, cutting off all hope for the city that had been under attack for three years (early 67 to early 70 A.D.). The internal struggles for power by factions within the city had reach horrifying proportions. Much of what the Jewish historian Josephus tells us about the last days of Jerusalem in his "Jewish Wars" is a profound confirmation of this verse. Life had so degenerated that men sought death rather than face the horrors of hunger and the terrors of the wicked men inside the city.

It was the Romans that laid siege to Jerusalem but it was not the legions but the ungodly Jews in the city which were the ones that provided the real foundation for death and terror to the people. The situation was so awful that what God had prophesied in Deuteronomy 28:56-57, Josephus tells us actually came to pass. Little wonder our Lord, in speaking of this period of time said, "blessed are the barren,

and the wombs that never bare (Luke 23:29)." Men wish they had never been born, and now want to die (the Greek is in the present tense, e.g. men will continually seek to die). Such is the tribulation that fell upon Israel. Indeed, the Greek *ekeinas*, "those" days, seems to imply a very specific time with very special days that precipitate such events as we find here.

v7 And the shapes of the locusts [were] like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads [were] as it were crowns like gold, and their faces [were] as the faces of men.

As we saw in Revelation 9:3, Joel 1:1ff is a good parallel passage to look at for this use of language when God is discussing the theme of Israel and judgment such as in our verse here. The locusts are given in John's vision because God wants us to perceive a great swarm of enemies coming against Israel (e.g. Nahum 3:15). These locusts, which look like battle horses, are given golden crowns and faces of men (Nahum 3:15-17), thus turning the hoards of locusts into a great army of fighting men that can and do conquer their enemies. It is a scene of hopelessness as this mighty and triumphant army prepares to descend upon Israel under the hand of Satan (cf.. Revelation 9:1-3, 11).

v8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as [the teeth] of lions.

The coming of these horses/beasts against Israel is just as it was centuries before our Lord was born (Joel 1:6). We see a clear precedent of Revelation 9 in Joel chapter 1, where this type of imagery is used. God, in His purpose, is using other nations to judge His Old Covenant people. Such parallels will help us understand other language to come. It seems in John's vision that the locusts are to be seen as noble and royal with great pomp and glory, and therefore are adorned with great beauty as a woman with high stature (Such was the way the Roman armies arrayed themselves in the first century. Horses were also adorned in such a fashion for battle). John seems to even be mixing these two ideas together; the locusts seen as horses, and the noble fighting horses moving in numbers like locusts.

v9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings [was] as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

Breastplates on the locusts are of strong iron and they move swiftly as is demonstrated by the sound that is heard by their "running into battle." Here John uses picturesque language, the unique sound of the wings of many locusts approaching to give us the feeling of a swift, large, unmerciful army which would have a uniquely frightening sight and sound.

v10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power [was] to hurt men five months.

Again the five month period of time, an unparalleled time of torment according to Josephus, is mentioned here as in 9:5. All the imagery in verses 9:7-9 has little real effect unless the locusts have power to inflict torment. Part of their make-up in John's vision includes this scorpion power, a deadly power that was mentioned in 9:3. The verse uses power (Greek, *exousia*), and is similar in its thrust to Revelation 17:17 and John 19:10-11. The authority to inflict the torment is given by God to fulfill His purposes. The heart of these men is in the Lord's hand, and His purposes shall prevail (Daniel 4:34f cf.. Proverbs 21:1; Psalm 115:3).

v11 And they had a king over them, [which is] the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue [is] Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath [his] name Apollyon.

The fact that the name of the angel of darkness is given in both Greek and Hebrew gives us the universality of the book's audience. This is done more than once in Revelation (see 12:9; 16:16). This also points to why there is so much mixture of Old and New Testament references and themes as well as so much mixture of Greek phrases and Hebrew idioms in Revelation. Many times in John's gospel we see John interpreting Hebrew ideas for the reader which implies that his audience was of Gentile origin (John 1:38; 9:7). Yet it is clear from the book of Acts and Galatians that John ministered mainly to the Jews (Acts 4:13; 8:14 cf.. Galatians 2:1-9). Thus, if James and Peter were still in Jerusalem fulfilling their apostleship as two of the three pillars of that assembly (for which they were later martyred), then John at Patmos might well have been in the best position in light of his knowledge to have written our book of Revelation for instruction on the coming holocaust for both Jew and Gentile.

Note: As an aside, this writer believes that Peter died in the city of his ministry, Jerusalem, and not Rome as some historians have stated (see note on Revelation 11:3). There are too many places in the book of Acts where Peter and Jerusalem are spoken of in the same breath (Acts 8:1; 11:2; 12:3; 15:2ff), and no references to Peter and Rome, but rather Paul and Rome (Acts 28:16-31).

v12 One woe is past; [and], behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

Woe! That terrible word of accursedness, in particular when the subject is the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 13:27; cf.. Luke 21:23).

v13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

The "four horns" seems to be from the tabernacle rather than the temple, although both tabernacle and temple were both places where God displayed His Glory and testified that He was with His people. The latter was the "permanent" dwelling, the former the temporary dwelling place of the presence of the Lord under the old economy (Exodus 40:34ff; 2 Chronicles 7:1ff - in Revelation, see Revelation 11:19). The words to the angel are greatly exalted coming from such a place as this, the One speaking being God (that is Christ).

v14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

God commands the sixth angel to hold back the river Euphrates, the great river of the Mesopotamian region and a great barrier for any people that might threaten Israel. The command is obviously to clear the way for a large, attacking army (see 9:16 cf.. Revelation 16:12). It is interesting that although a river runs in a line and therefore we would expect one angel to have charge over binding the Euphrates, there are four angels involved with the binding and loosing of the river. This might be because the number "four" so readily gives us an earthly idea (e.g., "four corners" of the earth).

v15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

The Greek puts stress on the idea of the preparation as it relates to the four angels (i.e. they *stand prepared*!). They are prepared upon the sound of the sixth trumpet to make the way for the hour, day, month, and year when a third of mankind will be slain. The Greek also stresses the result or end purpose of the angelic preparation was this same slaughter.

It is in the context of the Palestinian land that we must see this prophesied event, for God's Word sets the stage there geographically with the river Euphrates. It is an error to equate "the third of man" with a third of all mankind living (for other uses of "man." [Greek *anthropos*], being limited by the context, see Matthew 5:13,16,19 etc.. for "local" examples). It is a very real tendency to see this book in universal terms, but we must refrain from doing such when Revelation gives us cause to be specific or limited (see note, Revelation 1:7, on the Greek word *ge*). It is certain that the readers saw this statement as limited to area near the Euphrates river.

Note: See Old Testament limits on "all men" related to Palestine in Ezekiel 39:20; Zechariah 8:10, as well as the limitation of "the world" in John 12:19.

v16 And the number of the army of the horsemen [were] two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

If those who have studied numbers in Scripture are correct and the number "two" is the number that relates to man (verses referenced as proof of this by numerologists, Amos 3:2 and Matthew 18:20), then this army is two times 10,000 times 10,000, or a great innumerable multitude of men coming against Israel (the term "thousand" is used for a massive number, see Psalm 68:17; 119:72; Jeremiah 32:18 Daniel 7:10; 11:12). I do not believe the 200,000,000 is meant to be exact any more than the 7,000 in Romans 11:4. It is not that Revelation is void of precise numbers, but it seems that exactness would not serve any purpose here. Indeed, the opposite would be apropos in the picture John is giving of an innumerable army unleashed by the sixth trumpet.

v17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses [were] as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

The breastplates of the horsemen are both beautiful and frightful in their appearance. Even the horses themselves have the look of lions as to their heads and seem invincible with fire, brimstone, and smoke issuing forth from them. It seems as though this is the whole point of the vision - to give us a picture of an army of invincibility both in number (9:16) and strength (9:17). In fact, 9:18 and its carnage is the inevitable fruit of such an army as is described in vv16-17. The Israelites had in their history seen such armies as are before us here (see Habakkuk 1:5ff), but remember that our subject is the **GREAT** tribulation.

v18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

Our verse speaks of killing a third of man in agreement with 9:15, and yet we were told that the fifth seal would unloose forces that would not *kill* but *hurt* for five months. Josephus tells us that during the siege of Jerusalem, the horrors inflicted upon the Jews were from within. But in the end Titus and the great Roman army destroyed the city, killing and enslaving multitudes while leveling Jerusalem as Christ had prophesied (Matthew 24:1ff).

v19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails [were] like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

Some notes about the word *power* in verse nineteen:

Note 1: The symbolism of power in this verse ("for their power is in their mouths") is also said of the two witnesses of God (Revelation 11:5). In both cases the Greek is "authority" (Greek, *exousia*).

Note 2: There is a distinct difference between John's use of our word here (*exousia*, "power"), and his use of the other common New Testament word for power, *dunamis*.

First, John does not use the noun *dunamis* in his gospel or any of his epistles (it is used 12 times in Revelation).

Second, when John does use *dunamis* in Revelation, it means mainly raw power (1:16;3:8), and is conspicuous by its consistent use in the "doxologies" of Revelation (4:11;5:12;7:12;11:17;19:1).

Third, the subject at hand here in verse nineteen is warfare, which would tend to make us expect John to use *dunamis*, yet what we find surprisingly is *exousia*.

Fourth, there are in fact three verses in Revelation where *both* words are used (12:10;13:2;17:13). There is an implication then that John is speaking primarily not of the force that is being used but *the source* of that force and the ability of these people to carry out their plans, again similar to Habakkuk 1 and the Babylonian empire and the plans God had for the nation of Israel when He decreed their destruction by that wicked nation.

Note 3: The very creature (serpent) that is going to hurt men without the seal on their forehead is the same that the disciples of our Lord were to triumph over during their ministry (Luke 10:19), as well as the Romans were to bruise (Romans 16:20).

v20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Thus, the authority being granted, multitudes are slain by the great army numbered in 9:16. Up to this time in Revelation the word "plague" has not been used and we must wait for its grand use in chapter 15 with the seven last plagues (15:1ff). But already, like so much of John's previous terminology, we must look to the Old Testament to understand its background and its origins.

So we look to the book of Exodus where God pours out His wrath upon the land of Egypt, and threatens the same upon Israel herself if she is unfaithful (Deuteronomy 28:15, 28:58-61). Indeed, such judgments were the lot of the generation that was brought out of Egyptian bondage (see Numbers 16). This is important, for if there was an unfaithful generation, it was the generation that crucified the Lord of Glory (Luke 19:11ff; note the use of the word "generation" and its relationship to the first century Jews (Luke 11:29-32,50-51).

Note in Deuteronomy 4:30; and 31:29, it is prophesied in the "latter days" that the idolatry depicted in Revelation will befall Israel, the same days which the apostles wrote that they were living in (Acts 2:16ff; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:19-20; 1 John 2:18). There is most certainly a near fulfillment of Deuteronomy 31:29 in Judges 2:19, because "latter days" can mean both the age of the Messiah's reign as well as just plain "later on." But there was to be a grand apostasy when Israel rejected their Messiah.

Now Peter is quite clear about this prophetic issue of apostasy and falsehood, and relates the current first century problems to Israel of long ago (2 Peter 2:1ff), warning his Jewish/Christian readers to hold fast to truth (2 Peter 1:19ff). That it was not true worship that was going on in Jerusalem in the first century was made clear by the Lord Jesus Himself (John 4:20-24). The message brought in the synagogues was not the good news of eternal life and of the Messiah, but a perversion of the Old Testament (Matthew 23:13ff).

v21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Compare Isaiah 47:1ff and Babylon.

It is most enlightening that in Malachi 3, the chapter prophesying John the Baptist, that along with grace coming to Israel there is wrath and judgment along side (3:1-5). Malachi 3:5 being a verse similar to our verse here. This combination of grace and wrath to Israel was part of our Lord's message (Matthew 21:42-44), as well as Peter's message at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). Repentance is what is lacking in the hearts of these men. That which is a gift from God these men do not ask Him for (Acts 5:29-31). Their hearts are hearts of stone not of flesh (Ezekiel 36:25-27), and they will not enter God's decreed rest (Hebrews 3:7ff; Psalm 95:8ff).

Revelation 10

- v1 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:

The phrase "mighty angel" is used in Revelation only here and in 18:21. It is clear that with the language we find here leading us back to places such as Revelation 1:13-16 and Ezekiel 1:26-28 as well as the "rainbow" of Revelation 4, we are beholding our Lord Jesus Christ. That our Lord, who is God, might be called an "angel" should not confuse us since this was common in the Old Testament (see Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:1, where the "angel" is obviously Divine), and John draws on Old Testament language for much of Revelation. Our Lord does the work of the Father so in this sense "angel" is quite appropriate since the work connotes one who brings something such as a message (see John 4:34; 17:4).

The fact that the vision shows our Lord's face shown "as the sun" is meant to be an expression for Christ in His glory as the God/Man (John 17:5 cf.. Matthew 17:2; Acts 26:13; Revelation 1:16). He was once "made a little lower than the angels," and now He is "so much better than the angels" (Hebrews 2:9 compare Hebrews 1:4). The same John who looked at Christ after His resurrection (John 21) **could not** behold the Lord without falling prostrate before His majestic person as Daniel did (Revelation 1:17 cf.. Daniel 10:8,16,17. For more, see note, Revelation 1:16). Again, the phrase "clothed with a cloud," or just the mention of cloud(s) in association with our Lord needs to be understood because it will affect our interpretation of many other similar and important verses (e.g. Revelation 1:7, Acts 1:11 etc.). Cloud(s) speak of:

- 1) The presence of the Lord - Exodus 14:19; 19:9
- 2) The majesty of the Lord - Job 22:14;
- 3) The mystery surrounding God Himself - Job 26:9; Psalm 97:2
- 4) God's judgment - Zephaniah 1:15; Isaiah 19:1; Jeremiah 4:13; Lamentations 2:1; Ezekiel 30:3; 38:16.

Important Note: The Lord's coming with clouds is *the* major theme of our book and therefore must be understood thoroughly. See beside Revelation 1:7; Revelation chapter 19, Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27.

v2 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,

If Ezekiel 2:9-3:1 is our guide at this point, the little book, consistent with the flow of thought up to this point, is a book of decrees with woe and misery written in it for Israel: "a roll of a book was therein, and He spread it before me; and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe...moreover He said unto me...eat...and go speak unto the house of Israel."

Most references given in the best known Bible cross reference book (the "Treasury of Scripture Knowledge") seem to relate the fact of Christ having one foot on land and one on the sea to sovereignty; that is, it emphasizes Christs' sovereign control over peoples and events spoken of in this and subsequent chapters.

v3 And cried with a loud voice, as [when] a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

The cry of our Lord causes the seven thunders to sound. Whatever the contents of the sounds made by the seven thunders, the words and content must be deeply mysterious. Surprisingly, in a book intended to *seal not* what Daniel was told to *seal* (Daniel 12:4,9 cf.. Revelation 22:10), we have a specific place John is commanded to *seal*, and it is the words of the seven thunders. The words of Christ sound with the authority of a lion, which is appropriate as Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

v4 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.

The greatest secret of the Bible regarding prophecy/history is the day and hour of the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32), and this may be the content of what John is told to seal up and not write in Revelation.

v5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

See Psalm 63:4; 134:2.

If it seems strange that this angel, Jesus Christ our Lord, should look unto God and in the next verse take an oath or speak in the name of the Lord (but, see Zechariah 3:1,2, where the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke thee!").

v6 And sware 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:

The great and solemn words spoken are made more solemn by an oath, that by the Living God there will be no more delay [Greek, *chronos*, "time"]. The purposes of God shall be revealed now and man shall know His purposes and His work.

v7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, God shall fully and finally consummate all of what He has spoken through His prophets in the Word of God (cf., Acts 4:28, see also Daniel 9:24-27, where there is a finishing of transgressions, an ending of sin, a bringing of everlasting righteousness, a sealing up of vision and prophecy. Note also in Daniel we are told that all this "finishing" relates to Israel and the holy city Jerusalem - 9:24). All this was promised to His servants the prophets. The great mystery of the Old Testament relates to the final establishment of the kingdom of God, which kingdom takes away the Old and establishes that which is not only New but everlasting (Daniel 2:44; Ephesians 3:1-6; Hebrews 8:6-13; 13:20). Such a change from Israel to the church is specifically stated by Christ (Matthew 21:43), and the establishment of the kingdom of God was prophesied by our Lord to occur in the lifetime of the apostles (Luke 21:29-31. Greek Note: The word "you" in Luke 21:31 is in the emphatic form: that is, our Lord said **"YOU!** when **you** see these things").

v8 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.

See the parallel in Ezekiel 2:9-3:4.

Ezekiel's little book is revealed to contain "lamentations, mourning and woe" (2:10). The book contains the subjects of judgment which Ezekiel will communicate to God's rebellious nation Israel. It seems quite appropriate for John to use the same type of symbols for the same type of theme - that of Israel and God's judgment against her. Ezekiel's book and John's book contain the same mourning and woe for Israel, our Lord confirming that such would be the case for Israel in John's day (Matthew 23:37-39).

v9 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.

The eating of the book speaks of consuming the whole prophecy/Word of God. The fact that it is both sweet and bitter probably symbolizes the truth that the contents of the prophecy are sweet because they are the words of God but bitter in light of the terrible nature of the prophecy (somewhat analogous to the chastening of the Lord, which is both grievous and peaceable - Hebrews 12:11). It is also clear that the Word of God is expressed as our food in the Scriptures so the incident here is not unnatural (Matthew 24:45; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:6).

v10 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.

See Ezekiel 2:6-3:4 and Revelation 10:9, notes.

v11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

John is told first to eat the book and its contents and then go prophecy to nations, peoples, tongues and kings. A grammatical question arises of great interest and importance here: How do we translate the Greek word *epi*, translated in the KJV as "before." Consider that historians tell us John died during the Roman emperor Trajan's reign (ca. 96 A.D.) and thus could have written the book of Revelation during any period of his ministry (approx. 33-96 A.D.).

There are two schools of thought on the dating of Revelation: 1) It was written during the latter part of Domitian's reign (approx. 90-95 A.D.), or 2) It was written during the reign of Nero (approx. 60-64 A.D. or earlier). Now if *epi* (with the dative case) means "to" or "before," the second dating choice is to be preferred since John would need quite some time to carry out a personal ministry of prophesying to nations, peoples etc.. If, on the other hand, *epi* could be seen as meaning "about" or "concerning," such that the intent of the angel's message is to say that John is to prophecy about nations and peoples (i.e. the rest of the book of Revelation), then either date of writing is certainly possible.

On the whole, I believe the translation of "before" or "to" is preferable grammatically and therefore an early date of writing is probably the correct date (62-64 A.D.). As we shall see, chapter eleven will confirm this dating preference. Further, the angel tells John that he must prophecy *again* which implies a resumption of an extensive ministry. This most definitely points to prophesying in a way that was true prior to his imprisonment**.

** This writer has been brief on the question of when John wrote the book of Revelation. It is not that subject is unimportant, yet we have no inspired answer from Scripture and the date of writing seems to become clear from the content of Revelation itself.