

- b) The first scroll was sealed... could not be read or comprehended until the Lamb who had been slain opened it. (2 Cor. 3:14-18)

- ii. Sweet to the taste but bitter in the stomach



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LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Discuss the quote in the “Introduction” above. How does the purpose described for Revelation strike you? Does it reorient how you view the book? ...how you view the world you live in? Explain.
- How might imagining what we hear in chapter 8-9 be more important than imagining what we see?
- Why is it important to seek to understand how the first audience would have understood the visions of John? How might this require us to be more comfortable with mystery in our understanding?
- Discuss the David Bentley Hart quote (bottom of 1st page).
- What might we learn by seeing the parallels to the plagues in Egypt to the plagues inflicted by the trumpets?
- What chords might some of the images in the plagues have struck in the hearts of 1st century believers living in Asia minor?
- What might it mean that this scroll is sweet to the taste but bitter in the stomach? Supposing that the little scroll represents the New Covenant, are you willing to eat the scroll... to ingest it?

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (13): *The Silence, Sound, and Sweet-n-sour Scroll* Jerry Cisar — November 5, 2023

Text: Revelation 8—10

Introduction

“Revelation is a call to have faith in God rather than empire [nation].... The divine pretensions of pharaohs, kings, and emperors were and are nothing more than a parody of the true sovereignty of YHWH. Because Revelation took seriously the world of the Roman Empire—and declared it a blasphemous caricature of God's sovereignty over the world—we can take our own world no less seriously.” (Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now)

I. Silence (8:1-5)

- A. Silence for half an hour
- i. The Testament of Adam

- ii. The parallels to our text are striking.

David Bentley Hart: “Considering the scope of the catastrophe, and of the agonies and sorrows it had visited on so many, we should probably have all *remained silent* for a while. The claim to discern some greater meaning — or, for that matter, meaninglessness — behind the contingencies of history and nature is both cruel and presumptuous at such times. Pious platitudes and words of comfort seem not only futile and banal, but almost blasphemous; metaphysical disputes come perilously close to mocking the dead. There are moments, simply said, when we probably ought not to speak. But, of course, we must speak.”

II. Sound (8:6—9:21)

- A. Parallels to the plagues in Egypt
 - i. Hail and fire (Exo. 9:23-24)
 - ii. Seas turn to blood like the rivers of Egypt.
 - iii. 3rd plague continues to affect the waters
 - iv. The 4th plague brings darkness on the land, corresponding to the 9th plague in Egypt.
 - v. 5th trumpet introduces a plague of locusts.
 - vi. Possible echoes to Pharaoh's army chasing the Israelites to the Red Sea where God delivered them.

- B. How might a late 1st century have understood this vision?
 - i. Stars and heavenly bodies falling from the sky or being darkened often represent spiritual entities (angels/demons) as well as political rulers.

 - ii. Locust army
 - a) Verse 3 introduces the locusts and some sort of hybrid "locust-scorpion" which then morphs into an image that might more closely resemble a zombie apocalypse.
 - b) "The Animal Apocalypse."

"The Animal Apocalypse is an allegory of the human story, from the creation of Adam through Israel's history to the eschaton, in which humans are symbolized by nonhuman animals, angels by human figures, and fallen angels by stars. The creaturely imagery has a logical pattern: the patriarchs from Adam to Isaac are bulls, Jacob/ Israel is a ram, and *the people*

of Israel are sheep. Gentile nations, who often oppress Israel, are differentiated according to species (e.g., asses = Ishmaelites; wolves = Egyptians; lions = Babylonians/ Chaldeans). (Reading Revelation in Context)

In the Animal Apocalypse, hybrid creatures "stand on the wrong side of the boundary between order and chaos, clean and unclean." (88-91)

- c) The locust-scorpion hybrids in v7 morph into even stranger creatures.

C. What do these revised plagues of Egypt mean to us?

III. Sweet-n-sour Scroll (10)

- A. Who is this angel?
 - i. Does he introduce a *transformative moment*?

 - ii. 7 thunders
- B. What is this little scroll?
 - i. "Take it and eat it."
 - a) Could this scroll be the New Covenant?