

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: Average Morality is good enough: Revelation 10:1-4

Purpose of Stewardship

Would you call the farmer faithful who didn't care enough to cultivate, weed, and spray his fields after the seed was planted? He should change his methods if he's not getting an adequate yield of produce. The purpose of farming is to raise a good crop, and the purpose of stewardship is to multiply the investment entrusted to a manager by his employer. Christian stewardship entails the responsibility of investing whatever time, talents, and possessions God has given us to yield the best returns to Him.

The Way of the World

The fable of the fox and the wolf aptly illustrates the way of the world that the Christian is to avoid. It seems a fox was peering into a well from which people drew water by lowering an empty bucket, and pulling up the full one that was at the bottom. By accident the fox fell into the empty bucket and found itself at the bottom of the well. It made a lot of noise trying to get out. A wolf, hearing the noise, looked down and said to the fox, "What are you doing, my friend?" "I'm catching fish," was the sly answer; "Come down to help me." "How can I?" asked the wolf. "Jump into that bucket up there and you'll be down here in a moment." The foolish wolf obeyed, and because it was heavier than the fox it went down and the fox came up and started to run away. "Are you leaving me down here?" cried the wolf. But the fox answered slyly, "That's the way of the world, my friend; when one goes up, the other goes down."

Salvation has Requirement- Get on Board

A certain businessman arrived at the airport 30 minutes in advance of his flight. He went to the ticket window and received his boarding pass.

Next, he checked his suitcase in plenty of time to get it on the proper flight with him, then sat down with a magazine in the lobby waiting for time to board.

Since this was his first chance to relax all day, he closed his eyes for what he thought would be a ten minute "cat nap." He rested his eyes right through the first, second, and final boarding calls on his flight.

When he awoke, a quick glance at the clock on the wall snapped him back to reality. The flight had taken off without him. He had done everything right except one. He had not gotten on board.

Some people are going to miss the plane spiritually if they do not get on board. It is fine that we have faith and Christian parents and atmospheres in our homes. But we must accept Christ to get on board.

No Half-Measures with Him

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). New status, new life, new creation—we must not separate these blessings. They belong together, and are given to all who are in Christ.

A simple illustration may help. If a vagrant comes to us in dire need, down and out, in rags and tatters, and sick, even starving, it will be good to give him a bath and a change of clothing, but not enough. For he is ill and undernourished. So, in addition, he needs food and hospital treatment. Similarly, we come to Christ down and out, in the rags and tatters of our sin, spiritually sick and starving. In Christ, we are at once made welcome and accepted, and given a bath and a change of clothes. God sees us as righteous in Christ. This is our new status. But it is only the beginning. The Good Physician knows we are sick. So he puts His Spirit within us to give us new life and health, and He feeds us with His Word until we grow strong and vigorous. There are no half-measures with Him.

Christian Nurture

A nursery worker about to plant a number of young saplings, some straight and some crooked, thus reasoned with himself—"These straight saplings will no doubt grow up to be fine trees without much attention on my part; but I will see if, by proper training, I cannot make something of the crooked ones also. There will be more trouble with them, no doubt, than with the others; but for that very reason I shall be the better satisfied should I succeed."

False promises that the Devil makes to you

Revelation 10-14 describes the events that will occur at the middle of the seven-year Tribulation. This explains John's repeated mention of the three-and-a-half-year time segment in one form or another (Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6,14; 13:5). At the beginning of this period, the Antichrist began to make his conquest by promising to protect the Jews and assist in their rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. But after three-and-a-half-years, he will break his agreement, invade the temple, and begin to persecute the Jewish people.

However depressing the events of this middle segment of the Tribulation may be, God is not without His witness to the world. In Revelation 10-11 are three important testimonies: from a mighty angel (Revelation 10), from the two special witnesses (Revelation 11:1-14), and from the elders in heaven (Revelation 11:15-19).

The Testimony of the Mighty Angel (Rev. 10:1-11)

More than sixty references to angels are made in Revelation. They are God's army sent to accomplish His purposes on earth. Believers today seldom think about these servants (Hebrews 1:14), but one day in heaven we shall learn about all they did for us here.

The description of the angel (vv. 1-4). This angel amazes us, for he has some of the characteristics that belong especially to the Lord Jesus Christ. John had seen and heard a "strong angel" (Revelation 5:2), and the same Greek word is here translated "mighty." All angels excel in strength (Psalms 103:20), but apparently some have greater power and authority than others.

We first saw the rainbow around the throne of God (Revelation 4:3); now it sits like a crown on the head of this messenger. The rainbow was God's sign to mankind that He would never again destroy the world with a flood. Even in wrath, God remembers His mercy (Habakkuk 3:2). Whoever this angel is, he has the authority of God's throne given to him.

God is often identified with clouds. God led Israel by a glorious cloud (Exodus 16:10), and dark clouds covered Sinai when the Law was given (Exodus 19:9). When God appeared to Moses, it was in a cloud of

glory (Exodus 24:15 ff; 34:5). "[He] maketh the clouds His chariot" (Psalms 104:3). A cloud received Jesus when He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9); and, when He returns, it will be with clouds (Revelation 1:7).

The fact that the angel's face is "as the sun" corresponds to the description of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:16; his feet correspond to the Lord's description in Revelation 1:15. His voice Like a lion suggests Revelation 5:5. This being could well be our Lord Jesus Christ, appearing to John as a kingly angel. Jesus often appeared in the Old Testament as "the Angel of the Lord" (Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:4; 6:11-12,21-22; 2 Samuel 24:16). This was a temporary manifestation for a special purpose, not a permanent incarnation.

The angel's posture is that of a conqueror taking possession of His territory. He is claiming the whole world (see Joshua 1:1-3). Of course, only the victorious Saviour could make such a claim. The Antichrist will soon complete his conquest and force the whole world to submit to His control. But before that happens, the Saviour will claim the world for Himself, the inheritance that His Father promised Him (Psalms 2:6-9). Satan roars like a lion to frighten his prey (1 Peter 5:8), but the Lion of Judah roars to announce victory (Psalms 95:3-5; Isaiah 40:12-17).

We are not told why John was forbidden to write what the seven thunders uttered, the only "sealed" thing in an otherwise "unsealed" book (see Daniel 12:9; Revelation 22:10). God's voice is often compared to thunder (Psalms 29; Job 26:14; 37:5; John 12:28-29). It is useless for us to speculate when God chooses to veil His truth (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The declaration of the angel (vv. 5-11). This declaration fills us with awe, not only because of what the angel declares, but also because of the way he declares it. It is a solemn scene, with his hand lifted to heaven as though he were under oath.

But if this angel is our Lord Jesus Christ, why would He take an oath? In order to affirm the solemnity and certainty of the words spoken. God put Himself "under oath" when He made His covenant with Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-20) and when He declared His Son to be High Priest (Hebrews 7:20-22). He also took an oath when He promised David that the Christ would come from His family (Acts 2:29-30).

The emphasis in Revelation 10:6 is on God the Creator. Various judgments have already been felt by the heavens, the earth, and the sea; and more judgments are to come. The word that is translated "time" actually means "delay." God has been delaying His judgments so that lost sinners will have time to repent (2 Peter 3:1-9); now, however, He will accelerate His judgments and accomplish His purposes.

Recall that the martyred saints in heaven were concerned about God's seeming delay in avenging their deaths (Revelation 6:10-11). "How long, O Lord, how long?" has been the cry of God's suffering people from age to age. God's seeming delay in fulfilling His promises has given the scoffers opportunity to deny God's Word and question His sincerity (see 2 Peter 3). God's Word is true and His timing, perfect. This means comfort to saints - but judgment to sinners.

In the Bible, a mystery is a "sacred secret," a truth hidden to those outside but revealed to God's people by His Word (Matthew 13:10-12). The "mystery of God" has to do with the age-old problem of evil in the world. Why is there both moral and natural evil in the world? Why doesn't God do something about it? Of course, the Christian knows that God did "do something about it" at Calvary when Jesus; Christ was made sin and experienced divine wrath for a sinful world. We also know that God is permitting evil to increase until the world is ripe for judgment (2 Thessalonians 2:7 ff, Revelation 14:14-

20). Since God has already paid the price for sin, He is free to delay His judgment, and He cannot be accused of injustice or unconcern.

The signal for this mystery's completion is the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:14-19). The last half of the Tribulation begins when the angels start to pour out the bowls, in which "is filled up [completed] the wrath of God" (Revelation 15:1).

The directions that the angel gave to John (Revelation 10:8-11) should remind us of our responsibility to assimilate the Word of God and make it a part of the inner man. It was not enough for John to see the book or even know its contents and purpose. He had to receive it into his inner being.

God's Word is compared to food: bread (Matthew 4:4), milk (1 Peter 2:2), meat (1 Corinthians 3:1-2), and honey (Psalms 119:103). The Prophets Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:16) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:9-3:4) knew what it was to "eat" the Word before they could share it with others. The Word must always "become flesh" (John 1:14) before it can be given to those who need it. Woe unto that preacher or teacher who merely echoes God's Word and does not incarnate it, making it a living part of his very being.

God will not thrust His Word into our mouths and force us to receive it. He hands it to us and we must take it. Nor can He change the effects the Word will have in our lives: there will be both sorrow and joy, bitterness and sweetness. God's Word contains sweet promises and assurances, but it also contains bitter warnings and prophecies of judgment. The Christian bears witness of both life and death (2 Corinthians 2:14-17). The faithful minister will declare all of God's counsel (Acts 20:27). He will not dilute the message of God simply to please his listeners (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

The angel commissioned John to prophesy again; his work was not yet completed. He must declare God's prophetic truth concerning (not "before") many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings (Revelation 5:9). The word nations usually refers to the Gentile nations. John will have much to say about the nations of the world as he presents the rest of this prophecy.

Average Morality Is No Morality

Many of us are like that man who prided himself on his morality and some specific virtues and said, "I am pretty good on the whole. I sometimes get mad and speak a couple of unnecessary words, but then I am pretty honest. I work on my farm on Sundays when there's work to be done, but I give a good deal to the poor and have never gotten drunk in my life." This man one day hired a Christian to build a fence around his pasture. He gave him very specific instructions. In the evening when the Scotsman came in from work, the man said, "Well, Jack, is the fence built, and is it good and strong?" "I cannot say it is all tight and strong," Jack replied, "but it's a good average fence, anyhow. If some parts are a little weak, others are extra strong. I have left a little gap here and there, a yard or so wide, but I made up for it by doubling the rails on each side of the gap. I dare say the cattle will find it a good fence on the whole and will like it, though I cannot say it is perfect in every part." "What!" cried the man, not seeing the point, "Do you mean to tell me that you built a fence around my lot with weak places and gaps in it? Why, you might as well have built no fence at all. If there is one gap or a place where an opening can be made, the cattle will be sure to find it and will be sure to go through. Don't you know, man, that a fence must be perfect or it is worthless?" "I used to think so," said the man, "but I hear you talking so much about averaging matters with the Lord, it seems to me we might try it with the cattle."