



REVELATION 9-10 STUDY GUIDE

The renowned reformer Martin Luther is often attributed with the statement, "the devil is still God's devil." His intent is clear—Satan, though malevolent and potent, remains under the sovereignty of the Lord.

There is only one Supreme God, and the devil does not hold that position. The crucial truth is that ultimately, nothing occurs without God's sovereign determination. Even in the face of evil and the destructive schemes of Satan, demons, and humans, God is not the author of evil. Instead, He permits it for His good purposes (James 1:13).

Revelation 9 reveals God turning evil against itself, using it as a tool for judgment and rightfully glorifying Himself in the process.

CONTEXT

Revelation 8:13 marks the transition into Rev. 9. The symbolism of the flying eagle may be linked to the eagle-like living creature mentioned in Revelation 4:7-8. Before the last three angels sound their trumpets, a three-fold woe is pronounced upon the earth in a loud voice.

- **The 1st woe** corresponds to the 5th trumpet...
- **The 2nd woe** to the 6th trumpet,
- **And the 3rd woe** to the 7th trumpet, which initiates the final series of judgments—the 7 bowls of Rev. 16.

The phrase "those who live on the earth" in Revelation 9:1 points to individuals in rebellion and unbelief before the true God. It shows their earthly focus to the exclusion of godly matters. It appears 12 times in the book, depicting a tragic way of living and a terrible way to die.

Chapter 9 naturally divides into three parts:

1) the 5th trumpet (9:1-12) details the release of demons from the bottomless pit or abyss;

2) the 6th trumpet (9:13-19) lists the death of a 1/3 of humanity through demonic destruction;

3) and 9:20-21 document humanity's refusal to repent of idolatries and immoralities, summarizing their response to the trumpet judgments from Rev. 8:7-9:19.

Throughout these events, the absolute and awesome sovereignty of God is highly displayed. Even Satan and demons, in the grand scheme, fulfill his bidding. It is astounding that despite these events, people continue to defy God, refusing to repent of the evils within their hearts and deeds. John, who needed only six verses to outline the first four trumpets in Rev. 8, dedicates an entire chapter of 21 verses to the sounding of trumpets 5 and 6—referred to as the "1st and 2nd woes" (Rev. 9:12).

THE INTENSITY AND REALITY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE (REV. 9:1-12)

Rev. 9 jumps into the real conflict within the spiritual realm, showing its impact on both the spiritual and physical parts of our world.

Like in Genesis 6, the imagery is both alarming and horrifying as the spiritual realm infiltrates the physical, unleashing demons that bring devastation, destruction, and death. As warned in 8:13, the last three trumpets (trumpets 5-7) usher in "three woes" upon the earth.

This chapter details the unfolding of that prophesied day, a text super-hard to express well in human words.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN PERMITTED EVENTS (REV. 9:1-5)

It is so important to get that everything occurring is within the sovereign control of God. He commands the angels to sound their trumpets, directs Satan to possess "the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit" (9:2), and prescribes the actions of the unleashed demons (9:4). The fifth angel blows the trumpet, revealing a fallen star—a person—distinct from the star mentioned in Rev. 8:10. This imagery recalls Jesus' words in Luke 10:18 about watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Though interpretations may vary, it is most likely to identify this fallen star as Satan himself.

The fall of Satan, already done before the fifth trumpet, remains unspecified in timing. Lucifer, once the morning star and anointed angel, was cast out of God's presence when sin tainted his heart (Isaiah 14:12, Ezekiel 28:14).

Now, as history approaches its climax, Satan gains a demonic freedom on Earth, opening the

abyss—a demonic prison (Luke 8:31, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). The smoke that emerges upon its opening darkens the sun. The abyss, mentioned 9x in the New Testament (7 in Revelation!), will also release the Beast (Anti-Christ) in Rev. 11:7, and Satan will be confined there for a 1,000 years after Jesus' second coming (20:1-3).

Upon the abyss opening, demonic locusts flood the earth, resembling the eighth plague on Egypt (Exodus 10:1-20) and Joel's locust vision (Joel 1-2). These are not literal locusts but demons, released to torment humanity spiritually, physically, and in various other ways. Their mission (9:4-6) is to torment those without God's seal on their foreheads, signifying possession and protection (Rev. 7:2).

Believers are immune (see also: Job 1-2), and the torment's duration is limited to five months. The nature of the torment, which is primarily physical, involves stinging and striking, akin to a scorpion's actions. However, interpreting these events should consider the apocalyptic / symbolic nature of the language, recognizing that what occurs is within God's allowance.

HUMAN SUFFERING AND THE UNATTAINABILITY OF DEATH (REVELATION 9:5-6)

These demonic creatures inflict severe torment on mankind but are restrained by God from causing death at this juncture (Rev. 9:15). Rev. 9:6 is strikingly ironic and tragic, depicting evil people seeking death, the same fate they impose on others. However, death escapes them—they long for it, but it runs from their grasp like water through our hands!

For 1000s of years, humans have fled death...only to find it swift. Now, ironically, they pursue it in vain, discovering they are too slow. The irony and tragedy of this reversal are profound.

POWER AND EVIL OF DEMONIC FORCES (REVELATION 9:7-12)

These verses provide a detailed description of the demons, potentially confined since Satan's fall. While John may emphasize the overall impact of the vision rather than specific details, the account reveals the unnatural and unrestrained evil of these creatures.

Described as "horses equipped for battle," they make up an army prepared to wage war against God and His people (Rev. 9:7). Their considerable size and terrifying appearance—crowned with gold—signify authority and power. Their faces, resembling men, indicate intelligence, portraying them as cunning and cruel, wise, and wicked. They operate under a leader with a well-orchestrated game plan. The mention of "hair of a woman" (9:8) adds an interesting dimension to their malevolence.

Indication of the lengthy antennae of locusts or the draw of their tactics is apparent. The concept that they are captivating and enticing might be understood. The mention of "teeth like lions" conveys fierceness and a deathly force in their assault.

The reference to "chest like iron breastplates" (Rev. 9:9) suggests they are nearly resistant, strong, and well-protected. Overcoming them would require a supernatural power greater than their own.

The description of "the sound of their wings...sound of chariots with many horses rushing into battle" indicates their intimidating approach. The noise of their attack would instill fear in the heart of any opponent facing them.

The statement "Tails with stingers like scorpions" (9:10) indicates they possess a painful sting causing great agony and suffering.

The phrase "Harm people for 5 months" repeats Rev. 9:5, adding emphasis and intensity to their mission of misery.

Remember: All of this occurs ultimately under God's authority, but immediately it happens under the leadership of "their king, the angel of the abyss" (Rev. 9:11), and this King has a name. "In Hebrew [it] is Abaddon and in Greek, he has the name Apollyon."

Both—it is believed by many—refer to Satan.

The Hebrew term Abaddon appears 6x in the Old Testament, derived from a verb meaning "to become lost," "to perish," or "to destroy, kill." Abaddon is akin to Hades in Revelation 1:18 and 6:8, and similar usage is found in Psalm

88:11 where it is paralleled with the grave. Job 31:12 implies a non-stop hunger.

Abaddon is not only a place but also a person, fitting for the angel of the underworld and the king of the locusts in Revelation 9:11. Despite being under God's sovereignty, Abaddon (and his helpers) have an insatiable appetite, representing a destruction that reaches beyond the grave.

The name Abaddon would evoke images of doom and despair for John's readers in the 1st century, intensifying their fear of the impending torture by the angel of the underworld and his army.

Apollyon, the Greek counterpart to Abaddon, is used as a proper name only here in the Bible. The term carries the idea of "one who destroys."

John may have intended an indirect attack on the Greek/Roman god Apollo, and thus on the reigning emperor, Domitian, who considered himself Apollo incarnate. Apollyon and Apollo (Apollon in Greek) sound alike, and worshipers of Apollo had the locust as one of their symbols.

In John's apocalypse, the Greek reader could not have missed the echo of the name Apollo, the god, and Apollyon, the destroyer. The well-known pagan god, a favorite of the emperor behind the persecution of Christians in Revelation, is identified with hell and destruction.

The horror of this divinely allowed judgment is indescribable, yet something worse is still to come. Rev. 9:12 plainly states, "The first woe (5th trumpet) is past; 'behold' (ESV; take notice, look here!), two woes (6th & 7th trumpets) are still coming after these things." The first disaster has passed, but there are two more on the horizon.

WHEN GOD'S RESTRAINING GRACE IS WITHDRAWN, HELL SHOWS UP ON EARTH! GOD ONCE AGAIN DICTATES THE ACTIONS OF EVIL (REV. 9:13-19)

The sounding of the sixth angel prompts an unidentified voice from the golden altar before God (Rev. 9:13), possibly the angel-priest mentioned in 8:3-5. This entity instructs the sixth angel with precision: "release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates." These

angels, likely demons, acting like "good angels" are never bound and are strategically positioned at the historical boundary separating Rome from its primary enemies—the Parthians.

Rev. 9:15 discloses their preparedness for a specific timeframe—1) hour, 2) day, 3) month, and 4) year—with a simple purpose: to totally get rid of 1/3 of humanity. In step with Revelation 6:8, it becomes evident that half of the world's population will perish due to the seal and trumpet judgments, resulting in unimaginable devastation. Rev.9:16 identifies the instrument of this terribleness: a specific army numbering 200 million—an alarming figure noted by John!

The identity of the 200 million army raises speculation—is it comprised of demons or humans? Opting for an either/or decision might not be necessary. While some link it to the kings of the east in Rev. 16:12, associating them with a human army. The primary description, though, suggests a massive number of demons. God directs this astounding demonic activity.

GOD ONCE AGAIN DETERMINES THE ACTIONS OF EVIL (REV. 9:16-19)

Rev. 9:15 affirms that demons bring about the death of "a third of the human race" (Rev. 6:8, where "over a fourth of the earth" is killed). Rev. 9:16 quantifies the mounted troops at 200 million. Rev. 9:17-19 vividly describe the demonic army arriving in the last days.

Unique to Revelation, John explicitly acknowledges the visionary nature of his. The overall impression of the horses and riders takes importance over details. The vision reveals riders with breastplates of fire, hyacinth (dark blue), and sulfur yellow. The colors match the fire, smoke, and brimstone emanating from the horses' mouths in Rev. 9:18. The horses have heads resembling lions, symbolizing ferocity and destructive power.

The destructive forces—fire, smoke, and brimstone—proceed from the demons' mouths, causing a third of humanity's demise.

Rev. 9:19 adds another descriptive element: the horses' tails have power, resembling snakes with heads that inflict harm. From both ends, these demonic hordes possess the capacity to damage and destroy. This description aligns with

the notion that these are demonic forces wreaking havoc on the earth. Fire-breathing monsters, prevalent in ancient mythology, will become a terrifying reality during the Great Tribulation. Reflecting on Genesis 19, when fire and burning sulfur rained on Sodom and Gomorrah, the future holds widespread suffering for much of the world.

God's judgment exposes our terrible sinfulness before a holy God!

PEOPLE CHERISH THEIR IDOLS (REV. 9:20)

According to John Calvin, "the mind begets an idol; the hand gives it birth" (Institutes 1:11:8), a sentiment aligning with Scripture. Both 9:20-21 reveal humanity's refusal to repent in the face of divine judgment. 9:20 emphasizes that idolatry lies at the heart of an unrepentant soul.

"The rest of mankind" denotes those who, despite surviving previous judgments, remain unrepentant. These unbelievers reject the Creator but willingly worship man-made gods (Rom. 1:18ff).

Notably, idol worship often accompanies demon worship. Worshiping lifeless idols parallels worshipping demons, emphasizing the folly described in Romans 1:22 (ESV): "Claiming to be wise, they became fools." Idolatry usurps God's place, allowing demons to take control. This pervasive idolatry isn't confined to distant places but lurks nearby, even within homes.

PEOPLE CHERISH THEIR IMMORALITY (9:21)

Verse 21 details four specific sins prevalent throughout history, potentially intensifying in the last days.

- **"Murder"** involves the unjust killing of innocent lives.
- **"Sorceries"** encompasses witchcraft, occultic practices, possibly involving drug use for divination.
- **"Sexual immorality"** (*porneia*) refers to all sexual sin outside marital bonds.
- **"Thefts"** equate to stealing and unlawfully claiming others' possessions.

These sins directly contravene the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: Deut. 5):

- idolatry violates the first two;
- murder, the sixth;
- immorality, the seventh;
- and theft, the eighth.

Echoing the days of the Judges, these times will witness unrestrained evil, as people do what seems right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Shockingly, impending judgment seems only to provoke further sin, providing a damning testimony of the human heart's depravity.

CHAPTER 10

In 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, the Apostle Paul goes on about the Christian ministry of the gospel as a ministry of life and a ministry of death. He states in 2 Cor. 2:15-16, *“But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ and through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For to God, we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To some, we are an aroma of death leading to death, but to others, an aroma of life leading to life.”* f 10:9-10, describing it as bitter and sweet. This bittersweet message is a mandate for him to proclaim again among the nations (Rev. 10:11).

CONTEXT

Revelation 10:1-11:14 stands as an interlude or parenthesis positioned between the 6th and 7th trumpets. Recall, a similar “pause” appeared earlier in Rev. 7:1-17 between the 6th and 7th seals.

What’s more, there is no parallel “pause” between the sixth and seventh bowl judgments in chapter 16. The rationale is evident: when the bowl judgments are unleashed, “it is done!” (16:17).

Rev. 10 revolves around a powerful angel, a small scroll, and a re-commissioning for John to “prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings” (10:11).

The concept of prophecy—the proclamation of the word given by God—serves as the focal point of this passage. There is undoubtedly a shift in subject matter from chapters 8-9, where the outpouring of God’s wrath on unbelieving humanity is detailed, referred to as “those who live [ESV, “dwell”] on the earth” (8:13). Specifically, individuals lacking the seal of God’s protection on their foreheads (9:4).

Now, a word of encouragement is extended to us here, TVBC: “God’s hidden plan will be completed” (Rev. 10:7b). A person can trust God to conclude matters in his time and way. Confidence in God’s purposes is necessary, so the charge is to persist in proclaiming the gospel among “many peoples, nations, languages, and kings” (10:11).

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GOD’S WORD ARRIVES WITH AUTHORITY (REV. 10:1-4)

A pause interrupts the onslaught of devastating and horrifying judgment. And this pause emerges as God addresses his servant. The term “awesome” (which we all use to describe life sometimes – but best reserved for God himself!) finds a great use on this occasion!

GOD’S WORD DISPLAYS AUTHORITY AND COMPREHENSIVENESS (REV. 10:1-3)

- John introduces with, **“Then I saw,”** a significant and recurring phrase in Revelation (4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1, 11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11; 21:1). What unfolds is the sighting of “another mighty angel,” with angels mentioned over 60 times in Revelation and mighty or strong angels mentioned 3 times (5:2; 10:1; 18:21). The angel, descending from heaven, is depicted as “mighty,” perhaps showing both majesty (10:1) and magnitude (10:2, 5, 8). While demons ascend from the abyss in chapter 9, this angel, as God’s messenger, descends from above, bringing immense authority as God’s ambassador.

- The angel’s description recalls the vision of the exalted Christ in Rev. 1:12-16 we looked at back in May. Simple terms: He’s huge! However, this is not Christ but his angelic representative. **“Surrounded (ESV, ‘wrapped’) by a cloud”** symbolizes glory, majesty, and power, reminiscent of the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14. Clouds led Israel (Exodus 16:10), covered Sinai during the giving of the law (Exodus 19:9), and signified God’s presence to Moses (Exodus 24:15; 34:5). Psalm 104:3 affirms, “[He] makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind.”

Take note: 9 out of 20 instances of “clouds” in the New Testament are linked with judgment (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7; 14:14, 15, 16)

--**“A rainbow over his head”** signifies God’s covenant faithfulness, echoing the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9:12-16; Ezk. 1:26-28; Rev. 4:3).

--**“His face was like the sun,”** radiant and brilliant, reflecting the awe-inspiring presence of God.

In 10:2, we learn the angel **“had a little book”** (mentioned four times in chapter 10). This is likely a distinct book from the sealed book of chapter 5. The angel, of such greatness, claims the message for the entire earth, positioning his right foot on the sea and his left on the land (mentioned 3x).

What's more, his message aims to warn all and be heard by all. He "cried out with a loud voice, like a roaring lion" (10:3). The entire world is under his feet, held in the hands of God.

- Hosea 11:10 declares, "the Lord...will roar like a lion; indeed, He will roar."
- Joel 3:16 states, "The Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and earth tremble."

This cry is accompanied by seven thunders, which speak or cry. Within the little book resides the Word of God, while the seven thunders trumpet additional judgments from God—judgments positioned to impact the entire world at once.

GOD'S WORD POSSESSES MYSTERY AND SOVEREIGNTY (10:4)

Seven seals have brought affliction upon the earth. Six of seven trumpets have sounded in cataclysmic judgment. Now, "seven thunders" stand ready to unleash their judgment.

They have already sounded and are ready for action. John is ready to transcribe. Then, something crazy happens. John hears a voice from heaven, likely the voice of our God. He is instructed, "Seal up what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down" (10:4).

These are the sole words in Revelation that are sealed. Revelation 22:10 says, "Don't seal the prophetic words of this book, because the time is near."

However, in this one instance, John is commanded not to document what the "thunders said."

Why? We can't be sure!

It's worth noting that God similarly instructed the prophet Daniel (8:26; 12:4, 9). And Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us that secret things belong to the Lord, emphasizing our lack of understanding.

What's more, a second issue arise: the seven thunders, undoubtedly heralding another dreadful series of judgments on Earth, are silenced by God. Is this an act of grace and mercy? Does it manifest God's longsuffering and patience?

While "there will be no more delay" (v. 7, ESV), indicating a forthcoming end, the sealing of the

thunders underscores that, as dire as the seals, trumpets and bowls are, it could have been a whole lot worse!

Again, the exact reason why John was restricted from detailing further on the thunders remains a mystery, at least for now. Perhaps someday a clear reason will emerge.

For now, we trust in the plans of our sovereign God, marveling at his mysterious ways. After all, he is God, and we are not—an essential lesson we mere mortals often struggle to remember!

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GOD'S WORD IS CERTAIN (10:5-7)

In Isaiah 55:11, our God assures us: "So my word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in that I send it to do."

When the Lord speaks, HIS word is unwavering, reliable, and trustworthy. It will come to pass—we can rely on it. In a firm and sovereign message, the mighty angel solemnly affirms that which God "announced to his servants the prophets" (10:7) "would be fulfilled" (ESV). Indeed, "there would be no more delay" (10:6). This seems to be the fulfillment of Daniel 12

WE CAN TRUST GOD TO CONFIRM HIS WORD (10:5-6)

In a serious act of oath-taking, the angel in verse 1 raises his right hand to heaven. This marks the only instance of an oath being taken in Revelation.

Jesus, in Matthew 5:34-35, spoke against silly and deceitful swearing, a truth echoed by his brother James (James 5:12).

However, throughout Scripture, revered figures such as:

- Abraham (Genesis 21:25-31),
- Isaac (Genesis 26:26-31),
- David (1 Samuel 20:12-17),
- Paul (Acts 18:18),
- Jesus (Matthew 26:63-64),
- and God Himself (Hebrews 6:13) took oaths as a solemn confirmation to speak the truth.

This angel swears an oath in the name of the living God "who lives forever and ever" (Rev. 10:6),

acknowledging His eternal nature (cf. 1:18; 4:9, 10; 15:7).

Moreover, this God is the Creator of heaven, earth, and sea, and "what is in it" (repeated three times for emphasis). He stands as the sovereign Creator. The angel could not have sworn by anything greater. God will undoubtedly confirm His Word.

WE CAN TRUST GOD TO FINISH HIS WORK (REV. 10:6-7)

The message conveyed by God's servant angel is twofold:

- **Firstly, "there would be no delay" (ESV), addressing the inquiry of the martyrs in 6:10.** God will not halt or postpone the impending judgments. Evil will rapidly unfold as Anti-Christ ascends from the abyss (Rev. 11:7) and emerges as a global ruler (2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 13:1-18). God and evil—the Dragon and the Lamb—are poised for a cosmic battle, a global showdown. It will transpire soon.
- **Secondly, when the 7th angel (Rev. 10:7) sounds to unleash the 7 bowls (chapter 16), the mystery of God will be fulfilled, complete, finished as He declared (announced, proclaimed) to His servants (doulos) the prophets.** A mystery is a truth previously concealed but now revealed. God's purpose in creation and redemption, made possible through the blood of the Lamb, is now laid bare. It is nothing less than the realization of the saints' prayers throughout history, "Thy kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The time is now. The kingdom will come. God has ordained from eternity past the absolute and final defeat of evil. That Day is drawing near. You can trust God to bring his work to completion. We may falter, but he will never fail us! His word is certain.

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GOD'S WORD MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY (REV. 10:8-11)

These verses stand out as the most applicable and practical in this section of Scripture, holding clear relevance for every generation of believers and followers of the Lamb.

The "little scroll" from 10:2 comes back and assumes a central role, mentioned three times in 10: 8-10. God's Word arrives with authority; its promises and prophecies are certain to be fulfilled.

However, the Word's personal value to us is small or nonexistent unless we actively engage with it—reading, internalizing, and then proclaiming it. This is undeniably a bittersweet book, one that transforms us, leaving no one unchanged. Life and death reside within its words.

So, how do we respond to this Word?

GRASP THE WORD (REV. 10:8)

The voice from heaven speaks once more (10:4), likely the voice of God. This voice commands authority and demands obedience.

John is instructed to "go" and "take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel." Both "go" and "take" are imperative commands, undoubtedly necessary for John to approach such a mighty angel (10:1).

Interestingly, the scroll lies open. For us, too, there is an open book God has prepared for us to read—the Bible. Just as John is commanded to go and take the little scroll for his spiritual edification, we are commanded to go and take God's extensive book, exploring its truths.

Unlike John, we don't have a huge angel to approach; there is an open book ready for the taking. All we have to do is go and get it!

FEAST ON THE WORD (REV. 10:9-10)

John approaches the angel and requests the scroll. The angel responds by instructing him to "take it" and to "eat it." Both verbs are COMMANDS!

John is to take the scroll and consume it entirely. The Old Testament background is evident in Jeremiah 15:16 and Ezekiel 2:9-3:3.

This presents a compelling image of how we should approach the Word of God. This book is likened to:

- Honey (Ps. 19:10; 119:103; Prov. 24:13),
- Superior to bread (Matt. 4:4),
- Meat (1 Cor. 3:1-2), and
- Milk (1 Peter 2:2).

It offers a diet for spiritual health and nourishment.

However, a two-level reaction can be expected when eating and digesting this book.

#1 - It will be sweet in our mouths, revealing the gospel—God’s goodness, grace, love, mercy, plans, purposes, His will, and ways. As Pastor Nelson said: “Salvation is sweet!”

#2 - Yet, it can be bitter to our stomachs (vs. 9-10), embodying a word of judgment for unbelievers and a word of persecution and suffering for believers. As Pastor Nelson said: “Friends and family may be condemned to hell.”

There is joy and sorrow, sweetness and bitterness, gladness and sadness when God’s word accomplishes its perfect work in our lives.

PREACH THE WORD (REV. 10:11)

God, through His angel, commissions (or re-commissions) John. Although not identical, the commission echoes the Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus to the church (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

These words bear significant application for all of us. "You must" conveys a moral command, a moral and spiritual obligation. There is a divine mandate and command to prophesy, preach, proclaim again (cf. 1:11, 19).

John is to prophesy "about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings," with the inclusion of "kings" being unique and occurring only here. This is world missions! One commentator suggests it is likely added due to the presence of the “kings of the earth” in 6:15; 16:14; 17:10-11 as rulers of the nations and persecutors of the saints.

Like the bittersweet book, proclaiming God’s word to the nations is bittersweet—a positive message of redemption to those who believe and a bitter message of judgment to those who refuse to repent (9:20-21) and persecute God’s people (11:1-14). Our assignment is to go, our calling is to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. In the midst of judgment, God announces through His prophets the good news of his grace revealed in the gospel of His Son. The sweetness of faithful obedience cannot be soured by the bitterness of persecution, rejection, suffering, and even