

17. The blessing of not knowing

10/17/2004

Thomas Hardy, an ever-so-famous novelist and poet of England at the turn of the century, could have commanded whatever figure to any newspaper, because they were willing to pay him whatever he wanted for anything for them to print. But every time he submitted a poem or some literary piece he always included a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of his manuscript should it be rejected. He remained humble enough to think that his work could be tuned down by an editor who would never be as famous as he.

Even though he was a great poet of England, he didn't assume that all of his poems should be accepted by in the newspaper, because he didn't know what the editor might think about it. It takes a great deal of humility and acceptance of uncontrollability of future from his part.

None of us knows everything. Those who have Ph. D may know a lot in their specialized fields or like a guy name Ken Jennings from Salt Lake City, UT on Jeopardy quiz show, who is been winning over 1.97 million dollars, knows a lot of things, but not everything.

It is very hard for many of us to say, "I don't know." Because it seems that we are ignorant. And none of us wants to be known as ignorant. But the Bible teaches us in this portion of the chapter that it is a blessing to not to know.

A. THE TESTIMONY OF THE MIGHTY ANGEL

Revelation 10:1-3 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. 2 He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.

Revelation 9 left off with the sounding of the sixth of seven trumpets, which usher in the end of all things. Now, instead of the seventh trumpet, we have another interlude until Revelation 11:15.

These interludes serve a dramatic purpose, but also show the mercy of God in allowing more opportunity for repentance from the people on the earth who are going through the tribulation. It is as if God brings things to the brink, then pulls back a little to grant mankind more time to repent.

Many good Bible teachers believe this angel is Jesus Himself because the angel's description is very similar to the description of Jesus in chapter 1. In addition, "angel," or 'aggelos' in Greek, means "messenger"—a term that could theoretically apply to Jesus. Angels are never clearly identified with Jesus in Revelation or in the New Testament, though He is clearly associated with the "Angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament.

But I have a problem with this view because the appearance of Jesus on the earth at this time would interrupt the flow of the book. Jesus is not supposed to be on the earth yet.

I suggest this is an angel of importance who takes on characteristics of the Lord because he is in the presence of the Lord. This encourages me because the same thing is true for us. If we spend time with the Lord, we begin to sound like Him, look like Him, and act like Him a little more each day. That should be our goal on this earth - being more like Jesus, less like ourselves.

B. THE BLESSING OF NOT KNOWING

Revelation 10:4 Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

Although the purpose of Revelation is to reveal, we find a concealing in our text as Apostle John is forbidden to record the response of the seven thunderous voices to the roaring of the angel in verse 3. Why was John not allowed to record it? After careful study, I have come to the conclusion that I don't have a clue.

Not so Ellen G. White, founder of the Seventh Day Adventist movement. She has much to say about what these voices uttered. So do the Mormons and many other cults who have built entire doctrines upon this mysterious section of Revelation 10.

From time to time, some off-the-wall theologians or cult leaders who come up with their own conclusion with a fancy personal revelations from 'supposedly-from-Jesus-Himself' for the things that God said that it is not for us to know. Don't listen to them.

Scripture makes it clear that the message of the seven thunderous voices was to be hidden – which raises a very interesting question: Why is it even mentioned? It's like someone saying, "I know something, but I'm not going to tell you." Is the Lord just teasing us here?

My daughter Michelle likes to know what she is getting for her birthday or Christmas presents. So sometimes, her mom and I tease her by saying to her, "We know what you are getting for your birthday." That makes her to be more curious about that particular present. But our Father in heaven is not like that.

There are some things we simply are not going to know from the Bible. And it is completely OK not to know.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

I see two reasons for us to not know everything God has for us:

1) Not knowing keeps us humble

We all have heard this: "If you want to hire someone who knows everything, hire a teenager. Because they think that they know everything." Teens think that they and their friends know more than their teachers and parents. But when they become twenty something years old, all of sudden, those dumb parents become so smart and wise. What happened?

When I think I have all the answers in any area, I become puffed up, self-sufficient. However, not knowing the answers, not having the solutions, produces within me a humility that ultimately makes me happy because it takes all the pressure off. It allows me to have a simple faith in God.

Psalms 131:1 LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don't concern myself with matters too great or awesome for me. NLT

2) Not knowing keeps us stable

In my opinion, one of the areas that God doesn't completely reveal to us is the area of the spiritual warfare. We've learned about the spiritual warfare from the Bible, but so far, none of us have seen how heavenly angels battle against the demons in the spiritual realm. If we get to see all the activities of demonic forces' work, some of us may lose our hearts, because we might be overwhelmed with sheer fear.

Over the years, I have seen in my own life and in the lives of others a vulnerability to instability when life gets difficult, a tendency to ask, "Why, God? How come, Lord? What's going on here?" If you think you have to know why things happen or don't happen, you'll go up and down in an emotional roller coaster. But when we reach the place of saying, "I don't know why; I don't know how; but I know that God is in charge – your roller coaster ride will even out.

I might not know what or how or why – but I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He'll do what's best for me.

Yet, knowing we would invariably argue with Him if He answered our questions, the Lord chooses to give us a peace that passes our understanding according to Philippians 4:7.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hear me on this, my brothers and sisters:

Our faith is not a true faith in Christ Jesus if it remains as only head knowledge and not exercised from our hearts in our lives without seeing a shred of evidence. We can declare that we believe in God all we want. But we don't put our trust in God in our finance, the control of our lives and our health, our faith is nothing more than a thing to talk about at a Bible study. We ought to walk by faith, not by sight.

C. NO MORE DELAY

Revelation 10:5-7 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven 6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, 7 but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

The mighty angel gives a solemn oath declaring that the end is irrevocably set in motion, that there should be delay no longer. There is absolutely no turning back.

Apostle John's readers were under the persecution by the Roman Emperor and have seen their family members killed, friends beat up, terrible things taken place to them. He wants them to know, "There's coming a time when all of the questions you have and all of the pain you're experiencing will be answered."

In this context, the mystery of God probably refers to the unfolding of His resolution of all things, the finishing of His plan of the ages.

D. DEVOURING THE BOOK, LITERALLY

Revelation 10:8-11 Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." 9 So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." 10 Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. 11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

If we say, "He is devouring his textbook," that means he is really studying his textbook a lot.

The directions that the angel gave to Apostle John should remind us of our responsibility to digest the Word of God and make it a part of the inner man. It was not enough for Apostle John to see the book or even know its contents and purpose. He had to receive it into his inner being. We find the similar situation in Ezek 3.

God's Word is compared to food: bread in Matt. 4:4, milk in 1 Peter 2:2, meat in 1 Cor. 3:1-2, and honey in Ps. 119:103. The Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel knew what it was to "eat" the Word before they could share it with others. The Word must always "become flesh" before it can be given to those who need it. God's double judgement will be upon the preachers or Bible teachers who declare God's Word, yet does not apply into his or her life.

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.

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. The faithful minister will declare full counsel of God. He should not dilute the message of God simply to please his listeners.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) When the Bible tells us that we are not going to know about a certain thing, be obedient to follow God's instructions. Stay not knowing.

It takes an obedient heart and humility to admit that we don't know all things. And if someone declares that they know it somehow, stay away from them. God doesn't contradict His own Word.

2) Our faith is not a true faith in Christ Jesus if it remains as only head knowledge and not exercised from our hearts in our lives without seeing a shred of evidence.

We can declare that we believe in God all we want, but we don't put our trust in God in our finance, the control of our lives and our health, our faith is nothing more than a thing to talk about at a Bible study.

3) The Word of God must always "become flesh" before it can be shared with someone else.

There is nothing more pathetic to see someone claimed to be a Christian, yet that person's life does not reflect what the Bible says. Action speaks louder than words. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Word. If you have to, use your words."