

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
7-3-18

Revelation 11

Revelation chapter 10 explains the reason John received this revelation on the Isle of Patmos. From Revelation chapter 11 onward John becomes a participant in, not just an observer of these events. The seventh trumpet has still not sounded. Before it sounds John is to perform a commission he received from the Lord.

At the mid-point of the Tribulation period Jesus will call his faithful remnant to flee Jerusalem and hide in the desert place, and he will place two powerful witnesses on public display in Jerusalem. For a full three and a half years they will speak to the nation and to the world of impending judgment. In spite of the enormously hostile environment of Jerusalem in that Day, these bold spokesmen for the Lord will be kept safe until their mission is accomplished.

The Two Witnesses- Verses 1-14

¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers." ²But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. ³And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth." ⁵If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. ⁷Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. ¹¹But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet,

and terror struck those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. ¹³ At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

11:1-2 — Measuring the Temple. The "reed like a rod" that John was given represents a surveyor's rod. (Anciently reeds, which could reach twenty feet in length, were used for this purpose. They grew in abundance on the banks of the river Jordan.) Solomon's temple, like the tabernacle before it, had an inner and outer court. The inner court, known as the sanctuary, contained the temple altar. (Herod's temple had four outer courts and does not seem to be the temple that fits John's symbolism.) Again John borrows symbolism from the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 40-42 the temple is measured with care. In Zechariah 1:6 a measuring line is connected with the salvation of Israel. The sanctuary is symbolic of God's people—who will be spared—as the Spirit dwells in them just as it does in the temple sanctuary. John is told not to measure the outer court because those without the Spirit (the gentiles) will not be saved. Note that proximity to the sanctuary (as is the case with "lukewarm" saints) is not enough to obtain salvation.

11:3-10 — The Two Witnesses. These verses make it clear that the righteous will be afforded some degree of protection, which God will provide through his servants. These prophets combine the power of Moses (who commanded that Egypt be afflicted with plagues and parted the Red Sea) and Elijah (who called down fire from heaven to protect himself from King Ahaziah's troops (see 2 Kings 1:10-12) and sealed the heavens so they gave no rain). John uses symbolism from Zechariah 4:12-14 by describing them as two olive trees and lampstands—meaning they stand next to the Lord.

They are to preach for 1260 days, which when divided by the lunar month of 30 days yields 42 months or $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. ("A time, times and half a time" also means 1260 days and has the same meaning as $3\frac{1}{2}$ years or 42 months.) These numbers are full of symbolism. The number seven means perfection and completion, the number six means falling short of perfection, while the number eight indicates superabundance. Six times seven is forty-two, which also indicates falling short of the mark or a task ended without being completed. In like manner, the number $3\frac{1}{2}$ (the distance half way to seven) indicates a task interrupted before completion.

In these verses 42 months is the time evil is allowed to flourish, thus indicating that it will not be allowed to continue until its task is completed. The death of the witnesses causes rejoicing when they are slain. (Their bodies are made to lie in the streets for three days. In the Middle East failing to bury a body is a sign of great disrespect.) The rejoicing is replaced with despair when the slain witnesses return to life. Since Cain slew Abel, murder has been the ultimate weapon of the wicked. When the wicked are deprived of this weapon it is easy to see how they will lose heart. The raising of the witnesses from the dead ends the second woe ushered in by the trumpet blast of the sixth angel.

11:10 Truth remains victorious, even though human channels fall. Their message—and God's plan—march on in spite of death, for even death proves to be a defeated foe. Seldom do we face the possibility of death when we share our faith. Why should Satan threaten our lives when fear of embarrassment or rejection is enough to keep us silent? But if Jesus has truly changed our lives, we will find a way to let others know. Not to witness represents more than just fear; it also reveals selfishness. Have those near you heard what Jesus has done for you?

11:13 The ultimate goal of God's saving plan is that everything in creation will glorify him. "Glory" refers to the splendor, radiance, and magnificence of God. It refers not only to God in his essential nature but to the praiseworthy effects of what God has accomplished. We glorify God because his glory is true and real, and we acknowledge his greatness. In so doing, we see our rightful position as his servants. When we glorify him in our singing, our speaking, and our living, we experience some of his transcendence and thus edify and uplift our own spirits. Glorifying God prompts us to moral action and loving service.

The Seventh Trumpet & 3rd Woe - Verses 15-19

¹⁵ The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever." ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—and for destroying those who destroy the earth." ¹⁹ Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

11:15-19 — Seventh Trumpet Blast and Third Woe. Shortly after the two prophets ascend into heaven the blast of the seventh trumpet is heard with the announcement that the kingdoms of the world will now be ruled by Christ. The third woe, the destruction of the wicked that survived the second woe and the ending of Satan's power, is now at hand. The Ark of the Covenant is used as a symbol of God's covenant with Israel. (It symbolizes the throne and presence of God among his people.) John provides little detail about the third woe at this point. He does not say how Christ will finally overcome the wicked and Satan, or what judgments will be visited on the earth and its inhabitants. John's account of the vision of the seven seals is now finished.

11:15 The seventh trumpet is sounded, announcing the arrival of the King. There is now no turning back. The coming judgments are no longer partial but complete in their destruction. God is in control, and he unleashes his full wrath on the evil world that refuses to turn to him (9:20-21). When his wrath begins, there will be no escape.

11:18 In the Bible, God gives rewards to his people according to what they deserve. Throughout the Old Testament, obedience often brought reward in this life (Deuteronomy 28), but obedience and immediate reward are not always linked. If they were, good people would always be rich, and suffering would always be a sign of sin. If we were quickly rewarded for every faithful deed, we would soon think we were pretty good. Before long, we would be doing many good deeds for purely selfish reasons. While it is true that God will reward us for our earthly deeds (see 20:12), our greatest reward will be eternal life in his presence.