

**Revelation #29****March 5, 2023****Series Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon****Today's Message: The Ministry of the Two Witnesses; Revelation 11:1-14**

In review it would be good to remember that Chapter 10 brought us to a pause between the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet, which contains the seven final bowl judgments of the seventh seal! This interlude has two parts including the Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll/ Book, and The Ministry of the Two Witnesses. And, at the conclusion of the second half of the interlude— in 11:14, we're told that now the "second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon."

Why this interlude?

To strengthen and keep the faith and hope of suffering believers who are living through these terrible woes.

Here in Revelation 11:1-14 we have two witnesses emerge as God's spokesman to the inhabitants of the earth. These preachers will function in the same way that the OT prophets did, and as preachers must do today— to serve by confronting the inhabitants of the earth with their sin and rebellion and calling these wicked people to repentance. They will call sinners to repent and believe the Gospel! It is the last bid for the sinners' of the earth to come to Christ to have life, and to escape the wrath of God soon to fall in its full weight upon the inhabitants of the earth!

These witnesses will do that which is unpopular even among Christians in this day of grace: they will declare that the terror and destruction that has come upon the earth is indeed the judgment of God! In our day there have been disasters and terrors throughout the earth; and it is expected that unbelievers who have no faith in the Sovereignty of God would shun the notion that God is judging the earth to some degree. But, it is preposterous for the Church of Christ, our brothers and sisters, to deny that disaster and terrors are not some form of judgment by the God of heaven. For example, September 11, 2001, a date most of us remember, many preachers were warning that the terrible destruction was a form of judgment. These preachers were ridiculed and silenced. But Amos 3:6b says clearly, "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" See also Isaiah 14:24-27

So, here in Revelation 11:1-14, God is sending out these two mighty witnesses to proclaim a message of awe and of judgment and of repentance and of salvation to the nations, including Israel!

**I. (11:1-6) The Ministry of the Two Witnesses**

A. (11:1-2) John is commanded to measure the temple of God.

1. The General Scene

- a) (11:1a) John was given a "reed" to use as a measuring rod
- b) (11:1b) The command comes from the mighty angel in 10:9-11
  - (1) The same angel from whom John took the little scroll
  - (2) The same angel that recommissioned John to "prophecy"
- c) (11:1c) John was commanded to count the worshipers
- d) (11:2) John was commanded to exclude the outer court from his measure
  - (1) The outer court has been given to the Gentiles

- (2) The Gentiles, John is told, “will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

2. The Significance of the scene

- a) The Temple John is measuring is the Temple built in Jerusalem during the first half of the tribulation presumably under the direction of Antichrist

- (1) **Daniel 9:27** describes the presence of a fourth temple in Jerusalem.

- (a) There, Antichrist has permitted sacrifice and offering
- (b) But, Antichrist sets up the predicted “abomination that causes desolation” (Matthew 24:15; Dan. 9:27)
- (c) Antichrist will at some point “sit in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thes. 2:4)

(2) The Five Temples of God in Scripture

- (a) Solomon’s Temple destroyed in 587 B.C. by Neb.
- (b) Zerubbabel’s temple desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. He hailed it as Jupiter’s temple.
- (c) Herod’s Temple, destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D.
- (d) The Tribulation Temple of Revelation 11
- (e) The Millennial Temple described in Ezekiel 40-47

- b) John measures three things:

- (1) The Temple of God: The Inner courts where the priests of Israel work
- (2) The Altar of God: Where Israel makes sacrifice
- (3) The Worshipers of God: the men of Israel worship at the altar; and this measure would include the court of women where the Jewish women worship.

- c) The significance: God is remembering, claiming and protecting Israel!

- (1) This is confirmed in Revelation 12!

- d) God excludes the court of Gentiles

- (1) The focus of Revelation 11:1-2 is on God’s preservation and salvation of the Israel (See Romans 9-11)

- (2) The Gentiles will trample the Jerusalem for 42 months

- (a) Meaning, they will treat the city as a common thing, failing to understand the significance of Jerusalem in God’s eyes. They will treat it as an unholy thing.
- (i) God will punish the nations.

B. (11:3-6) The two witnesses

1. (11:3) For 1,260 days they will preach:

- a) Proclaiming the disasters and of the judgments of eternal hell which will follow the last days of the tribulation.

- b) Salvation to the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem

- (1) Note: In Revelation 12:6, many of the Jews will flee to the wilderness and be protected for 1,260 days. But here in Revelation 11:3, the witnesses are for those Jewish people who remain in Jerusalem and are suffering greatly at the hands of the Gentiles.

(2) MacArthur: "They preach the gospel so that the Jewish remnant can believe and enjoy God's protection."

2. (11:4) These two witnesses are identified as the two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.
  - a) Zechariah 4:1-14 describes Joshua and Zerubbabel as both the olive tree and lampstands before God. The significance of the tree and lamp signify the power of the Spirit by which they prophecy, or preach.
  - b) So, here, we learn that the two witnesses will be Spirit filled preachers, testifying to the world of the work and truth of God among all mankind.
    - (1) Though they are clothed in sackcloth, they are filled with the Spirit and through them, God brings light to the world through what they preach!
      - (a) The Olive trees symbolizes the Spirit in His fulness.
      - (b) The lampstands symbolize the Word preached in power!
  - c) These witnesses stand before the Lord and minister
    - (1) Their ministry of Spirit filled preaching of the Word of God is to be understood as literally ministering *to God*!
      - (a) While they speak to men their ministry is in fact "directed on being pure and faithful conduits for God in speaking to the nations at the time of the end." (Garland)
    - (2) To look at them may be unimpressive (11:3). But to hear them would mean to hear the very words of God faithfully spoken!!
      - (a) Preachers are to preach in the same power today!
        - (i) Zech. 4:6, "It's not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord Almighty."
3. (11:5-6) These verses describe the opposition to their message from God
  - a) They will be hated and opposed and eventually killed by **the beast out of the abyss**.
  - b) But NOTHING CAN HARM THEM UNTIL THEIR WORK IS COMPLETED!
    - (1) God will incinerate all who oppose them. Fire from their mouths!
      - (a) OT examples: Genesis 19:23-24; Lev.10:2; Nu.11:1, 16:35
    - (2) They will have the power to speak and cause drought. Shut up the sky as long as they are prophesying
    - (3) They will be able to bring plagues:
      - (a) turn water to blood
      - (b) And unleash any plague of their choosing as often as they want to.
    - (4) Again, **they are unstoppable until their work is completed!**
  - c) These verses also reveal the absolute hardness of the sinful human heart.
    - (1) Spirit filled preaching will accomplish two things:
      - (a) It will either save men, or
      - (b) It will ruin men.

## II. (11:7-10) The Murder of the Two Witnesses Causes Celebration

- A. When they have finished their ministry before the Lord they will die

1. The beast will come up out of the Abyss
2. Who is this beast?
  - a) This is the first of 36 references to the beast in Revelation
  - b) This is not Satan. Satan is the Dragon (Revelation 12:3, 9)
  - c) This beast is a world ruler called **Antichrist**
    - (1) He imitates Christ and demands worship (Rev.13:1-8)

B. The results of the deaths of the two witnesses:

1. (11:10) The inhabitants of the earth celebrate
  - a) Great joy because the message of the witnesses that tormented the people has been silenced.
    - (1) They exchanged gifts in celebration
2. (11:8-9) Their bodies are left to decompose in the street; they are refused burial.
  - a) The ultimate sign of dishonor as they desecrate the city of God with the bodies of God's faithful witnesses. (See Deuteronomy 21:22-23)
    - (1) The city is Jerusalem.
      - (a) Where the Lord Jesus was crucified
    - (2) But referred to as Sodom and Egypt
      - (a) This indicates the utter ruin of the City of God.
        - (i) The point: Jerusalem had become no better than Sodom and Egypt—Godlessness reigned.
3. (11:10) The citizens of the earth gloat over them and, as mentioned they celebrate
  - a) But, the celebration is two fold
    - (1) The witnesses are silenced
    - (2) The celebration is also indicative of their adoration of Antichrist who overpowered them.
      - (a) But, as the Scripture says, "Their glory is their shame."

C. (11:9) The duration of the dishonor of their bodies

1. Literally 3 ½ days
  - a) During these days their bodies evidently do not decay and are kept from being eaten by scavenger animals and insects. Why?
    - (1) Garland suggests convincingly that they are protected in order to serve as trophies to the Beast.
      - (a) Their bodies serve as a testimony to the nations of the power and strength of the Beast to seemingly overcome God and His power!
        - (i) They mock God by this act of dishonor!
        - (ii) But it is short-lived! For in 3 ½ days God raises them from being dead to life again!
          - (a) Sinners' successes are short-lived gains.

### III. (11:11-14) The Resurrection of the Two Witnesses Causes Terror

A. (11:11-12) The Celebration is short-lived and comes to a shocking halt!

1. "After 3 ½ days a breath of life from God entered them and they stood on their feet"
    - a) The life-giving breath, or power of God returned life to their dead bodies
      - (1) It is the same breath that God breathed into Adam in Genesis 2:7
        - (a) "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became (at that instant) a living being."
      - (2) The two witnesses came to life instantly.
        - (a) Likewise, when God breathes spiritual life into a person upon new birth, it is an instantaneous new life that arises out of death!
    - b) Terror struck those who saw them.
      - (1) Who saw?
        - (a) Rev. 11:9 says that "men from every people, language and nation" gazed upon their dead bodies. So, it stands to reason that here at their resurrection, men from every people, language and nation witnessed their resurrection!
          - (i) It becomes a global event!
      - (2) The short-lived gain of the Beast crushed. The celebration turns to terror as God demonstrates His power to overcome death inflicted by the Beast!
        - (a) Hallelujah!
        - (b) God undermines the glory of the Beast!
  2. (11:12) A loud Voice from heaven commands the two witnesses to "come up here."
    - a) The Lord commands the rapture of these two men.
    - b) They went up to heaven in a cloud
      - (1) Their ascent to heaven is similar to Jesus's ascension as described in Acts 1:9.
    - c) "While their enemies looked on."
      - (1) No doubt they preached concerning the power of God to raise the dead—a key doctrine of Christianity rooted in Christ's resurrection.
        - (a) Perhaps this becomes the greatest witness of the testimony of the two witnesses and salvation to some!!
- B. (11:13-14) Death, Terror and Glory
1. At the time of their ascension a severe earthquake was unleashed
    - a) Death came to 7,000 people!
      - (1) The Greek word for "people" here is literally, "the names of men." This, according to MacArthur, strongly suggests that the 7,000 men who died were likely leaders in Antichrist's world government.
  2. The survivors were those people living in Jerusalem and probably Jews
    - a) In their terror they gave glory to God.
      - (1) This phrase, "gave glory to God" is indicative of repentance.
      - (2) So, these Jews who witness this event will come to faith in Jesus Christ! Salvation came to some of the surviving Jews!

- (a) In Revelation when the phrase is used it is used in conjunction with faith in Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb! (See Revelation 4:9; 19:7)
  - (b) Other examples are seen that giving glory to God is synonymous with repentance unto salvation
    - (i) Luke 17:15-19; Romans 4:18-24
- 3. (11:14) The interlude ends on a hopeful note. But the sober warning is sounded: the third woe— that is the seven final bowls of judgment and Christ's return is imminent.