

Prophetic Witness (*The Two Witnesses*)

Revelation 10-11 on October 23, 2022

Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

Please read Revelation 10-11 before going further in this transcript.

Last Sunday, Revelation 9 ended with the unfortunate response of unrepentant sinners. And it's this unrelenting sinfulness that now gives the context leading into today's text from Revelation 10-11. So it's intriguing to consider John's next vision. We might have expected God to ratchet up His judgment even more. But instead, God sends in His prophets. In Revelation 10, God reminds us of His prophets from the past and He recommissions John to prophesy again. In Revelation 11, we then learn about the prophetic ministry of the Two Witnesses. As we work our way through this text, we can't help but reflect on our own Great Commission mandate to be "Prophetic Witness for Christ." In Revelation 10:1 John begins, "Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven...."¹ Now at first, we might expect that this angel is here to blow the 7th and final trumpet. After all, that's where we left off last week. We made it through 6 out of the 7 trumpets, and 2 out of the 3 woes. So it seems reasonable that it's time for the 7th trumpet, but...that's NOT what happens. Instead, what we encounter first, is an interlude.² In fact, we'll need to read another almost two full chapters before we finally get to the 7th trumpet, toward the end of chapter 11.

So what's the point of this long interlude? Well, let's take a look. Revelation 10:2-3 says, "[The angel] was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,³ and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke." Thunder is most often associated with divine judgment.⁴ So maybe we'll see the increasing judgment we were expecting after all. Only, we don't hear a message of judgment. In fact, we don't even know what the message was at all, because as soon as John begins to write it down, a voice from heaven tells him not to. But why not? Why not tell us what the 7 thunders said!?⁵ Apparently, we don't need to know! If we needed to know, God would tell us. But we don't, so He doesn't. This is a good reminder for all of us: whenever our End Times anticipation begins to get carried away, and we begin

¹ "...He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars." See Exodus 13:21 and 19:16. This cloud emphasizes God's presence and reminds the readers of "the manner in which God came down on Mount Sinai." (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, pp. 1621, 1634 footnotes on Matthew 17:5, 24:30.) Legs like fiery pillars: "Since the exodus supplies background for this central part of Revelation, this feature may recall the pillars of fire and cloud that guided and protected the Israelites during their wilderness journey." (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2162 footnote on Revelation 10:1.)

² "an interlude of two related visions—the angel with the little book (10:1–11) and the two witnesses (11:1–13). These interludes are not so much pauses in a sequence of events as they are literary devices by which the church is instructed concerning its role and destiny during the final period of world history." (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 199.)

³ Judging by the placement of this angel's feet, He appears to be a particularly HUGE angel! More importantly though, "having one foot on the land and the other on the sea" stresses the authority that God has granted this angel; he's bringing a message that has significance for the entire world. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 396.

⁴ We saw this last week in Revelation 8:5 and we'll see it again today when we come to 11:19.

⁵ John knew more than he was allowed to tell us. In 2 Corinthians 12:4 Paul talks about being, "...caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell." "Perhaps the seven thunders were for John what the things that Paul saw in the third heaven were for him." Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1993, p. 67.

expecting to know more and more details, it's good to remind ourselves that everything is in God's capable hands. So sometimes we need a reminder that we're on a "need to know basis," and we need to just back off a little!⁶ Believers in the 1st century church had this same tendency to get caught up in eager expectation. Acts 1:6-8 says, "Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." So as we continue our journey through the book of Revelation, we shouldn't get distracted by unnecessary details that we don't need to know; we need to stay focused on our mission to be witnesses for Christ.

In Revelation 10:6-7 the angel declares, "...There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." New Testament scholar Robert Mounce explains this mystery: "The mystery of God in Revelation 10:7...refers to the purpose of God as revealed in the consummation of human history.... John is saying that with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, that which God purposed in creation, and made possible through the blood of the Lamb, will be brought to its fulfillment."⁷ ⁸ In other words, God has been announcing His plan of salvation all throughout both the Old and New Testaments, throughout the history of mankind.⁹ So "there will be no more delay;" the mystery of God's Master Redemptive Plan through Jesus Christ, "that was initiated before the foundation of the world," is now being accomplished.¹⁰ This is a telling reminder, right in the midst of mankind's unrelenting sinfulness. God has been faithfully proclaiming His salvation from day one. And in Revelation 10-11 He continues to send forth His Prophetic Witnesses to a world in need of salvation. (*John is one of those witnesses.*)

In Revelation 10:8-9 the voice from heaven tells John, "...'Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.' So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, 'Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'"¹¹ This "little scroll" seems to be the same scroll from Revelation 5, or at least a portion of it.¹²

⁶ "The major message [here] is one of sovereignty. God is in control, and the saints do not need to know all the details." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 398.

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 207.

⁸ So in contrast to the "voices of the seven thunders," this mystery has already been announced. God has revealed this mystery by announcing it to "his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7 teaches, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets." Also consider Amos 3:8 and Romans 16:25-27.

⁹ "There is no reason why this designation should be limited to either Old Testament or New Testament prophets." Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 208.

¹⁰ This is the first time Revelation uses the Greek word for accomplished or completed (τελέω). See also 15:1, 8; 17:17; 20:3, 5, 7. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, bottom of p. 401.

¹¹ John's prophetic calling brings to mind Ezekiel's calling back in Ezekiel 2:8-3:14. Here also the prophet is told to eat the scroll and then go speak. It tasted like honey in Ezekiel's mouth, but led to bitter words of warning from God.

¹² There's a fair amount of debate over whether this little scroll in chapter 10 is the same scroll that was given to Jesus in chapter 5 (now with its seals broken and lying open). Or, whether this may be an entirely different scroll.

¹³ ¹⁴ Grant Osborne highlights that the emphasis here is that the scroll now lies open. There seems to be a progression that began back in Revelation 5, from when the scroll was still sealed shut. It was in God the Father's right hand. The Lamb was then found worthy to take the scroll and open all 7 of its seals. Now in Revelation 10, the scroll is open in this angel's hand. John then takes it from the angel.¹⁵ So John will now prophecy for all 7 of the churches to read and hear, and also for our church, E-Free Bemidji, to read and hear. John had already been commissioned to write down the visions he was seeing back in Revelation 1:19.¹⁶ Now that the scroll is opened, He's commissioned again in Revelation 10:11, "Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."¹⁷ John is commanded; he must speak forth this prophecy! Here at the end of chapter 10, John is approaching the halfway point of Revelation's 22 chapters. So the Lord seems to be giving him additional exhortation to press on in his prophetic witness.¹⁸

Sometimes sharing God's message is easier said than done though. At the end of Revelation 10:9 John was told, "...Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'" This isn't suggesting that John literally ate the scroll; today we might say something like I want you to "devour this book."¹⁹ So this means that John carefully read it and considered its message, which is why it turned his stomach sour.²⁰ Some of us have had a similar experiences as we've been digesting some of the truths from Revelation. These chapters are filled with lots of sweet encouragement, but also plenty of difficult truths, that really kind of turn our stomachs sour. If we're experiencing what John was experiencing, then it's a good sign that we're taking God's Word to heart.²¹ As you and I read these words almost 2,000 years later, they remind us of our calling to be prophetic witnesses just like John.²² You see, when we talk about "prophetic witness," it's not just about "foretelling" the future, it's also about "telling forth" God's message. (*In Revelation we find examples of both.*) As John recorded these words for the 7 churches, these words were meant to encourage them to hang in there. But they were also meant to stir them to action, to inspire them to continue faithfully proclaiming the Good News about Jesus. John also

¹³ It may be called "the little scroll" to indicate that it's only a portion of the full, larger scroll from chapter 5. See discussion by Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, pp. 394-395.

¹⁴ If so, then this particular portion is the part for which John was personally responsible. In fact, John now takes an active role in the visions which he was previously only watching and writing down. See discussion by Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, top of p. 392.

¹⁵ See p. 402 of Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002.

¹⁶ "The first half of Revelation (1:1-11:19) is framed with prophetic witness (1:9-20; 10:1-11:13)." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 390.

¹⁷ This brings to mind 1 Corinthians 9:16, "...Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

¹⁸ This brings to mind Philippians 3:12-14.

¹⁹ Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1993, p. 68.

²⁰ The goodness of God's Word is indeed as sweet as honey, (See Psalm 119:103) but once John had digested its message, and he realized the content that God wanted him to proclaim, it gave him an upset stomach.

²¹ When we began this sermon series back in July, we paid special attention to Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." You see, we aren't necessarily expected to understand every single detail and nuance of this book. But, we are expected to take it to heart, to put it into practice to the best of our ability.

²² Much of this future that John is writing about is still off in the future, so in the present we should be continuing in our own faithful witness for Christ.

recorded these words for E-Free Bemidji, so that we will take them to heart and put them into practice.²³

In Revelation 11:1 John is given a task, “I was given a reed like a measuring rod²⁴ and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshippers.”²⁵ But why measure it? Well, other places in the Bible indicate that measuring it highlights God’s protection over His people.²⁶ In other words, this measuring is for our benefit, not because God needed the dimensions. This act of measuring is meant to reassure John’s readers that God knows where they are and how many they are, and He’s carefully watching over each one of them. That’s why verse 2 clarifies that John shouldn’t measure the outer court, because only the ungodly would be out there. Those who worship God are being watched over in His temple. There’s considerable, robust debate over this temple that John is measuring. Some feel strongly that this is a literal, physical temple that will one day be rebuilt in modern-day Jerusalem. Others are quite convinced that this is a symbolic temple representing the church.²⁷ It gets a little tricky because at this time in history, when John is writing the book of Revelation around 95 AD, the earthly temple in Jerusalem had already been destroyed some 25 years earlier. So this has led some scholars to conclude that the temple being referred to here is symbolic for the church, which is often described in the New Testament as God’s temple.^{28 29 30 31} (*We’re not going to get into this debate today.*)

Revelation 11:3 goes on, “And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” (*sackcloth symbolizes mourning and*

²³ 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 says, “... [God]...uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?” Also consider 2 Corinthians 3:5-6. Paul didn’t share these challenges at a pastors’ conference or a missionary training weekend. He is writing this to all of the believers at the church in Corinth. In other words, EVERY believer in Christ is called to the ministry of prophetic witness. 2 Corinthians 2:17 goes on to say, “we speak...as those sent from God.”

²⁴ Reeds were common along the waterways, growing as much as 20 feet tall. Since they were “straight and light [they were]... a convenient measuring rod.” *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2163 footnote on Revelation 11:1.

²⁵ “What follows in chapter 11 has been generally acknowledged to be one of the most perplexing sections of the entire book. There is presented here an almost bewildering interweaving of symbols suggested by Old Testament history and prophecy. Perhaps the most that can be said with confidence is that the author views the people of God as bearing faithful testimony, but also of suffering pain and persecution and indignity.” Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1993, p. 68.

²⁶ “In Ezekiel 40-42 the measuring of the temple signifies God’s ownership and protection of his people.... Also, in Zechariah 2:1-5....” Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, bottom of p. 409.

²⁷ “Alternatively, many preterists read verses 1-2 as predicting the Jerusalem temple’s destruction in AD 70. Many dispensationalists understand verse 1 to refer to a future temple rebuilt during the great tribulation.” *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2604 footnote on Revelation 11:1.

²⁸ See discussion by Micah D. Carpenter, *The Victory of the Lamb: Sermons on Revelation*, self-published, 2021, pp. 99f.

²⁹ Similarly, the altar in verse 1 may refer to a literal altar or be symbolic of worship by the church, something like what’s referred to in Romans 12:1. And these worshippers may be in an actual temple, or they may simply be believers gathered in the church worshipping. See discussion in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2604 footnote on Revelation 11:1.

³⁰ In the same way, in verse 2, these “Gentiles” could be a word picture used in John’s ongoing metaphor to refer to unbelievers in general who were persecuting God’s people. Or, they could be a reference to the Roman army destroying an actual temple in Jerusalem. And these could be a literal 1,260 days or a symbolic period of time in which believers will continue on in their faithful witness. See discussion in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2604 footnote on Revelation 11:2.

³¹ For example, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.” See also 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5; and Ephesians 2:21. Either way, let’s consider something that perhaps we can all agree on. Revelation 21:22 says, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” In other words, when all of us Preterists, Historicists, Futurists, Idealists, and any others “ists” enter into eternity with our Lord, there won’t be a temple in the New Jerusalem. We’re just all going to be with the LORD together and there’ll be nothing to argue about.

repentance.³²⁾ ³³ ³⁴ ³⁵ ³⁶ ³⁷ These Two Witnesses seem to be patterned after Moses and Elijah from the Old Testament.³⁸ ³⁹ Verses 5-6 list particular abilities that seem to point to them. For example, Elijah called down fire on people multiple times and he also shut up the heavens to prevent rain. Moses is well-known for his role in turning water to blood and sending all kinds of plagues on Egypt.⁴⁰ But what's more important than their supernatural abilities is their courageous witness.⁴¹ They faithfully proclaimed God's message of warning and repentance for 1,260 days straight. That's 3½ years, in the face of fierce opposition. The only reason they weren't, was that God was specifically shielding and protecting them during this time. God not only protected them, but He also anointed and equipped them for their ministry. He gave them whatever they needed to faithfully deliver His message. And God still does that today. Now, I'm not suggesting that any of us need the ability to have fire come out of our mouths. But whatever we do need, God will provide it, so that we can faithfully proclaim the gospel to the people in our sphere of influence. Revelation 11:4 mentions that these Two Witnesses "...are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth."⁴² This points back to Zechariah 4 from the Old Testament, which clarifies their direct connection to the power of the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 declares, "...'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty."⁴³ Brother or Sister in Christ, we have access to this same Holy Spirit. If we want an effective witness for Christ, then we need an empowered witness for Christ.

³² See Genesis 37:34 and Jonah 3:5.

³³ The question of why God appoints TWO witnesses, and not more or less, has been the subject of considerable, robust dialogue. Some have postulated that this is a sort of recapitulation of Zechariah 4:2-14 where Joshua and Zerubbabel are anointed to rebuild Israel's temple. Other's wonder if this may reflect the only two remaining faithful churches from Revelation 2-3 (Perhaps Smyrna and Philadelphia?). See discussion in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2604 footnote on Revelation 11:4.

³⁴ Personally, I'm intrigued by another theory regarding having TWO witnesses. Throughout God's Word, there's an established minimum of 2-3 witnesses. 2 is the absolute minimum number of witnesses required before rendering a judgment on someone. Deuteronomy 19:15 says, "One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." When Matthew 18 discusses church discipline, we see this same idea. Matthew 18:16 says, "But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'" So in light of the immediate context of God's disciplinary judgment on the wicked, this seems like a plausible reason for God sending Two Witnesses before rendering His final outpouring of wrath.

³⁵ It certainly could be a case of both/and, but "Interpreters throughout church history have debated whether these witnesses refer to individual prophets or symbolize the church." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2604 footnote on Revelation 11:1-14.

³⁶ I appreciate Ladd's perspective: "The witness of the church...will be consummated in the appearance of two prophets in the time of the end." Citing Ladd, Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, bottom of p. 409.

³⁷ The 1,260 days correspond to the 42 months mentioned in verse 2. So 1,260 days/30 days per month = 42 months. Either way we're talking about a period of 3½ years. Which, of course, corresponds to Daniel's time, times, and a half time. Daniel 7:25 predicts, "He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time."

³⁸ Again though, "they may symbolize testifying believers in the final period before Christ returns, or they may be two actual individuals who will be martyred for the proclamation of the truth." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2163 footnote on Revelation 11:3.

³⁹ Although also see Jeremiah 5:14

⁴⁰ See 2 Kings 1:9-12; 1 Kings 17:1; and Exodus 7:17-21.

⁴¹ "The point is that both Moses and Elijah are held up as examples of courageous ministry in the face of powers of evil in the world." (Micah D. Carpenter, *The Victory of the Lamb: Sermons on Revelation*, self-published, 2021, p. 101.) Moses stood up to evil Pharaoh, and Elijah stood up to evil kings as well as to the evil prophets of Baal.

⁴² Back in Revelation 1, the lampstands stood for the churches. But more broadly, they also stood for each believer's Christian witness in this world. Each one of us is called to be a lampstand for Jesus, to shine forth His light in this dark world.

⁴³ *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2163 footnote on Revelation 11:4.

Revelation 11:7 goes on, “Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.”⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ This only happened after the full 1,260 days, “when they have finished their testimony.” So this is all under God’s sovereign control. Here we find Revelation’s first reference to this beast, but it will not be the last. More to come, when we get to chapter 13 next week!⁴⁶

The nature of evil is then demonstrated in the deplorable treatment of God’s precious martyrs. By almost anyone’s standard, refusing them burial is a “flagrant violation of decency.”⁴⁷ Nonetheless, they leave their bodies lying in the street for 3½ days. Representatives from every nation and people group pass by and gaze at them. Revelation 11:10 says, “The 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.” On the one hand, I suppose it’s understandable why they’d celebrate; after all, this was not just the end of these Two Witnesses but also the end of the 3½ years of the torment they’d inflicted. However, on the other hand, we see once again, another clear example of the hardheartedness of the stubbornly unrepentant. Even after all this time of hearing the testimony from these Two Witnesses, and being eyewitnesses of the miraculous power that God had granted them, these unrepentant sinners respond by gloating over their martyrdom. They even go so far as to send each other gifts! This celebration is short-lived though. Revelation 11:11-12 goes on, “But 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. 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.” This period of 3½ days can’t help but remind us of our Lord Jesus who was also raised from the dead after 3 days. In other words, these two prophetic witnesses were in good company. They joined Jesus in suffering persecution and rejection by sinners, but they also joined Him in heavenly resurrection.⁴⁸ ⁴⁹

Then, in verse 13, there’s a severe earthquake that wipes out a tenth of the city. 7,000 people are killed, and the remaining survivors end up not only terrified, but also giving “glory to the God of heaven.”⁵⁰ It’s debatable whether there was really any heartfelt

⁴⁴ “They have a twofold ministry: judgment (11:5-6) and witness (11:7).” Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, bottom of p. 418.

⁴⁵ The beast coming up from the Abyss in 11:7 likely correlates with the beast “coming out of the sea” in Revelation 13:1. This same Greek phrase for attack and overpower them occurs in Revelation 13:7. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2604 footnote on Revelation 11:7.

⁴⁶ This beast, aka the Antichrist, “is introduced in 11:7, but not explained until chapter 13.” Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 391.

⁴⁷ *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2164 footnote on Revelation 11:8.

⁴⁸ “if the two witnesses symbolize the church, this describes the church’s vindication in resurrection at the end of the age.” *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2605 footnote on Revelation 11:11.

⁴⁹ In the words of Tertullian, “How often the blood of martyrs becomes the seed of the church!” (Citing Tertullian, Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding...Revelation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1993, p. 70.) Learn more here:

<https://christiantoday.com.au/news/the-blood-of-the-martyrs-seed-for-the-harvest.html> “Ter TUL lee uhn”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nfst1llfoA>

⁵⁰ This is such a strange variation on how we normally think about an ascension into heaven. When Jesus ascended into heaven, after His own death and resurrection, the witnesses were His devoted followers. But here, the witnesses are the enemies of God, which is an incredibly strange kind of WITNESS: a hardhearted unbeliever who is a personal EYEWITNESS to the miraculous resurrection of two of God’s people. Consider Matthew 27:54.

repentance here, or whether it was simply outright terror due to the stark realization that they had chosen the wrong side.⁵¹ They'd chosen to follow the beast of the earth, but clearly the God of heaven was far more powerful, and clearly the One in full control.⁵² Regardless, the Two Witnesses had fulfilled their commission, and they received their "well done, good and faithful servants!"

This brings us to the end of the second woe, which means "the third woe is coming soon." But for the second time now in today's text, following a terrible display of human depravity and persistent sinfulness, we once again run into something unexpected. The trumpet sounds, but it doesn't lead to further judgment, at least not immediately. Instead, the trumpet leads to a shout of praise! Revelation 11:15 says, "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."⁵³ So we continue to encounter these sections of worship interlaced all throughout the book of Revelation. This one is probably one of the more familiar to us because we often hear it proclaimed when we listen to Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." We'll run into other portions of that musical piece later on in Revelation. *(In fact, our choir is preparing to share it with us at our November 20 worship service. If you'd like to participate, please see Mr. Wold ASAP or show up at choir practice Tuesday night at 7:15 p.m. It would be SO nice to have a nice big choir to really sing this out!)*

Revelation 11:16-17 continues, "And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 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." [So they give thanks to "the One who is and who was," but "the One who is to come" is now superfluous, because He's right there, and He's already begun to reign.] Revelation 11:18-19 concludes, "The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ and your people who revere your name, both great and small — and for destroying those who destroy the earth." Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant.⁵⁶ And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe



⁵¹ Only 1/10th of the city collapsed, not all of it. So God continues to show mercy to a remnant who could still turn to Him in faith.

⁵² Either way, it's no wonder that they'd give "glory to the God of heaven," in verse 13, who wouldn't!?

⁵³ Consider Psalm 2 in light of Revelation 11 verses 9-10, 15, and 18.

⁵⁴ "Designates (1) Old Testament prophets, (2) Christian prophets like John, or (3) believers (synonymous with 'your people') who fear and serve God and prophesy." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2606 footnote on Revelation 11:18.

⁵⁵ Daniel 9:6, 10 tell us, "We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.... 10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets."

⁵⁶ As we consider the Ark of the Covenant – let's not be distracted by Hollywood's depiction of it in the *Raiders of the Lost Ark*! In Deuteronomy 10:1-2 the LORD tells Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to me on the mountain. Also make a wooden ark. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Then you are to put them in the ark." See also Exodus 25:10-22.

hailstorm.”⁵⁷ In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was a rectangular wooden chest.^{58 59 60} My Study Bible notes that it was the only furnishing located within “the Most Holy Place, and it symbolizes the footstool of the Lord’s throne, a description that links the earthly dwelling of God with the heavenly one.”^{61 62} In other words, the perceived separation between heaven and earth is being removed. It’s becoming clear that they’re one and the same Kingdom of God.

The Lord’s Prayer come to mind, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” I appreciate how Pastor Micah Carpenter says it: “This is what we are to pray for, and this is what we are to live for.... even during times like now, when there is so much pain and turmoil in the world.... The day is coming when the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, he will reign forever and ever. That’s a reason to hope, a reason to keep on living courageously, and it’s a reason to worship the God who reigns!”⁶³ So, let’s run hard after God, and let’s commit ourselves again to His Great Commission mandate. Let’s continue becoming deeply devoted followers of Jesus together. Let’s not waste the opportunities that God is offering us right now, today. There are sinners in need of salvation, so let’s reach them as His faithful prophetic witnesses.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ In some ways, it seems like the book of Revelation could have ended right here, right at the end of Revelation 11:19. But we still have another 11 chapters to go!

⁵⁸ It symbolized God’s presence among His people and it was kept in the Most Holy Place in the temple. And earlier in Israel’s history, in the tabernacle, the tent used during their wilderness wanderings.

⁵⁹ In the New Testament “it symbolizes God’s faithfulness in keeping [His] covenant with His people.” (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2164 footnote on Revelation 11:19.) That’s why it’s called the ark of the COVENANT, it was a reminder of God’s covenant promises. In other words, God will be faithful to keep His promises to His people.

⁶⁰ By the way, if it feels like we keep moving from one end of the Bible to the other, we are. As John continues writing this last and final book of the New Testament, he continues to link it back to the Old Testament, demonstrating over and over again that this is all part of God’s one Master Redemptive Plan for humankind.

⁶¹ *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 164 footnote on Exodus 25:10-22.

⁶² The ark would normally be located on earth, but here we see it depicted in heaven. The “old order of things” (Revelation 21:4) is passing away, and something new is beginning to take shape. This foreshadows the final destination of God’s Kingdom in Revelation 21:3, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.”

⁶³ Micah D. Carpenter, *The Victory of the Lamb: Sermons on Revelation*, self-published, 2021, p. 104.

⁶⁴ If we do this, I believe that the days we’re living in, right now, will be “the good old days” we look back to in the future; we’ll look back on this time as some of the “the glory days” of this church!