

BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 7 – INTERMISSION CONTINUED - The Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-19)

October 24, 2017

REVELATION 11:3-14

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

*⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. ⁷ When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰ And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹² And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and *their enemies saw them. ¹³ In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.*

As we continue in Rev. 11, we are rather abruptly introduced to two witnesses. The Gk. word for witness – mar-tus (MARtoos). A martyr is one who dies, usually violently, because of their belief, because of their testimony. We need to know that Scripture clearly identifies the two witnesses as literal men. The two witnesses will appear on the scene because God’s GRACE continues to shine forth. The message of the witnesses definitely includes judgment; however, the result of their ministry, or so it seems, is repentance on the part of many.

We’ve read of the 144,000 sealed servants of God from 12 of the tribes of Israel – physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What is God doing choosing and sealing these Jewish male virgins (Rev. 14:4), and giving power to two witnesses who appear to be Jewish. Didn’t Israel fail in their mission as God’s witness people in the OT? But, God is now using Jewish people as His redemptive tool during the Tribulation.

WHY?

- God is not finished with Israel. God has made promises to Israel which will result in the restoration of Israel as a nation.
- If you believe that God has a plan for Israel – that God isn’t finished with Israel as a nation...then you understand the book of Revelation more literally...then you

understand that God is not only pouring out judgment on a rebellious world but also purging Israel and preparing them for the Messiah and for restoration...then you understand the book of Revelation as the literal fulfillment of prophecy.

- If you don't believe that God has a plan for Israel...if you believe that God is finished with Israel...then you will understand Revelation more allegorically, metaphorically, figuratively – and you will understand the passages re: Israel as actually relating to the Church. (Rev. 7 – the 144,000 – the Church; Rev. 11:1-2 – the temple to be measured is really speaking of the Church)

Rev. 11:3 - *And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.* God will give them such power that they will be able to witness for 1260 days in spite of the antagonism! And, these two witnesses are God's personal witnesses, "My witnesses." Why are there two witnesses? In the Mosaic Law two witnesses were required to validate matters pertaining to the commandments. Deut. 19:15 - *One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.* (Also Deut. 17:6).

Timeframe for their ministry: 1260 days which equates to 3.5 years within the Tribulation. Which half of the Tribulation?

Jewish people wore SACKCLOTH during times of mourning (Esther 4:1). Sackcloth was a rough, coarse cloth worn as a symbol of mourning, grief, or repentance (Jer. 4:8; 6:26; 49:3; Amos 8:10; Jonah 3:5-9 [esp. v. 8]) – speaking of the people and even the animals wearing sackcloth – re: repenting of their evil ways).

These two witnesses are 1) clothed in sackcloth; 2) have a ministry matching that of previous OT Jewish prophets; and 3) minister in Jerusalem. The absence of the Church during the Tribulation, the sealing of the 144,000 Jews, the temple and the altar, the plagues, and Jerusalem as the setting argue for the Jewishness of the two witnesses.

There's speculation as to the identity of the two witnesses. Three views:

- Enoch and Elijah
- Moses and Elijah
- Two "ordinary" believers at the time

Re: Elijah

Most Bible scholars agree that one of them will be Elijah. Mal. 4:5 Mal. 4:5 - *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*

Enoch and Elijah

Regarding the identity of the two witnesses, some suggest that they will be Enoch and Elijah because they both were translated into heaven without dying. This view is supported by Heb. 9:27 – *it is appointed unto man once to die.* And so, Enoch and Elijah would then suffer death during the Tribulation. However, how would we explain Christians who are alive on the earth (perhaps us) when the Rapture of the Church occurs? They will not suffer death (I Thess. 4:17). It is not appointed unto them - ?

It is appointed unto man once to die – this is a general rule for all mankind. There have been, however, rare exceptions: Lazarus died twice (Jn. 11:43-44). Lazarus did not experience resurrection when Jesus called him forth; he realized resuscitation. Dorcas (aka Tabitha) died twice (Acts 9:36-42). The synagogue ruler, Jairus (Luke 8) – his daughter died and was raised (Matt. 9:18-19, 23-26).

Enoch is a foreshadowing of the Rapture. Heb. 11:5 - *By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death* (NASV). Therefore, how could he return to die? And, while Elijah exhibited the miraculous gifts manifested by these two witnesses (v. 6), Enoch did not.

Moses and Elijah

- Moses represents the Law and Elijah the Prophets.
- Like Moses, they strike the earth with plagues, and like Elijah, they have the power to keep it from raining. Both performed the miracles mentioned in v. 6.
 - Elijah was given the power to shut heaven so that no rain fell during his days of prophecy. James 5:17 – Elijah prayed and the drought brought on by Elijah was 3.5 years!
 - Moses turned waters to blood (Ex. 7) and struck the earth with plagues.
 - II Kings 1:10 – In the midst of a disagreement with the King of Israel, Elijah was summoned by a captain - *So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.*
- Both are called prophets (Rev. 11:10 – “these two prophets”):
 - Elijah – I Kings 18:22, 36.
 - Moses – Deut. 18:15 – God promised that He would raise up a Prophet like Moses. Deut. 34:10 - *But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face-to-face,*
- Both appeared with Jesus during His transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-4) which was a preview of His Second Coming as Jesus was seen in His glorified body. (In Luke 9:31 – Moses and Elijah spoke of Jesus’ death)
- While Moses died, his body was buried where it would never be found. There is some mystery concerning the death of Moses (Deut. 34:5-6 - *So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. ⁶ And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day;* Jude 9 – Michael, the archangel, contended with the devil regarding the body of Moses.), and Elijah was translated without seeing death (II Kings 2:11).
- Jewish tradition expected Moses and Elijah to return in the future. Malachi 4:5 predicted the return of Elijah, that Elijah must come *before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.* And the Jews believed that God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18) necessitated Moses’ return
 - Both Elijah and Moses are mentioned together at the very end of the Old Testament in the book of Malachi in the context of the coming of the Day of the Lord. Moses is mentioned in Mal. 4:4.
 - Both had a message of judgment.

Two “ordinary” believers

Some suggest that Revelation chapter 11 does not attach any famous identity to the two witnesses. If their identities were Moses and Elijah, or Enoch and Elijah, why would Scripture be silent about this? God is perfectly capable of taking two "ordinary" believers and enabling them to perform the same signs and wonders that Moses and Elijah did. There is nothing in Revelation 11 that requires us to assume a "famous" identity for the two witnesses.

The identities of the two witnesses is an issue Christians should not be dogmatic about.

Rev. 11:4 - *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.* Each witness in Rev. 11 is represented by one olive tree and one lampstand. What's the cross reference for the two olive trees and the two lampstands? Zechariah 4:2-6. The power given to the two witnesses is of God and it's a unique, continual empowering from the Holy Spirit as Zechariah's olive trees and oil lamps picture. The passage in Zechariah speaks of Joshua and Zerubbabel. Joshua, the High Priest, and Zerubbabel, a civic leader, were two of the leaders over the Jewish people in a time of RESTORATION when the Jewish people were returning to the land of Israel following 70 years in exile in Babylon. Joshua and Zerubbabel were two anointed ones, lit. "sons of oil." They were anointed with oil. Oil represents the Holy Spirit. Joshua and Zerubbabel were raised up to be lampstands or witnesses for God in their day and were empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the picture from Zechariah, oil lamps are filled directly from olive trees This is a picture of continual, abundant supply. Do we, as believers...we who have had a personal encounter with Jesus, and continue to enjoy an ongoing relationship with Him, have the power of the Holy Spirit? YES! And it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we witness effectively! In Zechariah we have a near fulfillment in Joshua and Zerubbabel's day. The High Priest, Joshua, and one who is of the Kingly line, Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:12 – Zerubbabel was in Jesus' line, the kingly line) leading the restoration following the exile looking forward to a far fulfillment when the Messiah Who is the Prophet (the Word), Priest ([Melchizedek] Jesus is the Priest Who offers Himself – the sacrifice) and King restores the earth during the Millennial Kingdom.

NOTE: God promised Israel that upon their being restored as a NATION (when Israel as a NATION would believe in God [Zech. 12:10] at the end of the Tribulation) they would be a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6). Priests in the OT represented the people to God. Zech. 8:23 - *In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'* In the Millennial Kingdom, the nation of Israel will represent the Gentile nations to God.

The *two olive trees/two lampstands* – the two witnesses during the Tribulation will be endowed/enabled/empowered with miraculous power. ...if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies (Rev. 11:5). These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power

over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire (Rev. 11:6)

Rev. 11:5 - *And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. They will be invincible. Those seeking to harm them will be consumed by fire from their mouths!*

Rev. 11:6 - *These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.* We observe unlimited power on the part of the two witnesses – stopping the rain, turning waters to blood, striking the earth with all plagues. NOTE: Scripture highlights four great periods in which miracles occurred with frequency: Moses; Elijah and Elisha; Jesus; Apostles. And we see these miracles reserved also for the Tribulation. The purpose of miracles - to substantiate the messenger and authenticate the message!

Rev. 11:7 - *When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.* When they complete their ministry proclaiming judgment and providing light to a dark and evil world, they will be killed. The antichrist will, with great vengeance, come against the witnesses.

Rev. 11:8 - *And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.* This “great city” is clearly identified as the city where Jesus was crucified which can only be Jerusalem. In Isaiah’s day, God lashed out against Israel (Isa. 1:1-10). A likening to Sodom is noted in Isa. 1:9. HOWEVER, Isaiah proclaims through the power of the Holy Spirit, that if God had not left a very small remnant (Jewish believers), Israel would have become like Sodom (Isa. 1:9). In Ezekiel’s day, the glory of God departed from the temple in Jerusalem because of the abominations (Eze. 8-10). During the Tribulation, worship of the antichrist will flourish in Jerusalem – in the temple.

Rev. 11:9 - *Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.* Jewish law required that a dead person hanging on the tree should be buried before sunset (Deut. 21:23). The people of Israel and the other countries of the ancient Near East considered it very important to honor those who had died by giving them a proper burial. Because of the warm climate in Palestine it was important to bury people within twenty-four hours after they died. Jewish people today bury their dead within 24 hours. Some bodies were buried in caves or tombs, making it possible for friends and relatives to go back and anoint the body over the next few days. Jews believed that the spirit of a person hovered over the grave for three days. Families often waited three days before declaring someone dead. This may be why Jesus waited until the fourth day to raise His friend, Lazarus (John 11:17). After three days, Lazarus was officially dead, and no one would

question it. By Jewish standards, the two witnesses will be officially dead. The dead bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street three and a half days. The world will essentially be focused on their dead bodies for three and a half days. No one will accept their remains. Multitudes from every people, tribe, and nation will see their corpses and refuse them burial.

Rev. 11:10 - *And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.* When the bodies of the two witnesses are lying in the street, the earth dwellers, the non-believers, will rejoice and exchange gifts with one another.

Rev. 11:11 - *Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.* In the midst of the world's festivities over the death of the two witnesses, God will breathe life into them. The world will watch in terror as the two witnesses stand to their feet.

Rev. 11:12 - *And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.'* And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. No one will be able to claim that this resurrection (their standing to their feet) is a hoax as everyone has been glued to their dead bodies. A loud voice from heaven will command the two witnesses to come up to heaven. And the witnesses ascended to heaven in a cloud.

Rev. 11:13 - *In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.* After the two witnesses live again and ascend into heaven – after the earth quakes greatly and a tenth of Jerusalem collapses killing 7,000, the fear of God will enter the hearts of the survivors. And, those survivors will give glory to God.

Rev. 11:14 - *The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.* The earthquake resulting in 7,000 deaths following the ministry and resurrection of the two witnesses will mark the end of the second woe.

Rev. 11:15 - *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'* The scene shifts to heaven. When the seventh trumpet sounds there will be a heavenly declaration that God and His Son, Jesus, will be taking over (I Cor. 15:24).

“The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord...” Best translation “kingdom” (singular not plural) – the antichrist has taken the role of the dictator of the world. ALL will come under God!

“have become” – past tense - a done deal. This is God's plan. He has decreed this victory!

The sounding of the trumpet unleashes the seven bowl judgments.

Rev. 11:16-17 - *And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,¹⁷ saying: ;We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. What a reaction to this declaration in heaven! The Church will fall down on their faces and worship God. They will thank Him because He lives and exercises great power in taking over His reign.*

Rev. 11:18 - *The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.’ Satan will know his day will soon end. He will stir the anger of the nations. God’s wrath will burn brighter which will put Satan and Jesus on a collision course. The ensuing conflict is referred to as the Battle of Armageddon.*

Note: everyone is accountable to God. No one will escape His judgment. Even the dead will be judged. The righteous, however, will be rewarded.

The Wrath of God in the Book of Revelation:

The wrath of the Lamb	Rev. 6:16
The great day of His wrath	Rev. 6:17
Your wrath has come	Rev. 11:18
The wrath of God	Rev. 15:1
The bowls of the wrath of God	Rev. 16:1
The wine of the fierceness of His wrath	Rev. 16:19
The fierceness and wrath of Almighty God	Rev. 19:15

Rev. 11:19 - *Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.* Following the heavenly worship and the declaration that Satan will stir the nations against God’s people, God will open His heavenly temple. Yes, there is a temple in heaven. Moses constructed the tabernacle in the wilderness after the pattern of the heavenly temple (Heb. 8:5 quoted from Ex. 25:40). God’s heavenly temple houses the ark of the covenant. The mercy seat rests on top of the ark where the blood of sacrificial animals was sprinkled for atonement – to cover the sins of the people. The lightnings, noises, thunderings and great hail will be signs of God’s wrath to come. The ark with its mercy seat is a reminder that God has always shown mercy to His people. The ark is a symbol of God’s presence with His people and His protection of them. God has chosen Israel to accomplish His purposes.

Those who hold to the mid-Tribulational view teach that the Church will be Raptured to heaven at the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation. Most of them equate the “last trumpet” in I Cor. 15:52 with the seventh trumpet which is the last trumpet in Revelation. The best way to determine whether the two are the same trumpet is to place the characteristics of these two trumpets side by side:

	<u>Trumpet/I Cor. 15</u>	<u>Trumpet/Rev. 11</u>
Subject	<u>Church</u>	<u>Wicked world</u>
Result	Catching up of the <u>Church</u>	Judgment of godless world
Character	<u>Trumpet of God's grace</u>	<u>Trumpet of God's judgment</u>
Timing	Signals the close of the life of the Church on earth- it's the last trumpet of the Church Age	Marks a climax in the progression of Tribulation judgments-it's the last trumpet of judgment in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER???????????

QUESTIONS:

What are you taking away from this lesson?
 What difference does this make?
 How does this chapter affect God?
 How does this chapter impact others?
 How does this chapter impact you?
 How will you then live?

STRONGLY SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread the handout.
 Jot down your questions.
 Begin a journal re: how what you are learning...how it brings glory and honor to God,
 how it impacts others, how it impacts you.
 Read the handout for Week 8 when you receive it.
 Share what you are learning with others!

SEE ADDENDUM ATTACHED

ADDENDUM

Scholars debate as to whether the ministry of the two witnesses belongs in the first half or the second half of the Tribulation. Their ministry spans 1260 days which equates to 3.5 years. The context of Rev. 11, however, does not reveal whether this is the first 3.5 years or the second 3.5 years. I realize the chronology is tough, but understanding which half will help us to think through the events of the Tribulation.

I'm suggesting that the ministry of the two witnesses will occur during the first 3.5 years/the first half of the Tribulation, before the beast reaches the point where he is able, in the middle of the Tribulation, to overcome them (Rev. 11:7).

- It is the beast who is destroyed at the end of the second half of the Tribulation, not the two witnesses (Rev. 19:20).

- Prior to the overthrow of the witnesses, they are invincible and almost certainly would not allow the beast to sit in the Holy Place, the temple, to declare himself as god (II Thess. 2:4). It seems more plausible to understand the overthrow of the two witnesses as leading up to the defilement of the temple/the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27; Dan. 11:31; Dan. 12:11; Matt. 24:15)..

- Why would the two witnesses whose ministry spurs many to repent and give glory to God (Rev. 11:13) during the Tribulation be found in Jerusalem after the intense persecution of the dragon and many have fled (middle of the Tribulation) (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 12:6; Rev. 13-14)?

- How could the beast overcome the witnesses at the end of the Tribulation and the world throw a big celebration at the very time the antichrist is heavily involved with the campaign of Armageddon directly before the Second Coming of Jesus?

- The overthrow of the witnesses would contribute to the rise and fame of the beast.

- If Jesus returns with the resurrected saints to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, and He will, why would these two resurrected witnesses ascend to heaven at that time?

- They will prophesy during the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation because after they are killed, they lie in the streets of Jerusalem for over 3 days. If they prophesied during the last 3 1/2 years, those 3 days would be after the Second Coming. That doesn't fit, so their prophesying has to be during the first half of the Tribulation.

- We know that the rebuilt Jewish temple will be standing during the time that the two witnesses are on earth giving their testimony as they are mentioned in the context of the angel telling John to measure the temple.

These challenging questions disappear if the 1,260 days (diff. than the 42 mos. mentioned for the temple during the last 3.5 years) connected to the two witnesses are understood as occurring during the first 3.5 years.

The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days, bringing plagues upon the earth, and no one is able to kill them (Rev. 11:5). On the last day of the 1260 days, the antichrist goes into the temple in Jerusalem and stops the sacrifices (Dan. 9:27). He then takes his seat in the temple and declares himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:3-4). He walks out of the temple and immediately meets the two prophets, who have just finished their testimony. No one on earth has been able to kill the two witnesses for 1260 days, but because their ministry is finished, the antichrist is able to kill them. (Rev. 11:7). This gives him instant credibility

in the world's eyes as the most powerful man on earth. After lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days, the two prophets suddenly are resurrected and ascend into heaven. The beast continues his reign as the Gentiles/the nations tread upon Jerusalem for 42 months – the remainder of the Tribulation – the last 3.5 years.