**Revelation**

*Lesson 22 – Revelation 11:1-14*

* We’re still in the middle of the interlude (a pause) in the series of trumpets. There was an interlude in the series of seals - the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7 between the 6th and 7th seals. Now there is another interlude between the 6th and 7th trumpets. Revelation 10 begins this interlude with the little scroll that John was to eat and the interlude continues now in this first part of chapter 11 with 2 witnesses.
* The general message of this section is a symbolic representation of the witness of the church and God’s preservation and vindication of her witness
* “There is also a theological parallel between the two parentheses (i.e., between the content of 7:1-17 and the content of 10:1-11:13). In chapter seven believers are sealed or protected against the spiritually destructive impact of the first six seals. Likewise, in chapter eleven believers are protected (“measured”) against the spiritually destructive impact of the trumpets and the beast.” –Sam Storms

*Verses 1-2: The Measuring of the Temple*

1. Measuring something indicates protection, ownership, and control. So what is going to be measured? God’s temple, the altar, and those who worship there. Who is this talking about? The Church. So we have different language describing the same thing. In Revelation 7, the church is “sealed” as God’s protection. In Revelation 11, the church is “measured” as God’s protection.
2. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 – “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? **17**If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” See also 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22 & 1 Peter 2:5.
3. What about the outer court of the Temple that is not sealed?
   1. The Temple = true Christians; The outer court = nominal Christians or hypocrites or apostates (William Hendriksen, Joel Beeke, Leon Morris, RCH Lenski)
   2. The Temple = the inner person of Christians; The outer court = the bodies of Christians (Greg Beale, Sam Storms, G.B. Caird)
4. Unbelievers are given authority over the outer court and over the holy city to trample on God’s people for 42 months. This trampling indicates widespread tribulation of God’s church.
5. But during this same time, God gives authority, in verse 3, to 2 witnesses who prophesy for 1,260 days and they are dressed in sackcloth.
6. Revelation 13:5 – “And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for **forty-two months**.”
7. Revelation 12:6 – “and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for **1,260 days**.”
8. Daniel 7:25 – “He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a **time, times, and half a time.**”
9. The time period of 42 months (=1,260 days = 3.5 years = “time, times, and half a time”) represents the entire period between Christ’s comings which is characterized by persecution of the church by the world. Elijah prayed in 1 Kings 17-18 and God did not send rain for 3.5 years. So these numbers do not tell us how long or the **quantity** of time. Rather these numbers symbolize the kind or **quality** of time. It’s a time of persecution and tribulation.

*Verses 3-14: The Two Witnesses*

1. But what about these 2 witnesses?
   1. 2 literal people who are unidentified whom God will raise up after the rapture from among those who turn to Christ during the 7 year tribulation. (Dispensational)
   2. Enoch and Elijah, because they are the only humans who are recorded as not dying
   3. Zerubbabel and Joshua based on Zechariah 4:1-14 which talks about lampstands and olive trees
   4. Moses and Elijah based on the description of the witnesses in the following verses of Revelation and because they were with Jesus at His transfiguration.
   5. Symbolic representation of the Church
2. “These witnesses symbolize the Church militant bearing testimony through its ministers and missionaries throughout the present dispensation.” –William Hendriksen
3. The witnesses are described as wearing sackcloth which was typical clothing of a prophet. So these witnesses are filling the office of prophet who are said to “prophesy.” Elijah wore sackcloth (2 Kings 1:8) and Isaiah wore sackcloth (Isaiah 20:2). Prophets in general are described as wearing sackcloth (Zechariah 13:4).
4. The reference to “two olive trees” most likely points to the fact that they are empowered by the Holy Spirit (Zech. 4:2-6). Olive oil was often associated with anointing, and anointing is associated with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Given the background of Zechariah talking about the high priest Joshua, we see that these witnesses not only perform the function of prophet, but also of priest. Priests were anointed with oil representing the ministry of the Spirit.
5. These 2 witnesses are also described as 2 lampstands which we saw in Revelation 1 represents the church. In Revelation 1, there are 7 lampstands with Jesus standing in the middle of the lampstands keeping their lights burning. So these witnesses represent the Church.
6. But why are they depicted as only 2 lampstands rather than 7? 2 witnesses were required in Jewish law for testimony to be valid. This is why Jesus sent out the 70 in pairs in Luke 10:1.
7. So these 2 witnesses refer to as Sam Storms puts it, “the whole church insofar as it fulfills its role as faithful prophetic witness in the power of the Holy Spirit.”
8. Verse 5 talks about how the church cannot be ultimately defeated because God has measured her as His temple and is protecting her. The world wants to devour the church but instead they are going to be devoured themselves.
9. That fire is said to come out of the mouths of these witnesses further indicates that these are not 2 individuals but are symbols. Jeremiah 5:14 – “Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall consume them.” So this fire is the speaking of God’s judgment upon the wicked from His word.
10. The church also stands in the line of Elijah and Moses. Look at verse 6. G.B. Caird calls the church “heirs” to the crowns of Zerubbabel and Joshua and to the rod of Moses and mantle of Elijah. Elijah prayed for it not to rain and James 5:16-17 picks up on this to talk about how powerful and effective prayer is. The Church has real authority and power given to her by God Himself through the prayers of His people. The Church also stands in line with Moses. God sent plagues of judgment upon Egypt through Moses in order to free His people from bondage. So today we speak God’s truth which torments unbelievers and stirs up their strife and hatred, but we also speak God’s truth which frees His people from bondage. Symbolically, John is depicting the church with the ministry of the Word and the prayers of the people. It’s a ministry of judgment to those who are perishing, but it’s a ministry of reconciliation to those who are being saved. We pray for the conversion of unbelievers, but we can also pray for God to rain down His judgment upon them and that is part of the message of the His Word. God is using the message of the Gospel proclaimed through the Church to free His own from spiritual Egypt and also to torment those who remain in spiritual Egypt (bondage to sin).
11. But the Church is symbolically only given 1,260 days for this ministry and in verses 7-10 we see the response of the world. When the time is come for the ministry of the Church to be over, a beast (which we will cover in Revelation 13), will rise up and make war on the Church and conquer and kill them. See Daniel 7:22-27 for the OT background to this beast.
12. Scripture is talking about a time, right before Jesus returns, when there will be an unparalleled onslaught against the church and by all appearances it will look like the church has been snuffed out. Sam Storms writes, “The previous influence of the church will have diminished and be treated with indignity and open contempt (which is surely the point of their bodies being left unburied).”
13. And the world will rejoice because the Word of God coming from the Church that has tormented them has seemingly been silenced.
14. But the good news is that this period is short. Verse 9 says that the church will appear to be dead for only 3.5 days. Compared to the 1,260 days of the church’s prophetic witness, that’s a very short time. But it’s going to be a more intense time because of the attack and murder by the beast. Greg Beale writes, “The contrast is meant to emphasize that Antichrist’s victory is brief and insignificant in comparison to the victorious testimony of the witnesses.”
15. After this short time period, God’s breath (Spirit) will re-enter the church and the Church will be made alive again. This seems to be a reference to the resurrection. God tells the Church to “Come up here!” in verse 12 and the Church ascends in a cloud, just like Jesus did.
16. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 – “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them **in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”
17. After this, there is a great earthquake. We’ve already seen an earthquake associated with the 6th seal in Revelation 6 and that represented the 2nd coming of Christ. So we have the same language here.
18. Now verse 13 is both interesting and confusing. It could indicate by mentioning 1/10 of the city falling and 7,000 dying that the final judgment is beginning and judgment on the rest is soon to follow (so William Hendriksen & Greg Beale). But there could also be an indication of a worldwide revival and conversion of people in that only a small number is indicated as dying and the rest are described as “giving glory to God” (so Sam Storms & G.B. Caird).

**Message for Us**

1. “Simply put, you are the two witnesses! All Christians collectively as they bear witness to the gospel and the Lordship of Jesus are represented by the two witnesses of Revelation 11.” –Sam Storms
2. The most important thing for us to see as Christians is this spiritual battle that is raging behind what we see with our physical eyes. “In your own life, look for the deadly conflict and persevere unflinchingly in witness and loyalty to Christ. In the lives of non-Christians, look beneath the veneer of pleasantries and see the deadly opposition that only divine power can stop.” –Vern Poythress
3. “What should we expect? Persecution. What is it that we should do? Prophesy. And in the end we will be vindicated. In the end we will live!” –Sam Storms