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The Two Witnesses

Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

June 13, 2021

Revelation 11

I. **Structure of Revelation**

- A. **Revelation 1:19** (NASB95) — 19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”
1. **Have seen**
 - a. Vision of Christ in Chapter 1
 2. **Are**
 - a. Current state of 7 churches
 3. **After these things**
 - a. **Revelation 4:1** (NASB95) — 1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place **after these things.**”
 - b. Chapters 4-22
- B. **Theme**
1. **Jesus Christ is coming**
 - a. Tribes of earth will mourn over Him
 - b. Eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of evil in the world and in the heavenly realms
 2. **Purpose – encourage the churches under great pressure**
 - a. Series: Between Rock and a Hard Place
- C. How is this purpose accomplished?
1. **Four visions**
 - a. **“In the Spirit”**
 2. **Revelation 1:9–10**
 - a. First vision
 - (1) The glorified Christ
 - (2) The messages to the seven churches
 3. **Revelation 4:1–2**
 - a. Second vision
 - (1) The heavenly vision
 - (2) The tribulation
 4. **Revelation 17:1–3**
 - a. Third vision
 - (1) The mystery of Babylon
 - (2) Judgment of Babylon

- (3) Final triumph and consummation
- 5. **Revelation 21:9–10**
 - a. Fourth vision
 - (1) The New Jerusalem
- D. **Structure of the 2nd Vision**
 - 1. **Chapter 4 – Almighty God on His throne**
 - a. He’s the One in charge; sovereign over human history
 - b. He holds the scroll
 - 2. **Chapter 5 – Lion and Lamb**
 - a. He’s worthy to break the seals and open the book
 - b. He’s earned the authority to control the unfolding of human history as it moves toward its conclusion
 - c. Due to the nature of the book and the seals
 - (1) The seals take place before the contents of the book are opened
 - (2) Tribulation unfolds before redemptive and judicial events come to their conclusion
 - 3. **6.1-8.1 – Seven Seals**
 - a. Rider – white horse; conqueror
 - b. Rider – red horse; takes peace from earth; makes men slay each other
 - c. Rider – black horse; wheat and barley for denarius; don’t damage oil and wine (famine)
 - d. Rider – ashen horse; death with Hades close behind; authority over 1/4 of earth; killed with sword, famine, pestilence, wild beasts
 - e. Martyrs; “how long”; white robes; told to wait until other martyrs
 - f. Natural catastrophes; Earthquake – sun darkened, moon turned to blood; great people afraid; recognition that the day of wrath had come
 - (1) Interlude
 - (a) 144,000 sealed
 - (b) Great multitude in white robes
 - g. Silence in heaven for ½ hour; angels given trumpets; prayers of saints; thunder, lightning, earthquake; no real content
 - 4. **General pattern of the Seals**
 - a. **Increasing difficulty**
 - (1) Human society
 - (2) Nature
 - b. **Brief period of extreme tribulation**
 - (1) Especially seen in trumpets and bowls
 - (2) Seem to be included in the 7th seal
 - (a) 7th seal has no content
 - (b) Book would be open
 - (c) Trumpets and bowls are the contents of the book
 - c. **The end**

E. Earlier message

1. Made case for

a. 1st Seal (rider on white horse) not a judgment, but the proclamation of the gospel

(1) No plague or judgment indicated

(2) White always indicative of Christ or the redeemed or good angel

(3) Implication

(a) In the midst of tribulation, the gospel will go forth and have its victories

(b) We should imagine Christ riding on white horse, breaking down enemy strongholds with His divine bow when we witness

b. Interlude – the 144,000 of Israel and the Multitude from every people, tongue, tribe, nation are two visions of the same group – the Church

(1) Chapter 6 ends with question – Who is able to stand?

(2) Chapter 7 answers it – those who are sealed

(3) The John hears the number of those sealed – 144,000

(a) Called Israel

(b) But not described in quite the way national Israel would be described

(4) Then John sees the multitude in heaven – people from every tongue, tribe, nation

(5) Cf pattern of the vision in Chapter 5 (Lion and Lamb)

(6) The Multitudes and two visions of spiritual Israel, the Church

(a) Sealed on earth

(b) Eventually saved in heaven

(7) Implications

(a) Should we remain during the tribulation, though we are subject to the anger of the beast, we are sealed from the wrath of God

(b) We will stand before the Father and the Son worshiping, washed white in the blood of the Lamb, hungering and thirsting no more, all our tears wiped away, partaking of the springs of the water of life – all because we're sealed

2. 8.1 – Seventh Seal opened

a. Silence in heaven for ½ hour

(1) Awesome, rapt anticipation of what is sure to come next as the judgment of God increases in intensity

(2) No specific judgment – encompasses the trumpets

II. Second Vision Continues

A. Structure

1. **8.2 – Seven Trumpets given to angels**
 2. **8.3-5 – another angel with censer with incense**
 - a. Fire hurled to earth, thunder, lightning, earthquake
 3. **8.6-13 – Trumpets 1-4**
 - a. Hail, fire, mixed with blood
 - b. Third of earth burned up
 - c. Great mountain burning with fire
 - d. Sea into blood
 - (1) Third of creatures died
 - (2) Third of ships destroyed
 - (3) Severe, though still partial
 - e. Great star fell from heaven
 - (1) Wormwood
 - (2) Third of rivers and springs
 - (a) Bitter water
 - (b) Many die
 - f. Third of sun, moon, stars struck, darkened
 - g. Eagle crying out “Woe, woe, woe”
 - (1) those who dwell on earth – key phrase – pagan world hostile to God
 - (2) Woes directed at the ungodly
 - (a) Trumpets 5, 6, 7
 - (b) Not on the sealed church
 4. **9.1-12 – Trumpet 5 – Star fallen from sky to earth**
 - a. Given key to abyss
 - b. Releases demonic powers of affliction likened to locusts
 - c. Locusts not to harm vegetation but afflict people who are not sealed for 5 months
 - (1) Makes them want death, can’t find it
 5. **9.13-21 – Trumpet 6 – Four angels of Euphrates**
 - a. Adds death to the torture of the 5th Trumpet
 - (1) 1/3 died
 - (2) Still only partial
 - b. Rest of mankind did not repent!
- B. Implications of the Trumpets**
1. **Trumpets represent the wrath of God** poured out on those who dwell on the earth, the ungodly
 - a. Those in allegiance with Satan, with Antichrist, who have the mark of the beast, who worship Antichrist
 - b. Those with the seal of God are protected from the wrath
 - (1) Those who worship the Lamb
 2. **Evil and good become abundantly clear** as the end approaches
 - a. No middle ground

- b. All loyalties become plain
- 3. **God is sovereign** in all of this, even over the demonic
 - a. He gives the key to the abyss to the Star fallen from heaven
 - b. Angels bound (by God!) at the Euphrates were released at God's command
- 4. **Nature of evil and the demonic is revealed**
 - a. Now enticing; demonic realm wants you to think it's your friend
 - b. In reality the demonic realm hates humanity
 - (1) Not just godly humanity; all humanity
 - c. Once released, they attack those who dwell on the earth who haven't been sealed and protected by God!
- 5. **The wrath of God is merciful** in addition to being judicial
 - a. Still time to repent!
 - b. But the wrath of God is not rehabilitative or redemptive
 - (1) They don't repent!
 - c. Repentance requires regeneration

III. **More of the Second Vision – John's Commission**

A. **10.1-4 – The Angel's Revelation**

- 1. Another strong angel, down from heaven
 - a. Magnificent appearance
 - b. Has little scroll, book
 - (1) Open in his hand
 - (2) Contents plainly visible
 - c. One foot on land, the other on the sea
 - (1) As if this prophecy concerns the whole world
- 2. Multi-media revelation – includes sound
 - a. Angel is the mouthpiece of God
 - (1) 7 = its completeness
 - (2) Thunder = power
- 3. Remarkable thing
 - a. Message is clear; John understood it; starts to write it
 - b. Don't write it! Instead told to seal it

B. **10.5-7 – The Angel's Announcement**

- 1. No more delay – judgment of the end is imminent
- 2. Mystery of God is finished
 - a. Mystery – something in the mind of God that He revealed to men
 - (1) Mysterious in that men can't know it apart from divine revelation
 - b. But God has revealed it – to His servants the prophets
 - (1) Preached = euangelisen (Lit, preached the gospel)
 - c. The end of God's redemptive plan has been preached and is about to unfold

C. **10.8-11 – The Scroll and John's Commission**

- 1. Told to take the scroll and eat it
 - a. Sweet in mouth, bitter in stomach

2. John eats it
- D. **Implications of the Commission**
 1. **Even prophets don't have to know everything**
 - a. And don't even have to say everything that they know
 - b. Some things are secret, belong only to God
 2. **God's history will be finished**
 - a. The preaching of the gospel is integral to its conclusion
 3. To the true prophet, **the words of God are sweet**
 - a. But they **contain hard things**
 4. **John needs all the encouragement he can get**
 - a. Most severe judgments are about to take place (7th trumpet, 7 bowls)
 - b. John can't stop here; must continue, even though hard things must be said

IV. **Still More of the Second Vision – The Two Witnesses**

- A. **Revelation 11:1–2 (NASB95) —**
 1. 1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.
 2. 2 “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.
 3. John told to measure the temple, worshipers
 - a. Outer court is excluded
 4. **Structure of the temple**
 - a. Center building – Holy of Holies and Holy Place
 - b. Court of the priests – Altar of Burnt Offering
 - c. Court of Israel, Court of Women
 - d. Court of Gentiles – anyone can come here
 - (1) Not measured – given to nations to trample
 5. **Measuring – the prophetic meaning**
 - a. Marking out an area (city, etc.) for preservation
 - (1) Zechariah 2:1–5 (NASB95) —
 - (2) 1 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a man with a measuring line in his hand.
 - (3) 2 So I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.”
 - (4) 3 And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him, 4 and said to him, “Run, speak to that young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.
 - (5) 5 ‘For I,’ declares the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ”

- (6) Ezekiel 40-43 – Jerusalem marked out to become the true city of God
- b. Marking out an area for destruction
 - (1) 2 Kings 21:13 (NASB95) — 13 ‘I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.’
 - (2) Edom: Isaiah 34:11 (NASB95) — 11 ... And He will stretch over it the line of desolation And the plumb line of emptiness.
 - (3) Lamentations 2:8 (NASB95) — 8 The LORD determined to destroy The wall of the daughter of Zion. He has stretched out a line, He has not restrained His hand from destroying, And He has caused rampart and wall to lament; They have languished together.
- c. In this case, inner courts are measured, outer coursts excluded – they will be trampled
 - (1) Inner courts protected
- 6. **What is the temple?**
 - a. Two possibilities
 - (1) **Church protected during tribulation**
 - (2) **True Jewish worshipers** – story of the eschatological salvation of the Jewish people
 - (a) **Romans 9-11** – “Has God rejected His people?”
 - i) No – Israel will be grafted back into the tree of spiritual Israel again
 - (b) **Luke 21:24** (NASB95) — 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
 - i) Jerusalem symbolic of national Israel
 - ii) *untill* indicates a future time of national restoration
- 7. **Holy city tread under foot**
 - a. Exactly what Jesus said in Luke 21.24
 - b. Similar in **Matthew 23:37-39** (NASB95) — 37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 “Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 “For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me *until* you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’ ”
 - c. Prophesied in **Isaiah 40:1-2** (NASB95) — 1 “Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God. 2 “Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call

out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins."

8. **For 42 months**
 - a. **Daniel 7** – little horn arises out of 10th horn of 4th beast will oppress saints for time, times and half a time (3 ½ years)
 - b. **Revelation 11.2** – time of oppression of holy city
 - c. **Revelation 11.3** – time of mission of two witnesses
 - d. **Revelation 12.6** – time of preservation of heavenly woman
 - e. **Revelation 13.5** – time during which the beast is allowed to exercise authority
 - f. Appears to be period of domination of Satantic evil, particularly the final days of Antichrist
9. Is this the church or the story of the restoration of a believing Israel?

B. **The Ministry of the Witnesses**

1. **Revelation 11:3–6** (NASB95) —
 - a. 3 “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”
 - b. 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.
 - c. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.
 - d. 6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.
2. Witnesses covered with OT references
3. **Two witnesses – authority to prophesy**
 - a. Sackcloth – the traditional garb of prophets in OT
 - b. Two olive trees and two lampstands
 - (1) **Zechariah 4** – golden lampstand with 7 lamps, flanked by 2 olive trees from which they received supply of oil
 - (2) Zechariah's trees are two anointed witnesses – Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the governor (restoration of Israel following the Babylonian captivity)
 - c. Fire from mouths devours any who try to harm them for the time period
 - (1) **Jeremiah 5:14** (NASB95) — 14 Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, “Because you have spoken this word, Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire And this people wood, and it will consume them.”
 - d. Power to shut up the sky, turn waters to blood
 - (1) **Elijah and Moses** in mind
 - (a) Both prophets

- (b) Meet in transfiguration (discussing this occasion with Jesus?)
 - 4. Perhaps we have two prophetic witnesses
 - a. Similar in function to Joshua and Zerubbabel in restoration
 - b. Similar in power to Elijah and Moses
- C. **The Martyrdom of the Witnesses**
 - 1. **Revelation 11:7–10** (NASB95) —
 - a. 7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.
 - b. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.
 - c. 9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.
 - d. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.
 - 2. **Protected during time of ministry**; afterward killed
 - 3. First time **the beast** appears (Chapter 13?)
 - a. Spoken of as if John should already be aware of his existence
 - b. Reminiscent of
 - (1) Daniel 7 beasts
 - (2) Abomination that causes desolation in Olivet Discourse
 - (3) Man of Lawlessness of Paul
 - c. Representative of evil forces direct against the people of God
 - d. Here involves the eschatological figure who compresses centuries of wrath toward the people of God at the end
 - 4. **From the abyss**
 - a. Like locusts, Satanic in origin
 - 5. Bodies lie in street
 - a. Great indignity, no burial
 - 6. **Great city, Sodom and Egypt**
 - a. Jerusalem clearly meant – where they crucified the Lord
 - b. Sodom = immorality
 - c. Egypt – bondage and oppression of God’s people
 - 7. Where their Lord was crucified
 - a. Their = witnesses – clearly Christian witnesses
 - b. Implication – witnessing in Jerusalem (Israel) to Jews whose rejection of Messiah was the ultimate sin
 - 8. Look at their dead bodies
 - a. Not only Jews but also Gentiles are delighted over their deaths
 - b. Implication – while their ministry was directed at Jews, it was also against pagan nations

- (1) Typical of prophets who prophesied against both Israel for their sins, as well as the sins of surrounding nations

D. **The Resurrection of the Witnesses**

1. **Revelation 11:11–13** (NASB95) —
 - a. 11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.
 - b. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.
 - c. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.
2. **Breath of life – resurrection**
3. **Fear** struck those who saw them
4. Ascension
5. Earthquake
 - a. 7,000 die
6. Rest terrified, **gave glory to the God of Heaven**
 - a. Survivors were inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jews) who didn’t die in earthquake
 - b. Gave glory to God – indicates repentance elsewhere
 - (1) **Joshua 7:19** (NASB95) — 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”
 - (2) **Isaiah 42:12** (NASB95) — 12 Let them give glory to the LORD And declare His praise in the coastlands.
 - (3) **Jeremiah 13:16** (NASB95) — 16 Give glory to the LORD your God, Before He brings darkness And before your feet stumble On the dusky mountains, And while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, And turns it into gloom.
 - (4) **Revelation 14:7** (NASB95) — 7 and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”
 - (5) **Revelation 15:4** (NASB95) — 4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”
 - (6) **Revelation 16:9** (NASB95) — 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as

to give Him glory.

- (7) **Revelation 19:7** (NASB95) — 7 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

E. **Implications**

1. The large scale conversion of Jews to Jesus in the last days
2. Previous interlude had to do with the sealing and preservation of the church during the tribulation
3. This interlude has to do with the calling of Jewish believers as Jesus and Paul indicated would take place after the Gentiles had come in
 - a. Temple is marked for preservation, even while Jerusalem is trampled by Gentiles
 - (1) Always a remnant preserved even though national Israel is destroyed
 - b. Means by which this happens is the ministry of two witnesses
 - (1) Reminiscent of Joshua and Zerubbabel, Elijah and Moses
 - c. Witnesses are Christians who prophesy primarily to Jews
 - d. After their ministry they are killed; all rejoice
 - e. Then they are raised, ascend into heaven
 - f. Survivors of the earthquake are terrified – give glory to God
 - (1) Revelation indicates they repent
 - g. Jews saved out of Jerusalem in the end
4. While there is an identification of Israel with Church, there is a special focus on Jews and their salvation at the end
 - a. Consistent with Paul in Romans 9-11