

His Reign and Wrath

Revelation 11

Chapter eleven of the Revelation begins a critical bridge from the era in which God's mystery accomplished the salvation of mankind, by the working of His Spirit and the testimony of His saints, unto the time of the full measure of God's wrath. Previously, we read that in the days of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the mystery will be complete. God uses chapters 11 through 14 to wrap up for us several key elements that, as a consequence, conclude 'in these days of the seventh trumpet'.

Here, in chapter eleven, we deal with the first four -- we see the temple, the city, the testimony and the ark.

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there." John is given a measuring device that resembles a shepherd's staff or rod. The word for rod, by the way, comes from the word "to smite".

He is told to measure three things, the temple, the altar and those who worship there. The temple is not the same one Ezekiel was told to measure for that is certainly the millennial temple. This is the temple that we believe the antichrist will enable the Hebrews to build. The altar is probably referring to the altar of

sacrifice where the burnt offerings will once again be made. The people who worship there are God's people – blind, stubborn and without understanding – but nevertheless, His people. These are the same people who will be inclined to believe that the antichrist is their messiah. They are the epitome of delusional rebellion against God. They, more than anyone, are in desperate need of a waking up. They need someone to jolt them, to speak the truth whether they like it or not.

This angel may be the same one who gave John the little book in the previous chapter or he may be another, but I like the simple statement "the angel stood" for it indicates that what he's directing the apostle to do is important. You might say that this is the last boundary God will establish on the planet before His wrath. In the beginning, He walked with Adam in the garden for the earth was new and 'clean'; but when man sinned, He withdrew to a more distant posture. Later, He chose Abram and 'traveled' with him, leading him to the promised land. After this, He came to Moses and freed the children of Israel from bondage and brought them to this same land which He reserved for Himself giving them specific boundaries. When they rebelled against Him, He ultimately withdrew and they went into captivity.

Now, in measuring the tribulation temple, it's like the last 'line in the sand'. It is the last boundary of God's patience. He even allows the outer court to be given away.

"But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months." Some archeologists have stated that the original placement of the temple on the mount could actually accommodate the Muslim mosque of Omar if the temple compound did not include the former Court of the Gentiles. This may be what the angel is referring to when he tells John not to measure it.

Satan first polluted the paradise of God. He then, in the days of Noah, polluted the earth including man's own gene pool. After the flood, he polluted man's religion (which we'll get to in chapter 17). After God gave it to the Hebrews, Satan polluted the promised land, and he will thence pollute the holy city. His people will trample it underfoot for three and a half years. Now, you might think, 'this is not the only time Jerusalem has been trodden under foot' and you'd be right. This, however, is not mere destruction as was brought to her by the Babylonians and Romans (under God's direction). This is even more than that – this is the desecration of Satan attempting to take and convert what is God's to become his own. It is absolute pollution.

Thus, along with the temple, it will be the final toxic stench, the 'last straw', the end.

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

I'm inclined to believe that this period of time will cover most of the last half of the tribulation. Some people think these two will be Moses and Elijah based upon the up-coming signs they'll perform. Others say Enoch will be one of them based upon the fact that he and Elijah were the only two people who haven't died a natural death. In one of our previous letters, I suggested that John the Apostle may be included. Regardless, these two aren't stand-ins or last minute appointees. They have been prepared for this duty. They have been standing in the presence of God which is an enormous honor.

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. We have to go back to Zechariah chapter four to learn about these olive trees. There, the prophet was given a vision including them. Here's what he inquired and learned:

Then I [Zechariah] answered and said to him [the angel], "What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?" And I further answered and said to him, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?"

Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

So he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth." (Zech 4:11-14)

The two anointed ones in Hebrew is literally the "two sons of

oil". They are in such close association with the oil, that is, the Holy Spirit, they are the 'sons of oil'.

Now, earlier in the Revelation, we learned of seven lampstands before Jesus which He said were the seven churches. You see, lampstands are for shining forth light. The light the churches are supposed to shine forth is the truth of the gospel. As both the olive trees and the lampstands, these two tribulation witnesses are constantly supplied with oil and constantly displaying the light.

You may recall that it was James and John who approached Jesus (with their mother) and wanted to be those who would be on the right hand and on the left of Jesus in His kingdom:

They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They said to Him, "We are able."

So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." (Mark 10:37-40)

The cup Jesus spoke of is His obedience to God's will leading all the way to the cross. His baptism is that of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said both of these disciples would know the 'drinking and dunking' so

to speak. But He also said that they didn't have a clue about what they were asking for.

Like Jesus, His two witnesses will be totally anointed by the Holy Spirit and will be faithful in their ministry unto death.

Now, in Zechariah's vision, there was only one lampstand whereas in John's vision there are two. I suggest that as the seven churches in Revelation chapter one are lampstands, it would seem that the lampstands are representative of God's witness to the dark world. It could be that the OT prophet saw only one because at the time there was only one corporate witness – the Hebrew people. John may have seen two because of the additional witness to the world of the mostly gentile church. Could it be that one of these two tribulation witnesses will represent the Hebrew people and the other, the church? We'll see.

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.

The word for harm here is "to act unjustly or wickedly, to sin" as well as "to hurt". Note also that word "wants". That means if anyone even intends or seriously considers acting unjustly or wickedly towards these two, he's going to 'crash and burn'. Like Jesus, they will evidently have such discernment that they will be able to know what others are thinking. The word for fire is simply fire -- makes sense since they are lampstands.

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. Although their powers resemble those of Moses and Elijah, I think it is more relevant that they are able to plague the earth "as often as they desire". It seems that they are given a 'free hand' in issuing these plagues and that would be more in line with the time of God's wrath. That is, their testimonies will challenge the antichrist's claim to fame – that he is god. People with any sense will wonder, 'If so-and-so says he's god, why can't he stop these two guys from wreaking havoc on us??' Unfortunately, we'll see that the whole world will have lost its senses.

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. 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. For three and a half years, these two witnesses will plague the world of Satan-worshipping idiots, perhaps in defense of the remnant of saved Hebrews still on the planet. But when you're done, you're done. And you're done when you've finished your testimony.

When they finish, a senior demon (perhaps Satan) is allowed to kill their bodies and they will lie in the street of Jerusalem. Note

that the city is called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was the place of absolute perversion, and Egypt was the place of captivity. This means that Jerusalem has become the prison pit of perversity under Satan. How tragic and ironic that is when you see what comes next:

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. 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.

Senseless people around the world will celebrate that their 'god' has finally overcome and liquidated the two menaces. They will gloat as their bodies lie unceremoniously in the street. They will party and presume they have proven the resilience and ultimate power of man. But just as the band really starts getting hot...

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. 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. Like Jesus, they are resurrected and ascend into heaven. Before the cameras can cut to commercial, they stand up on their feet and rise into the clouds. As a result, knees are

knocking hard in Jerusalem and around the world.

The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Recall that the second woe is coincident with the sixth trumpet warning from God. It began with the death of a third of mankind by an enormous demonically empowered army. It included the conclusion of the mystery of God and the powerful testimony of the two witnesses. The last woe will be the last trumpet which is about to sound.

Don't get confused by the sequence of events or chronology. The actual end of the second woe does not have to precede the beginning of the third. God simply describes it in its entirety before moving on to the next. As a fine but important point of grammar, that word for "past" is in the aorist tense in the Greek. The aorist tense is characterized by its emphasis on punctiliar action; that is, the concept of the verb is considered without regard for past, present, or future time.

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!" And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 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.

*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."*

Here is the point at which the Almighty, having taken power or authority over mankind because of the sacrifice on Calvary, begins to exercise His right to reign. You may have thought this would begin after the coming battle of Armageddon, but actually His rule over our desperate planet begins here in heaven at the sound of the seventh trumpet. Notice that the acclamation is not that the world has become His but rather that the kingdoms of this world have become His. This is what we witnessed as the Lamb took possession of the sealed scroll in chapter five. The world itself already belongs to Him.

With this trumpet the seven bowls of God's wrath will be poured out. And, God is ready to judge the dead with a focus upon rewarding His servants, the prophets and the saints (Hebrew believers), as well as the gentile believers – those who fear Your name, small and great. Finally, if the typology follows that of the prophet Daniel, He is ready to destroy those who destroy His special land – Israel.

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. We noted earlier that as Satan polluted the garden of Eden, the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem and finally the temple, there remained only one last place that displayed the fellowship of God with man, one place that recognized the Creator's work to save us and love us, just one 'paradise' left. That is the Ark of the Covenant. Here we see that God has removed it to heaven. Perhaps this is the spiritual original of which the earthly was a copy. Regardless, by displaying it at this point, God is manifesting that He has preserved the symbol of His perfect redeemed relationship with us. Satan cannot spoil it.

The ark was where the High Priest alone could worship during the Old Testament and that only on the day of Atonement. It rested within the Holy of Holies surrounded by a thick curtain. The ark in the days of David, you recall, was thought to be the very presence of God but it was really a hugely important symbol of a future event.

The ark was a box, covered with gold which contained three things – the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the rod of Aaron which budded miraculously and a container of manna. All three of these things clearly point to Jesus Christ who fulfilled perfectly God's law, rose miraculously from the dead to new life, Who also

descended from heaven, like manna, and Whose 'body' provided our nourishment during the wilderness wanderings of this earthly life.

On top of the ark were two cherubim facing each other. It was at that specific place that Moses spoke to God. It was called the Mercy Seat. That's where God met with man. It pictured the very same thing in a garden tomb. There, where they laid the body of our crucified Lord, dear Mary Magdalene came to worship and pray and what did she find? Two angels, one at the head and one at the feet of where the Lord had lain – for He had risen! This was the fulfillment of the Mercy Seat – the real deal. In Jesus Christ, God met with man and re-established His gracious loving relationship with us.

Note finally, that in this last verse of our chapter it says that this wonderful symbol of God's mercy and love is **seen** in His temple. That's because, with Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, the way is open. There is no more veil of separation. Those who believe may come freely into fellowship with the Almighty God.