

Revelation Chapter 11 Handout

Here we once again see God attempting to move the people to repentance. God is very clear about what he wants and what people ought to do. God will protect his people from falling, yet ultimately there will be those who lose their lives. The good news contained here is two-fold. First some will turn and praise God. All is not lost for those who at the moment are not part of God's people. Second God has really begun to move toward the restoration of the world.

1 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, 2 but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.

Measuring rod - (Ezekiel 40:3 - 48:35) the measuring is to determine the bounds in which believers would be safe from the coming wrath of God. They may be killed but they might not be seduced. This becomes clear in Chapter 13 when the beast will kill some believers.

Temple - this is the church, the people of God. The temple in Jerusalem is gone by this time, and there will be no need for a real temple at the end of Revelation then this leaves John's use of Temple in the Gospel of John where it refers to Jesus' body... or the body of Christ. This is amplified by the fact that those in the temple are those who worship at the altar of God.

Outer court - this is the portion of the community who are not faithful followers. This comes from Ezekiel in which the prophet is to exclude those who do not worship the true God (44:5-9).

Nations - this is the "ethne" the nations, or gentiles. By this time in the Johannine church those who did not believe were being seen as gentiles, versus the idea of non-Jews being gentiles.

Trample - those who oppose God and do not worship him will persecute the church but will not be able to conquer it.

Forty-two months - this is the time of the reign of the beast out of Daniel 9:27 and 7:25 and is carried through Revelation. (11:3, 12:6, 12:14) (1260/30 days = 42 months = 3 ½ years = a time, two times and half time) This was also the amount of time Antiochus defiled the Temple. So it appears to be a period of time in which there will be proclamation but not much persecution, followed by an equal period of time in which the church will be persecuted. Another way to see this is if seven is the perfect number, then three and a half means less than a perfect time.

3 And I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; anyone who wants to harm them must be killed in this manner. 6 They have authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying,

and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

Two witnesses – there is a entire library given over to discussing the identity of these two witnesses. They have been described as historical characters come back to life (Moses, Elijah, Enoch), groups of people (Christians and Jews, martyrs and saints, Jewish believers and gentile believers) or two principles (law and prophets). Likely they represent all who will have the faith to prophecy in the face of danger. The number two is necessary because it takes two witnesses to testify to the truth of any belief.

Sackcloth – this is a call to repentance and a hope that people will turn to God
Two olive trees and lampstands – this refers to Zechariah's vision of Joshua and Zerubbabel (Zech. 4:1-6a, 10b-14) intended to strengthen the two leaders and to vindicate them in the eyes of the community. So they are present to encourage the church to fulfill its mission

Pours forth fire – the protection of the prophets is described in terms of former prophets (II Kings 1:10; Jer. 5:14) and uses the image of fire as a judgment from God. They will have immunity until they complete their mission. The idea that it comes from the mouth also implies that proclamation keeps people at bay.

No rain may fall – this comes back to Elijah and Moses (I Kings 17:1; Exodus 7:17-21) for the purpose of gaining people's attention so they will turn to God and away from Baal.

Plague – again this returns us to a new Moses who was trying to convince Pharaoh to let God's people go... they are trying to convince people to let go of other gods.

7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, 8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days members of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb; 10 and the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to the inhabitants of the earth.

Beast – this is the first reference to the beast. We will find out more about the beast in chapters 13 and 17 and only in 17:8 do we hear of him coming up from the abyss making sure we know he is of demonic origin.

Kill them – these two will be martyred. There is no escape for those who are willing to stand for God and for his Christ. This will only happen after there has been adequate proclamation.

Bodies will lie – for Jews it was important that the bodies be buried immediately. To be left in the streets was the supreme insult.

Great city – this is figurative for the places in which people have rebelled (Sodom) against God and are in captivity to other gods (Egypt). This could be Rome but we are told that it is figurative and thus it could be all cities in the Roman Empire in which Christians have been persecuted.

Three and half days – again we return to the image of an interim period of time.

Celebrate - the people will have a great time because they no longer are going to be tormented by the language of judgment that comes from the prophets or the plagues that remind them that they need to repent.

11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified. 12 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 watched them. 13 At that moment 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.

Breath of life - we harken back to Genesis where God breathes the breath of life into his creatures. Here he offers a new life to those who are dead. He does so publicly. This is intended to be the greatest miracle intended to cause people to turn to God.

Terrified - the people now begin to understand that the message of judgment of the two prophets was true and that they need to pay attention.

Come up here - God calls them to be among the saints under the altar. They are going home.

Earthquake - there are other signs of God's presence and displeasure, again reminding us of Exodus when Moses returns from the mountain and the people have worshipped the golden idol. There a portion of the people die and the others turn back to God.

14 The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming very soon.

15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

Loud voices - recall that the skies have been rolled back and so we can hear and see what is taking place in heaven. What follows is in response to both what God has done and the response of those who give their lives to Christ.

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever."

Kingdom of the world - this is the kingdom ruled by men and not by God. It has always been God's but now he is giving it over to Jesus to rule and reign. There is a marked difference... which is interesting considering in the story the beasts still are waiting to come and torture God's people.

16 Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 singing,
"We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty,
who are and who were,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.

Great power - it is a reminder who in the end has the power to change the world.

Begun to reign - God is no longer a neutral observer. God is now fully engaged in the battle. Raising the prophets is the mark that things are no longer going to be as they seem or as they once were.

18 The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for judging the dead,
for rewarding your servants, the prophets
and saints and all who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

Nations raged - nations believed that they were in charge and everything in the world is for and about them and so they did not want to share the stage and power with God.

Time for judging - there will come a moment when all the dead are judged and there will be a separation. Those who serve God will be saved and rewarded... those who destroy the earth... meaning all of God's creation and not merely the church.

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

God's temple - we now are able to see into the very inner court. We see the ark which is the symbol of God's covenant promises. What follows are reminders of God's presence in and with the world. God is coming and people ought to be wary.