

Place: Lurgan Baptist 24:2:20046

Reading: Revelation Chapter 11

EXPLORING THE FUTURE

17. GOD'S MIGHTY MESSENGERS

We have been looking for some months now at this final book of the Bible, The Revelation not of St. John the Divine, but The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Let's never forget that the Central Figure of the book of Revelation is not John (as the title may lead you to believe) but Jesus Christ. This is a Revelation of Christ as told to John. And if we study the Book of Revelation and don't learn anything about Christ, then we've misread the Book of Revelation. Now in (Ch 1-3) of the Book of Revelation we see Christ as The Lord in the Midst of the Churches: In (Ch 4-5) we see Him as The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne: in (Ch 6-18) we see Christ as The Lion in the Midst of the Nations: In (Ch 19) we see Him as The Lover in the midst of the Marriage Supper and then in (Ch 20-22) we see the Saviour as The Light in the Midst of Eternal Glories. Its all about Christ.

Now let us remember that where we are in this Book, is still the period known as, " *The Tribulation.* " We have discovered that this seven year " *Week,* " is characterised by three series of events: (1) The Seven Seals: (6:1-8:5) (2) The Seven Trumpets: (8:6-19:21) (3) The Seven Vials: (16:1-19:21) We have seen our Lord Jesus opening the Seals and Judgments being poured out on the earth. We have heard the angels sounding their Trumpets, and the judgments increase in their Intensity. We have noted that between that sixth and seventh Seals and now between the sixth and seventh Trumpets there is a parenthesis and this parenthetical portion runs from (10:1-11:15) Now having said all that as we come to (Ch 11) we are faced with the question, how do we interpret this passage ? Is this a Literal Temple or is this a symbol of something ? Is this the literal city of Jerusalem ? Or are we like some do, to spiritualise all this ? Well, we normally read books literally, and this is the way we're going to interpret this chapter this evening !

I think (11:8) gives us justification for doing this. Look at (11:8) Now where was our Lord crucified ? In the literal city of Jerusalem. So lets get this established in our minds that we're looking at the Literal City of Jerusalem in the days of the Tribulation period. The time periods are taken as literal time periods. The two witnesses are interpreted as two individuals. The three and a half days are taken

literally. The earthquake is a literal earthquake. The seven thousand men who are slain by the earthquake are 7,000 people who die in the catastrophe. The death of the two witnesses is literal as are their resurrection and ascension. Now I trust that as we interpret this passage literally, that it will begin to open up to us.

We've entitled this study " ***GOD'S MIGHTY MESSENGERS***," for God never leaves Himself without a witness. The more degenerate the times, the more definite the testimony. In the days before the flood, God raised up Enoch and Noah. In the days of Israel's darkest apostasy, He raised up Elijah and Elisha. He will do the same again. Now I've divided this into three parts.

(1) THE TEMPLE WORSHIP

The language in these opening verse's is peculiarly Jewish. The scene is Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple. John's measurement of the Temple is a symbolic action. To measure something means to claim it for yourself. When you're moving house this is what you do ! You buy a new house, and then you begin to measure for curtains, carpets, etc: What are you doing ? Well, by your actions you're claiming that house for yourself. Now the Lord was saying through John, " *I own this city, and this temple, and I claim both for Myself.*

(Zech 2:1-3) Now we need to take note that " *The Mighty Angel*," is speaking here of:

(a) A SPECIAL PLACE:

(11:1) " *The Temple of God.* " Now as you think with me of the Temple, think of the:

(1) THE TEMPLE IN THE PAST:

Three Temple's stood successively on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. (2 Chron 3:1) The First Temple was built by Solomon. (1 Kings 6:38) and was known in the ancient world for its breath-taking beauty. It stood for 400 years (950 BC - 586 BC) until it was destroyed by the Babylonians. The Second Temple was built by Zerubbabel and the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile (Ezra 3:12 Haggai 2:3) (444 BC - 20 BC) This Temple was more modest than Solomon's. The Third Temple which was in use in the days of Christ was built by Herod the great (20 BC - AD 64) This Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. So whenever you think of the Temple in the past, think of Solomon's, Zerubbabel's: Herod's. But what about:

(2) THE TEMPLE IN THE PRESENT:

Go to Jerusalem today and you will look in vain for the Temple, yet the aspirations of the Jews the world over are expressed in the prayer prescribed for the use of the orthodox each morning. "*Save us O God of our salvation and gather us together and deliver us from the nations. May it be acceptable to Thee, Our God and the God of our fathers that the Sanctuary be REBUILT speedily in our days and our portion assigned us in our law. There will we serve Thee in reverence as of old in bygone days.*" Now in the light of that prayer think of these facts. The Jew is back in the Land. The Holy city belongs to Israel once again and at the Wailing Wall worship can be offered before what are taken to be stones from Herod's Temple in the lower courses of Masonry. When you go down to the Wall the cracks in the stones are filled with pieces of crumbled paper on which are written the requests of the orthodox. Here is one of them: "*O mighty God, glorious God rebuild Thy house soon rebuild it in our time.*" Today on the Temple Mount, the site of the original Temple, two non-Jewish structures stand. These structures are sacred to Muslims. Indeed the Dome of the Rock, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque pose a problem to the rebuilding of the Temple. But surely from the light of Gods Word we can come to no other conclusion than that:

(3) *THE TEMPLE IN THE FUTURE:*

Will be built. Thus, The Might Angel says to John "*Rise and measure*" (11:1-2) Now remember John wrote the Book of Revelation about the year AD 95. This means that the Temple in Christ's day was non-existent for 25 years preceding John's writing. It had been destroyed in AD 70. What temple, then was John referring to ? There can only be one answer a yet-to-be- built Temple ! Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus "*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the Holy Place.*" (Matt 24:15 Dan 9:27 2 Thes 2:4) You see if the prophecy of Christ is to be fulfilled and the Holy of Holies is to be desecrated there must be a Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. In June 1967 the Israelis conquered the City of Jerusalem and gained access to the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. They immediately began archaeological explorations around the Temple Mount. One of these excavations began around the Western Wall and created what is known to day as the Rabbis Tunnel. This tunnel is 200 feet under the modern streets of the City of Jerusalem. Its 900 feet in length. As the archaeologists excavated they came on an amazing find.

Several hundred feet into the tunnel they discovered a gate, a gate that dates from the time of Herod. But what made this gate so unique was that it was a gate that "*was directly opposite the traditional eastern gate which faces the Mount Olives.*" Now the position of this new gate is crucial to locating the site of the Temple. Right now this gate is bricked up for the Arabs demanded the closure of the Tunnel for fear of their Holy Sight just above it. Why am I telling you all this ? Because "*The Rabbis Tunnel,*" and this "*Gate,*" positions for us the exact location of the Temple. (a) But

look at:

(b) *THE SPECIFIC PERIOD:*

" And the Holy City " (11:2) Do you recall what our Lord said concerning Jerusalem ? He said,

" Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

(Lk 21:24) The *" times of the Gentiles,"* began in 606 BC when Babylon began to devastate Judah and Jerusalem, and it will continue until Jesus Christ returns to deliver the Holy City and redeem Israel.

(Zech Ch 14) Now it seems to be that these two witnesses minister during the first half of the Tribulation. (11:3) Jerusalem is then overrun by the Gentiles for 42 months, the last half of the Tribulation.

Do you remember what Daniel says ? He tells us that there will be a 7 year treaty signed between the Antichrist and Israel. (Dan 9:27) When the Antichrist enters into this covenant with the Jews he will be received by the religious Jews because he'll allow them to rebuild the Temple. He will be accepted by the political Jews, because they think that, at last, they will have their freedom and safety assured. But right in the middle of this seven year agreement, the Antichrist will desecrate the Temple and demand that he be worshipped as God. (2 Thes 2:4) The Jews will not acknowledge him as God, and he will turn on them with unspeakable persecution, and the Great Tribulation will begin. (Matt 24:21) (1) My God has not got a literal temple during this age of grace, but do you recall what Paul says ? *" What ? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you ...,"*

(1 Cor 6:19) Moreover, the church corporately,
" groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

(Eph 2:21) (1)

(2) THE TWO WITNESSES

The time limit of the ministry of these two witnesses is stated as 1260 days. (11:3) Now keep in mind that while an ordinary calendar is made up of 365 days, a prophetic calendar is 360 days. So you can see that their ministry lasts for three and a half years ! The question is will they be ministering during the first part or the second part of the Tribulation ? Well, it seems to me that they will ministering during the first part, since it is the coming of the beast, onto the scene in power that terminates their witness. (11:7) Lets have a look at these two witnesses. Notice:

(a) *THEY ARE PERSONS:*

These two witnesses in the tribulation are real people, not symbols. Some scholars have tried to say they stand for something, perhaps the Old and New Testaments, but they are described as men who wear clothes, speak, perform miracles and eventually die, their bodies lying in the street for all to see. Look at (11:9) By no stretch of the imagination can we regard these witnesses as other than real persons. Did you notice what God calls these two witnesses ? (11:4) The olive tree symbolises fruit. The lamp-stand symbolises light. And the two work together, for it is the oil of the olive that caused the lamp-stand to burn, and that OIL is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. My Gods anointing and enabling will be upon these two witnesses ! They will be full of life and full of light. I just wonder will these be the two men who are instrumental in bringing the 144,000 Jewish evangelists to faith in Christ ?

Whatever it will be their responsibility to prophesy. Now prophecy in the New Testament does not necessarily refer to predicting the future. Its primary meaning is

“ to speak forth,” “ to proclaim,” or “ to preach.” My these two witnesses will proclaim to the world that the disasters occurring in the Tribulation are the judgements of God. They will warn that God’s final outpouring of judgment and eternal hell will follow. At the same time, they will preach the gospel of the kingdom, pointing men to Jesus Christ the King.

“ Witnesses.” Isn’t that a key word in the Book of Acts ? Christ did not say we will be theologians

(though many think they are) Christ did not call us to be lawyers. Ah, you say, *“ I can't witness.”* Of course you can. Suppose you saw a serious accident you would be summoned to the courtroom and asked, *“ Tell us what you saw and heard ?”* Listen, if Christ has done anything for you then you are to witness to it, tell others about it. Are you doing that ? Are you telling others about Christ as you should ? (a)

(b) *THEY ARE PROPHETS:*

For (11:3 11:6: 11:10) tell us the witnesses will prophesy. According to (11:3) they are clothed in sackcloth which was the traditional garb of the prophet when he was sent to warn of impending judgment. Now who are these two witnesses really going to be ? One of them is probably Elijah. Do you recall that fire was characteristic of his ministry, and his miracles were frequently those of judgment. (Mal 4:5 2 Kings 10:1) As to the identity of the other witness take your pick between Moses or Enoch. In some of the earliest Christian writings there are references to Enoch and Elijah as the two witnesses of (Rev Ch 11) Certainly, both were caught into heaven without dying.

(Heb 9:27) One thing is absolutely sure, these witnesses are prophets.

(c) *THEY ARE POWERFUL:*

For the Mighty Angel says, "*I will give power unto my two witnesses.*" (11:3) Notice they are armed with DROUGHT: For "*these have power to shut heaven.*" (11:6) Do you recall that the DROUGHT caused by Elijah's prayers lasted three- and -a-half years in the days of Ahab ? Notice they are armed with DEATH: For "*fire proceedeth out of their mouth.*" (11:5) Because they are Judgement prophets they are given judgement powers. Notice they are armed with DISEASE: For they have power "*to smite the earth with all plagues.*" (11:6) Terrible new viruses and revitalised plagues which long have cursed mankind will seize upon this old world at a word from these two men. No wonder they will be detested and feared around the world. Indeed:

(d) *THEY ARE PERSECUTED:*

(11:7-10) George Whitefield said, "*I am immortal until my life's work is done.*" You see, nothing can happen to these men unless God gives the word. But now their time has come. Their mission is complete, their job is done, their task is finished. And so we read, "*And the beast*" This is the first of 36 references to the Beast in the book of Revelation. It is a clear reference to the coming world ruler we call the Antichrist. He is Satan's puppet on a string. He is the devil incarnate. At his first opportunity the Antichrist goes for the jugular and kills them. They have been an irritant in his side. When Christ came, they killed Him. And these two witnesses will be killed, too, in the city of Jerusalem. The name Sodom emphasises *its VICE*, the name Egypt emphasises *Its VANITY*, "*where also Lord was crucified.*" (11:8) emphasises *its VIOLENCE*. I wonder will it be this killing, that will catapult the Antichrist into worldwide fame and popularity ? Will it make him drunk with the sense of his own power and cause him to proclaim himself God ? What a time this will be. The people will not even bury their bodies, they will just let them lie there in the street for all the world to see. And my All the world will see, something that would not have been possible until the advent of satellite television. Everyone will be rejoicing. It will be like an Anti-Christmas. Jerusalem will no longer be the HOLY City, but the HELLISH City. But in the midst of the fun and feasting God will intervene for the last thing to notice about God's Mighty Messengers is that:

(e) *THEY ARE PRESERVED:*

Miraculously preserved. (11:11-12) Did you notice here that 3 times the word "*Great*," is used here ? A Great Voice, VOICE calls them up to heaven. A Great Fear, falls upon those who witness this. A Great Earthquake levels one tenth of Jerusalem and kills 7,000 people. Can you picture the scene ? The sun-drenched streets of Jerusalem, the holiday crowds flown in from the ends of the earth for a first hand look at the corpses of these detested men. They are having a party dancing in the street, when suddenly the bodies stand up. They regain a healthy colour. Their stiff

limbs become pliable. They open their eyes and begin to breathe. And then, as everyone watches, a voice from heaven says, "*Come up, hither,*" and the two witnesses ascend to glory. Men called by God, empowered and faithful unto death. Could I just pause and ask: like these two is God calling you to carry out an extremely difficult task ? Are you obedient to His call ? Are you being faithful in the task that He has called you to do ? (11:14) ends the parenthetical portion which takes in from (10:1-11:14) John says: "*The second woe quickly.*" The second woe is brought to its completion and is evidently regarded as the final phase of the Sixth Trumpet.

(3) THE THIRD WOE

Contained in the Seventh Trumpet is announced as coming quickly. The end of the age is rapidly approaching. (8:13) Now note that when the Seventh Angel blows the trumpet, three dramatic events occur. There is:

(a) AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF VICTORY:

(11:15) A.T. puts it like this: "*The kingdom (singular) of this world has become the kingdom (singular) of our Lord.*" Is this not what the devil has been after for centuries ? (Babel) To unite the world into a Single Kingdom, but all his attempts have failed. Do you recall the offer Satan made when he tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness ? Luke tell us that "*the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them if thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.*" (Lk 4:5-7)

He offered the Kingdoms, the power and the glory. The Lord spurned the offer. Christ had not come for the divided, disunited kingdoms of the earth, He had come for the Kingdom. An so the Kingdom of this world, becomes the Kingdom of our Lord. It seems as though they never get tired of Crowning Him in Heaven. The Title Deeds of earth were given to Him in (Ch 5) and the elders cast their crowns at His feet. Here He is acknowledged as Earths Rightful King. In (Ch 19) He comes forth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and on His head are many crowns. : The little boy who had the read the last chapter. We know how its going to end. He shall Triumph. (a)

(b) AN ACCLAMATION OF PRAISE:

(11:16-18) In (4:10-11) the elders praised the Creator: in (5:9) they worshipped

the Redeemer: here the emphasis's is on The Conqueror. They gave thanks for three special blessings: that Christ Reigns Supremely:

(11:17) that Christ Judges Righteously: (11:18) that Christ Rewards Graciously. (11:18) In (11:18) we have a "*table of contents*," for the remainder of the Book of Revelation. These events did not take place the instant the angel blew his trumpet: he simply signalled the beginning of the process, and now these events would take place as planned. So there was (a) (b)

(c) AN ASSURANCE OF FAITHFULNESS:

(11:19) Isn't it fascinating to observe that this chapter opened with a temple on planet earth and it ends with the Temple of God in heaven. Here we have a visual reminder of God's sovereignty and faithfulness. Now over and over again, things are opened in this book. A Door is opened (4:1) the Seals are opened (6:1) the Abyss is opened (9: 2) the Temple is opened (11:19) heaven is opened in (19:11) The Books are opened (20:12) Here the focus of attention is on the Ark of God, the symbol of God's presence with His people. The fact that John sees the Temple and the Ark indicates that Israel is coming into view. Its a guarantee that God will never forget His people Israel ! And in (Rev Ch 12-ch 14) we will again see Israel come into prominence. Would this vision of the ark not greatly encourage God's suffering people to whom John sent this Book ? Would it not say to them, "*God will fulfil His promises. Trust Him.*" Do you need to be reminded of God's Faithfulness ? God is Faithful:

1. To CONFIRM when we are Unsteady:

For whom God Saves He keeps. (1 Cor 1:8)

2.To CONTROL when we are Tempted:

" There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye be able to bear it." (1 Cor 10:13)

3. To CARE when we are Hurt:

" Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest " (Heb 2:17-18) My He is able to enter into your heartache and feel your burdens Himself. What a Faithful God we have. Trust Him. Adore Him. Serve Him. "*For this God is our God for ever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death.*"