

Message Notes: Revelation Unveiled – Part 18

“People of Witness”

Revelation 11

Revelation 11 is part of a two-chapter interlude between the John’s description of what happened when an angel blew the 6th Trumpet, and an angel blows the 7th Trumpet to bring God’s final judgement down on Satan and Evil at the end of time as we know it here on earth. In the Apocalyptic chapters of Revelation, John’s literary genre is different from how people in churches here in American read and understand the book.

An Unfamiliar Organization of Thoughts

The theological framework of much of the American church when it comes to understanding Revelation leads many to interpret this part of the Bible through a specific lens:

- **Progression (Linear Thinking):** We tend to look at linearly and as a future timeline in “the last days”.
- **Recapitulation (Cyclical Thinking):** John wrote from a Jewish perspective, which means Revelation is not a linear timeline.
 - **Definition:** Recapitulation in literature is the retelling of the same events from a different perspective with a different purpose, commonly involving intensification.
 - **Old Testament Examples:** The creation story in Genesis 1 and 2; the repetitive retelling of the Exodus journey in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; the historical overlaps between Kings and Chronicles; the various prophetic writings...
 - **The End of the World in Revelation:** The end is not described just once at the very end of the book. It is recapitulated with intensifying imagery across multiple visions:
 - The 6th & 7th Seals (Chapters 6 & 8)
 - The 7th Trumpet (Chapter 11)
 - The 7th Bowl (Chapter 16)
 - The Defeat of Satan and Great White Throne of Judgement (Chapter 20)

The Danger of Forced Frameworks: Forcing a modern chronological timetable onto the text — such as the framework for Revelation popularized in the 19th and 20th centuries — distorts the original message of encouragement and hope intended for Christians in the 1st-century Roman Empire and the global persecuted Church today.

The overarching narrative resulting from the historical context of Revelation can be summarized by two truths:

First: The reality of CONFLICT. This occurs when two kingdoms try to occupy the same space at the same time — the Empire of Satan versus the Kingdom of God. Over 95 passages in Revelation refer to this ongoing clash, which manifests in two distinct ways:

- **Physical Persecution:** Though local believers weren't always facing a massive, continuous edict of execution from Rome, the threat of violence was constant.
 - The loss of wealth was real.
 - The loss of dignity was real.
 - The loss of life was real.
- **Non-Physical Persecution:**
 - **Slander:** Early Christians were falsely accused of being cannibals (The Lord’s Supper), practicing incest (Brothers and Sisters in Christ), and acting as threats to national security (They would not worship Caesar).
 - **Social Seduction:** Culturally compromising and watering down faith to fit into the local economic and religious structures.

Second: Even when the world is spinning out of control, GOD IS IN CONTROL. God is saying to His people living in the Roman Empire and to us today: Be Encouraged. Keep your Hope. Stay loyal to me in your faith and as you live your life. While you may not be physically secure in the world and your life may even be taken from you because you are a follower of Jesus, you are spiritually secure. That is the message from Jesus in the INTERLUDE between the 6th and 7th seals. Revelation 6:17 asks, “Who can stand?” The answer is:

- a. Revelation 7:4-8: The 144,000 (ALL of God’s People on earth)
- b. Revelation 7:9-10: The Great Multitude already in heaven
- c. Revelation 7:11-12: The Angels

AND SO, THE MESSAGE IS THAT **The servants of God can stand because they are spiritually secure.**

Revelation 11:1-2...

John is told after eating the scroll (Chapter 10) to measure a temple that had physically been destroyed decades prior by the Roman army. This is the same scenario as Ezekiel who after being told to eat the scroll, is told in chapters 40-48 to measure the temple which had been destroyed in 586 B.C by the Babylonian Army. This reveals a deep spiritual reality that aligns with the New Testament epistles. In the Old Testament, the temple in Jerusalem was the literal intersection of heaven and earth. Today, followers of Jesus are that intersection as we have the Holy Spirit living in us. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"*

The Meaning of Measuring: In biblical imagery, measuring signifies three profound promises for God's people in the midst of trials:

- 1. Ownership:** It declares exactly who you belong to.
- 2. Protection:** Not physical security from suffering or death, but absolute spiritual security for eternity.
- 3. Sovereignty:** It establishes who is truly in charge. Rome was not sovereign over the early church; modern global empires are not sovereign over you. You are governed by the One who measures you.

God keeps track of all His people to make sure we are not spiritually lost.

Further evidence of this being the meaning of this part of Chapter 11 is who John is told not to measure. He doesn't measure Gentiles because Gentiles are the image used to talk about those who are not God's people and do not belong to God. They will trample on the Holy City, which is the description in Revelation of God's people, not Jerusalem. Jerusalem in Revelation is referred to as the Great City which is also the expression used to refer to Babylon.

God's people will be trampled for 42 months which is 3 ½ years, 1260 days, "a times, times, times, and half a time". All of these descriptions are used in Revelation. They are not used to describe half of the 7 years of tribulation near the end of time, but to denote that the time of God's people being trampled will not go on forever.

Revelation 11:3-13... The Call to Witness

Chapter 10 explicitly commanded the Church to internalize God's Word — to "eat the scroll" so that the Word masters us before it comes out of us. Chapter 11 commands the next logical step: **Go be a witness.**

Verses 3-4... The Symbol of Two: Two witnesses are required by biblical law (Deuteronomy 17) for a testimony to be legally valid. The Church acts as a legal witness to a hostile world. The two olive trees and lampstands would remind John's listeners of Zechariah 4 where the two anointed ones symbolized the joint rulers over God's people Israel — the King and Priest. Jesus is known as King and High Priest. In the New Testament, followers of Jesus are a Kingdom of Priests. Is Revelation referring to Jesus or us? Probably both as Apocalyptic literature is layered and we are to become like Jesus.

Verses 5-6... Moses and Elijah Imagery: The witnesses have the power to call down fire, stop rain, and turn water to blood — matching the signs of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) fulfilled in Jesus. Yet notably, they never actually use these plagues.

Verses 7-13... The True Torment and the Power of Martyrdom:

The world is tormented not by physical plagues, but by the weight of the gospel message itself. The only instance of repentance and the world giving glory to God in the entire book follows the resurrection of the witnesses. Historically, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Will we choose to be a witness to the world by being like Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did?

The Story of Saint Agnes of Agone...

- The Location:** The Piazza Navona in Rome sits directly on the ruins of a 1st-century stadium built by Emperor Domitian. An ancient obelisk there once read: *All Praise Domitian.*
- The Martyr:** Today, the church of *Sant'Agnese in Agone* stands on that spot, named after Agnes, a 13-year-old girl who dedicated her life to Christ.
- The Sacrifice:** Because she refused marital proposals from powerful Roman elites to stay faithful to Christ, she was sent to a brothel as a sex slave but refused to comply. She was put on trial and ultimately burned at the stake in the stadium games.
- The Victory:** The dome of the church depicts her *apotheosis*—her being received into heaven by God, with Jesus handing her the victor's wreath, surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12). She chose death over cultural compromise, cementing her testimony forever.

The Takeaway: If we want to respond to what Jesus is saying to us in Revelation 11, commit to B.L.E.S.S.ing others. Pick up a B.L.E.S.S. bookmark and begin to be a witness to others in this way no matter what the cost is.

Revelation 11:14-19... The 7th Trumpet

When the seventh trumpet sounds, the heavenly temple opens to reveal the Ark of the Covenant. In 63 BC, Roman General Pompey entered the temple in Jerusalem, walked into the Holy of Holies, and found it empty. It was a secret the High Priests kept for generations until the veil tore at the crucifixion. God's presence left that building because **we** are now His Holy of Holies on earth. While the global powers of evil and empire tremble at the thunder and lightning of God's final judgment, those in Christ can rest in absolute assurance. The kingdoms of this world will fail, but our King reigns forever and ever. Hallelujah!

Personal Reflection & Weekly Challenge:

Don't let the mission of the church fade into white noise. Commitment requires action. Pick up a B.L.E.S.S. bookmark and commit to identifying, praying for, and actively serving and witnessing to the people in your life. Live out the ethics and life of Jesus no matter the personal cost.