

## Revelation Chapters 10 and 11 – John Karmelich

1. This lesson is called, "Doing God's Will in Difficult Times".
  - a) In most of Revelation, John just writes down what he sees. You sort of picture John with a bunch of legal pads trying to describe what he saw and record directly what was told to Him. My point, is John doesn't participate much in the action, he's just an observer.
  - b) In these two chapters, God asked John to actually get involved with the program. No, he doesn't kill anybody. ☺ Still, John had to do more than just write what he saw.
  - c) Given that, I thought a good lesson theme would be about "Doing God's will", especially in adverse situations. That is the one key personal application I get out of this lesson.
2. This is a situation where it is best to summarize the text and then come back to this theme.
  - a) When we last left off, God was busy destroying the earth. ☺
  - b) Back in Chapter 5, there was a scroll with seven seals. After Jesus removed each one of the seven seals, John then saw "something bad" happen on earth. Jesus then removed another seal and something else "bad" happened. This continued for each seal.
  - c) The seventh seal lead to "seven subparts" for a lack of a better term. That is, the final seal lead to seven more judgments on earth. That was the topic of the last lesson. An angel blew a trumpet and then, more judgment occurs. This process is repeated six times in Chapters 8-9 where six angels blew six trumpets one at a time, and after each trumpet blow, another judgment-oriented "bad thing" happened on earth.
  - d) Chapters 10-14 are actually a break from the earth judgment/destruction project.
    - i) In Chapter 10, a "mighty" angel told John to go eat a small book. Then this angel told John that he must "prophecy" (i.e., keep writing Revelation) some more.
    - ii) In Chapter 11, John was told to measure the Temple. As a real estate appraiser, measuring buildings is part of my job so I can relate to this text. ☺ This is the Jewish center of worship that has existed on and off through their history. Currently there is no temple. Many scholars believe it will exist again one day.
    - iii) Next, John describes "two witnesses", who are basically warning the world that God is behind all of this judgment and getting the world to repent.
    - iv) The last half of the Chapter 11 is "just about everyone" in heaven praising God for the judgment that is about to happen.
    - v) If all of this sounds confusing, it is. ☺ We'll tackle each item one at a time.
3. This surprisingly, leads me back to my theme: "Doing God's Will in Difficult Times"
  - a) Let's face it, whatever and whenever this "Great Tribulation" is occurring, it can't be an easy time to live through and trust in God. It must be just as hard to write about it.
    - i) Yet, John did what he was told. He wrote what he was told. He "ate a book" (i.e., digested what he saw) just as he was told. He measured a building as he was told. John is being obedient despite the difficulty of the situation around Him.
  - b) Let's recall some facts about Revelation: John was probably in his 90's when he wrote this. He was banished to an obscure island in the Mediterranean Sea that was a Roman penal colony. Do you think John planned to be used by God in a major way at this point in life and this location? I highly doubt it. My point is God called John, at a late stage in his life to do something difficult. If God can use John, He can use any of us.
  - c) Doing "God's will" is usually about learning the bible as best as you can, and then living one's life with the idea that we are trying to please God in all that we do. Hopefully, Christians pray daily for God's will to be done. Ideally, we spend enough time in God's Word that we learn what God desires for our life. Then we go "do what we want". If we love God, then "what we want", whatever we are called to do, is pleasing to God. Over and above that, there may be difficult situations where God "calls" us to do things.

- d) Very few Christians get some sort of "direct communication" from God telling them what to do. In other words, God does not audibly say to us to eat this book or measure this building. Still, all Christians have some sort of special gifts. It usually becomes obvious to us what they are, or our friends can tell us what are our special talents.
    - i) For example, I write these studies because I can't stand not doing them. I realize that God gave me a gift for writing, and I use it for His glory. It isn't the size of the "work" that counts, but whether one is obedient to doing what God called him or her to do for God's glory.
  - e) My point as it relates to this lesson is there many unexplained mysteries in this chapter.
    - i) Bible scholars debate just who is this "mighty angel" that told John to "eat a book".
    - ii) Bible scholars debate what John meant by "eating the book" and prophesying.
    - iii) Bible scholars debate why John had to measure the temple in Chapter 11.
    - iv) Bible scholars debate who are the "Two witnesses" John saw in Chapter 11.
    - v) Here is what most scholars neglect: John did it. He was obedient God's orders.
      - a) The two "witnesses" who are human and not angels were obedient.
    - vi) This leads to my point: There are going to be times in our lives where God calls us to do things that don't make sense. There are passages of the bible in which for us to be obedient to God, we are going to have to "blindly trust God". Notice God doesn't call John to kill anyone. God never, ever calls us to do something that is against one of His commandments. At the same time, doing God's will may make us unpopular with people or do things we would rather not do.
    - vii) Another point of this lesson is we need to focus on what the text does say versus what it does not say. Commentators have a field day trying to interpret the text and often miss some basic and key applications.
4. Chapter 10, Verse 1: Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. <sup>2</sup> He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, <sup>3</sup> and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion.
- a) In the last chapter, John was watching six angels blowing trumpets and six separate judgments taking place on earth. Now another angel shows up. This one has a rainbow above his head, his face looked like the sun, he had one foot on the land and one on the sea. He roared like a lion and had a small book in his hand. Any questions so far? ☺
  - b) OK, the first question: Who is this angel? Let me start by explaining that some people believe it is Jesus, and others believe it is just a mighty angel.
    - i) Back in Chapter 1, there was a word-picture description of Jesus. Some of that same symbolism is used here in Chapter 10. That is why some people believe this is actually Jesus in another word-picture form.
    - ii) The counter argument is that this is "just" a powerful angel. In the last chapter, we had six angels blowing six trumpets. Verse 1 says "another angel". The word "another" in the Greek means "another of the same kind".
    - iii) Whether one believes it is Jesus or an angel, I don't think it makes much of a difference. In a matter of verses, this "mighty angel" is going to tell John to "eat a book". John obeys. Whether God gave this instruction via an angel, or Jesus directly gives the instruction, either way John obeys it. I don't see any relevance of knowing whether or not this is Jesus Himself. We can move on.
  - c) Let's discuss the symbolism behind this angel a little.
    - i) Whoever or whatever it is, it is big and powerful. This angel is "robed in a cloud". When one thinks of "clouds", one thinks of cloudy or foggy. The idea is one cannot see clearly. Whenever God appeared in the Old Testament, there is usually a reference to clouds. The idea is we cannot fully comprehend what God is like.

- ii) This mighty angel had a rainbow around his head. Back in Chapter 4, the throne room of God was described. There was a rainbow around the throne. The only other bible reference to a rainbow was the one after the flood. That was God's promise never to flood the world again. That promise was never to judge the world again, but only to never use a flood to judge the world again. (Ref.: Genesis 9:15; 2nd Peter 3:7). The rainbow is a symbol of God is "sticking to His promise".
- iii) The text says this angel's face was like the sun and his legs were like pillars of fire. The word "fire" in the bible is associated with judgment. Most metals are heated in hot fire to get rid of impurities.
- iv) The text says he put his one foot on the land and one on the sea. The basic idea is that this angel is big. The effects of his message cover "the whole world".
- v) The final word-picture is the shout of a lion. In other words, this "message" is not only big, but loud. The idea is that it will be heard loud and clear.
- vi) Putting it all together, this is about "judgment". This angel is being sent as a "forewarning" of the judgment of the world.
- d) So why does this angel appear "now"? The purpose of this angel has to do with the "little scroll" (or little book) that the angel had in his hand. This is mentioned in Verse 2. We'll discover in a few verses that this angel is delivering a scroll for John to "eat".
  - i) So what is this little scroll? The text doesn't say. This is one of many mysteries of these chapters. What we need to do is focus on what the text does teach.
  - ii) Back in Chapter 5, we had Jesus taking a scroll from God the Father. That scroll from Chapter 5 had seven seals. As each seal was removed judgment happened.
  - iii) Whatever this little scroll is, it is given to John in a matter of verses. Most people suspect it ties to the writing of Revelation. It is God saying in effect, "Hey John, despite all of the tough things you've had to write about so far, we're not done. I (God) need you to take this scroll and write some more."

5. Verse 3 (cont.): When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. <sup>4</sup> And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

- a) If things are not confusing enough, it is about to get worse. ☺
- b) John now records that after this "big angel" roared, there are seven "thunders" that spoke. John was about to write what these thunders spoke, but a voice from heaven said in effect, "Do not write down what they said".
- c) As I said in the introduction, visualize John with a big pad of paper writing down what he saw. In Verse 3 he mentions these "seven thunders". God said in effect, "Don't mention the thunders". I visualize John erasing what he just wrote.
- d) So why mention these "thunders" in the first place?" If God said not to write down about the seven thunders, why reference them to begin with? The best answer is that God is still "keeping some secrets" from us. It is God saying in effect, "There are things I want mankind to know and things I want to keep a secret, at least for now".
  - i) The "mystery of the seven thunders" is God's way of saying to us, "The bible may be all you need to know about God and about what I (God) expect of mankind, but it does not represent full knowledge of Me. There are still things I as God choose not to reveal to mankind in this book."
- e) Remember the secret to understanding Revelation is to focus on what the text does say instead of speculating on what God is keeping silent about: There are books full of commentaries on the "secret meaning" of these seven thunders. The truth is if God wanted us to know the meaning, He would have stated as such.
- f) To me, the key point of this chapter is that this "mighty angel" was sent with this "little scroll" to deliver it to John. John was given the responsibility of communicating that message to us here in Revelation.

6. Verse 5: Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. <sup>6</sup> And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!"
  - a) Now we are back to this "big angel" himself. The key point is that this angel swore to God that "there will be no more delay". The question is, "delay of what"? We've already had chapter after chapter of judgment of the earth. What is being delayed? The answer is God's "wrap up". Even though it is going to take a bunch more chapters to describe this judgment, the point is God is "getting on with it".
  - b) One has to read these verses in the time perspective of all of history. We've been dealing with sin for thousands of years. God once got rid of all sin by flooding the earth. God promised one day (in effect) that He would judge the earth again, only this time it is with "fire" (i.e., judgment) as opposed to a flood. (Ref: 2nd Peter 3:7). That is Revelation in a nutshell. It is about Jesus Second Coming. It is about God judging the earth, with one big "last call" for salvation before Jesus comes and rules on the earth. In the time perspective of all of history, there are no more delays before the final judgment.
7. Verse 7: But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."
  - a) Again, understand Chapter 10 is full of "unexplained" things:
    - i) We had a big angel, with many unexplained things about his appearance. What is known about that angel is he is announcing to the world, "This is it, folks!"
    - ii) We've had "seven thunders" say something, only to have John tell us it's a secret and we can't know what these seven thunders said.
  - b) Verse 7 tells us something we do (or should) know: The mystery of God will be accomplished". The sentence says, "Just as he announced to his servants, the prophets." The idea is that Jesus Second Coming has been preached throughout the bible as recorded by different prophets.
    - i) Remember that in the bible the word "mystery" means "something unrevealed up to know". We think of a mystery as something we never know for sure. The biblical idea of a mystery is something unknown only up to this point in time.
  - c) So what is this "mystery of God"? The answer is what we've been discussing through most of Revelation: God's judgment on the earth. While we don't know the exact dates, Revelation does tell us "how" it is going to be happen. The point is God created human life. God is going to "wrap it up" one day and bring life as we know it to an end.
8. Verse 8: Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." <sup>9</sup> So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." <sup>10</sup> I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. <sup>11</sup> Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."
  - a) Verses 8 to 11 give the purpose of Chapter 10 as far as John was concerned. Some voice, presumably God's voice told John to go take the scroll out of the hand of this angel. John was then told to eat the scroll. The scroll tasted sweet in his mouth and was sour in John's stomach. Then John was told, presumably by that same voice, to go prophecy some more.
  - b) First, let's discuss this "voice" that told John to do things:
    - i) Imagine looking at this "mighty angel": It was big, and was "on fire". It roared like a lion. Whatever it was, this angel (or Jesus himself) was intimidating. Yet, some voice, told John to go take the book out of the hand of this angel and "eat it".
    - ii) That is why I believe it was God Himself who told John to do this. If it wasn't God, why would John follow these instructions?

- iii) Let's give John some credit here. He obeyed orders. You and I would probably be afraid to go near this "angel creature". Still, when God told John to do this, John did not question the orders. John obeyed what God commanded him to do.
  - c) Now let's discuss "eating the scroll". God once told the prophet Ezekiel to eat a scroll. (Reference: Ezekiel Chapter 3). In that chapter of Ezekiel, God not only told him to eat the scroll, but it too, would be sweet in the mouth and sour in the stomach. By the 4th verse of Chapter 3, God was telling Ezekiel to go prophesy the words God was about to give him. In other words, God was "putting words" inside of Ezekiel and he was to speak out to the Nation of Israel the words God put in him.
    - i) Obviously, "eating the book" is meant to be symbolic. Just as we use the expression, "let me digest what you are saying", so John had to "eat this book".
    - ii) We're seeing a similar picture here in Revelation 10. There is a scroll that John was told to eat. In Verse 10, John was told he must prophesy again to many peoples, nations, languages and kings. In other words, John must communicate more of Revelation to anyone and everyone willing to read this book.
    - iii) This gives us a clue as to what this little book that John was "eating": It describes Revelation itself. It describes the judgments that are still to be described in the remainder of the book, plus the actual events tied to Jesus Second Coming.
    - iv) In other words, God is telling John to keep writing. That's the application of this lesson: To encourage John to "keep writing". Despite all that John has seen so far, there is a sense that John must do more. It's not over yet.
  - d) So what does it mean when this book would be "sweet in your mouth and sour in your stomach"? I think the idea of Jesus return is exciting ("sweet to the mouth") but when one contemplates all the people who are condemned because they refuse to accept God's terms for salvation. That is the "bitter to the stomach" word-picture.
  - e) Let's step back and think about this for a moment:
    - i) John has already seen intense visions of God throne room, angels, judgment etc. Despite of all of this, John is told to keep writing. Chapter 10 is God telling John in effect, "Although a lot of judgment has happened so far, I (God) am not done yet. If I'm (God) am not done, neither are you (John) in terms of writing about it!"
    - ii) The application is, "Where God leads, God provides". God may not call you or me to write down the Apocalypse. ☺ He does call us to live as a witness for Him. That can be hard at times. Sometimes we have to pause and catch our breath, and then move on. That is what John is being told to do here. Despite all of the emotionally draining things John has seen so far, John is told to keep going. In a subtle way, I see this chapter as about encouragement.
    - iii) So why don't we get a big angel to come and tell us to "eat a book"? ☺ In a sense, we do. It is God's word. That is our guidebook for how we are to live. We then draw upon God's power to live in accordance with the principals of that book.
  - f) All of Chapter 10 can be thought of as "one big effort" to get John to continue his work. Yes, this "mighty angel" also announced in effect, "This is it, no more delays in world judgment". The other main action in this chapter is John taking and "eating" the scroll that was in the hands of this angel. The main point I get out of Chapter 10 is John obeyed what was commanded of him to do. That concept continues in Chapter 11.
9. Chapter 11, Verse 1: I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. <sup>2</sup> But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles.
- a) As I stated in the introduction, Chapters 10 and 11 are the first time John had to do things other than write down what he saw. In Chapter 10, John had to "eat a scroll". The key point is that John was told he must keep on prophesying (i.e., describe God's judgment) and keep on writing what is to become the Book of Revelation.

- b) Here in Chapter 11, John was given a measuring stick. John was told to measure the temple, the altar of the temple and count the worshipers who were in the temple. The idea is the temple is a specific size and John was to measure it and count the specific number of people who were worshipping in that Temple.
  - c) First question: What temple? That would be "the" temple. This was the central place of worship for the Jewish people.
    - i) Let's recall how the Temple was built: It was based on the model of the tabernacle in Exodus. There was an indoor structure surrounded by an outdoor fenced area.
    - ii) The last literal ("the") Temple to exist was destroyed in 70AD. (Most believe John wrote Revelation around 90AD). That last temple did have an outer court.
    - iii) Verse 2 says John is not to measure the outdoor area (the outer court), as has been "Given to the Gentiles". "Gentile" refers to anyone who isn't Jewish. The fact it is excluded from the Temple gives the idea that no outer court is used in association with God-worship.
    - iv) How do we know it is not referring to a temple in heaven? Given the fact the outer court is "given to the Gentiles" would indicate that this is an "earth-based" place where part of it (the indoor area) is used to worship God and the outdoor area is not included in this temple-structure as it is given to the Gentiles.
  - d) Now we get back to the classic debate of whether or not this is a single, future event or does it refer to all of Christian history?
    - i) If you recall, some Christians believe in a literal, future event called "The Great Tribulation". It covers a seven-year time span, which we'll discuss in a moment.
    - ii) The other view is that this "Tribulation" covers all of Christian history. Those who hold this view argue the fact that because the building and the people are "measured" is symbolism that there are only "x" number of saved people. It is a way of saying there is a limit to the number of people who go to heaven. Those who do not want to worship God are "cast out" with the Gentiles (nonbelievers).
    - iii) Those who hold the view that the Tribulation is a specific, future event will argue that a new temple will be built one day in Jerusalem where the original one stood. Now that Israel is a country again gives credence to this view. Somehow, the antichrist strikes a peace deal between Israel and its neighbors. Somehow, the Israelites are allowed to rebuild their temple. The fact that Verse 2 says "the outer court is given to the Gentiles" means that only the indoor structure will be built.
      - a) If you ask religious Jewish people how they will know when the Messiah comes, they will say the Messiah will lead them to rebuild the temple and have an era of world-peace. One can see how the antichrist will deceive them by allowing a new structure to be built.
      - b) The spot where the last the last Temple stood is now "The Dome of the Rock", which is a holy spot to Muslims. A (not the) view is that when this new Temple is built, in order to appease the Muslims, only a smaller Temple will be built that does not have an outdoor court. The area of the "outdoor court" is given the Gentiles (i.e., the Muslim shrine).
10. Chapter 11, Verse 2 (cont.): They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. <sup>3</sup> And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.
- a) These two sentences describe two new characters in Revelation: "Two witnesses". Whoever they are, they are "around" for 1,260 days. More on them in a moment.
  - b) If you recall from the first part of Verse 2, God said a temple exists, but the outdoor portion of the complex will be "given to the Gentiles". The second sentence of Verse 2 says, "They (the Gentiles) will trample on the holy city for 42 months".
    - i) Remember what Revelation is all about: It is about "revealing" the events tied to Jesus Second Coming. It involves judgment of the world prior to the event itself.

- ii) Here in Chapter 11, we read that "sin" is occurring during this judgment period. Somehow, someday, the Gentiles are "trampling" on the holy city. We know this city is Jerusalem because that is where the Temple is traditionally located. This will become more obvious when we get to Verse 8.
- iii) What we do know, is that if this is a future event, the Jewish Temple will exist again, but only the indoor portion of the structure. My view is that the antichrist will strike some sort of peace deal between the Jewish people and their neighbors. Jerusalem will become sort of "international controlled" city. In order for the Jewish people to accept this, one consolation prize might be to allow them to have a rebuilt Temple. However it happens, "somehow" the Temple will exist again.
- c) These verses mention both 42 months and 1,260 days. What does that mean?
  - i) If divided 1,260 days by 30 days, you get, (guess what) 42 months. The Hebrew calendar has twelve 30-day months. They occasionally add a month to "catch up".
  - ii) There are 12 months in a year. 42 months is three and one half years.
  - iii) Those who believe the "Great Tribulation" is either a historical event or describing all of Christian history will argue that each day represents a year. The view is it ties to the "Dark Ages" of Christian history when the papacy ruled over most of the Christian world and there was little wide spread bible knowledge.
  - iv) Those of us who see the Great Tribulation as a single future event, take this time frame literally. When Revelation says 42 months, it means just that: 42 months. When Revelation says 1,260 days, it means just that: 1,260 days.
  - v) The prophet Jeremiah predicted the Israelites would be in captivity for 70 years. (Ref.: Jer. 25:11, 29:10.) The prophet Daniel, who lived long afterwards, read that passage and took it literally. (See Daniel 9:2) Daniel started praying because he knew the 70 years was literally coming to an end. My point is if the prophet Daniel takes prophetic numbers literally, we should take them literally.
  - vi) There is a passage in Ezekiel where he stated that he prophesied for a total of 430 days and each day represented a year's time. (Ref: Ezekiel 4:5-6.) That is different because Ezekiel blatantly stated that each day represents a year.
- d) I give all of this as an introduction as I'm about to explain the view of how the "Great Tribulation" represents a literal seven-year time span.
  - i) In Daniel 9:24, God told Daniel that the nation of Israel would have 70 "sevens" to make an end of sin. This prophecy was specifically for Israel.
  - ii) The Hebrew word translated "seven" can mean either seven days, seven weeks, seven months or seven years. The prophecy in Daniel 9 is that from the end of the Babylonian captivity (when Jerusalem is to rebuilt) to the time of a "prince" (Messiah) will be 69 "sevens". In the Book of Nehemiah, the Persian king gave the order to start rebuilding Jerusalem. That date was March 1, 445 BC. (One can read in encyclopedias tying the date of this decree to this date in history.)
  - iii) Now let's get back to the "sevens". Daniel said a "prince" (KJV) will return after 69 of the 70 "sevens" from the starting date March 1, 445BC. Well, nothing happened after just 69 days, weeks or months. However, if you take 69 seven-year periods, beginning at 445BC, it comes out to March of 32 AD. The exact date is "Palm Sunday" in 32AD. This is the day Jesus presented Himself publicly as the king. Daniel's prophecy is that there will be 69 "sevens" until a "prince" is presented.
  - iv) Daniel 9:24 said there would be 70 "sevens" for Israel to make an end to sin. Daniel 9:26 says that after 69 "sevens" the Messiah would be "cut off" (i.e., killed). The 70th "seven" is a separate time-period. In other words, the Nation of Israel already got their 69 "seven-year-periods" to make an end of sin (i.e., accept Jesus payment for sin) and there is a futuristic 70th "seven-year-period".

- a) Remember a (not the) purpose of all 70 "sevens" is for Israel corporately to "make an end of sin", which is accepting Jesus as the Messiah.
    - v) This future seven-year period as discussed in Daniel is what we call "The Great Tribulation". That is why scholars believe it is a literal seven-year period.
    - vi) In other words, God "focused" on Israel prior to Jesus arrival. That means God primarily worked through the Nation of Israel. Now God primarily works through the church as opposed to Israel (i.e., the church is in the billions and has a much bigger impact). There is still a 70th "seven-year-period" where God will focus His work through the Nation of Israel. That is why many scholars believe most of Revelation occurs in a literal seven year time span.
    - vii) Are you saying the Great Tribulation is for Israel alone? If it is, God is missing the target as the whole world is getting punished. ☹ The Great Tribulation is the preparation before Jesus Second Coming. Israel is the primary location in focus as that is where Jesus returns. The Nation of Israel is the primary focus as God made unconditional promises that the Messiah would rule and reign from Israel. The 70th "seven" is for the Nation of Israel to "make an end of sin" (Daniel 9:27). I believe they will corporately accept Jesus as the Messiah at this time.
  - e) Believe it or not, this does lead us back to Revelation Chapter 11, Verse 2-3.
    - i) Remember the two witnesses who prophesy for 42 months or 1,260 days? Well, that is exactly one-half of a seven-year time frame. I take this literally.
    - ii) So do these two witnesses come in the first half or second half? Bible scholars with way too much free time on their hands debate this stuff. ☹ Most believe it is the first half. Remember that John is told at the end of Chapter 10 to "keep on prophesying" as if to warn the world of the judgment to come. These two guys get the same type of assignment. They are to prophesy during the first half of a seven-year period to warn the world that that God is about to complete the judgment.
    - iii) That's the "connection" between Chapters 10 and 11: God told John at the end of Chapter 10 to keep on "prophesying", i.e., write about God's judgment and Jesus Second Coming. God assigns these two "witnesses" to do the same thing.
  - f) So who are these two "witnesses"? All we are told so far is they are dressed in sackcloth.
    - i) Whoever they are, they are very "Jewish" in style. In the Old Testament, to dress in sackcloth" is a sign of remorse (E.g., Genesis 37:34). Nowhere in the New Testament is a Christian ever commanded to dress in sackcloth and repent.
    - ii) My point is the focus of these "two witnesses" is to Jewish people. God told Daniel that the "70 "sevens" are for Israel to "make an end of sin". (Daniel 9:24) These two witnesses are being sent to Jerusalem to tell the world to repent.
    - iii) Why have two witnesses? One has to "think Jewish". There is a bible concept that "by two or three witnesses a thing is established". (Deuteronomy 19:15).
11. Verse 4: These ("the two witnesses") are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.
- a) These two guys get "nicknames": one is "olive trees" and the other is "lampstands".
    - i) In the tabernacle, the soul source of light is a seven branch oil-based candlestick. The power source of this candlestick is olive oil. (Ref: Exodus 25:31-40, 27:20).
    - ii) The purpose of the lampstand is give light to the tabernacle.
    - iii) It is a model of the Holy Spirit, as His function is to "give light" to people about God and His desire for our life. This is a common word-picture through the bible.
    - iv) The point is God calls these two guys olive trees and lampstands. Those are both Old Testament word-pictures or nicknames that deal with "giving light" to God.
  - b) Olive trees are associated with the source of the light and the lampstand is the light itself.



12. Verse 5: If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.
- Suppose somebody didn't like the fact they were preaching Jesus is God or preaching the end is near. Suppose those "somebody's" wanted to harm them. Verse 5 says that fire comes from their mouth and devours their enemies. That would discourage criticism. ☺
  - We know these two guys are men, and not some sort of angelic creatures. Verse 6 says they are "men". In Verse 7, they do die one day, so I don't believe they are angels.
  - How does fire come from their mouth? Don't know. Many people don't take this literally because they don't believe God would create a "fire breathing man". I've experienced some bad breadth in my lifetime, but this would be different. ☺ Personally, I believe God is God and if He wants to make a person who could breathe fire, it is not an issue.
  - Remember the main purpose Jesus did miracles was to validate His ministry. All the people Jesus healed still died on a later date. God uses miracles to validate the messenger. The same applies with these fire-breathing witnesses!
13. Verse 6: These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.
- A classic debate is just who are these two guys? There is lots of speculation. The majority opinion is they are "like" Moses and Elijah or are somehow, these are these two guys.
    - The only person in the bible ever given the power to shut up the sky so it wouldn't rain is Elijah. (Ref: 1st Kings 17:1; James 5:17).
    - There is an Old Testament prediction that Elijah would come prior to the Messiah:
      - "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6 NIV)
      - I emphasized the word "dreadful". Jesus First Coming was not dreadful. It lead to salvation. Based on Revelation so far, you have to admit that the judgment on the world is pretty dreadful. ☺
    - Jesus Himself validated Elijah will come prior to His Second Coming (Matt. 17:11).
    - John the Baptist came in "the Spirit of Elijah" (Luke 1:17) but John the Baptist denied that he himself is Elijah. (Ref.: John 1:21.)
  - The reason I believe the other guy is Moses or "like Moses" is that Verse 6 says this guy has the power to turn waters into blood. That sounds Moses-like to me. ☺
    - There is also a strange story in the book of Jude where the angel Gabriel is fighting with the devil over the body of Moses. (Jude 1:19). That makes bible scholars suspect God still has a purpose for Moses body one day.
  - Remember these two guys are in Jerusalem, most likely at the temple. They are preaching to the world to repent and that Jesus is the Messiah. This is not a popular message in a Jewish based community. ☺ It is one thing to claim one is either Elijah or Moses. People would take them more seriously if there was no rain for several years and the water sources turned to blood! Let's not forget the fire thing coming out of their mouth.
    - The point is Jewish people knew their history and knew of Moses power and Elijah's power. They knew that Elijah would return prior to the Messiah.
    - The Jewish people "won't be too crazy" about having to accept Jesus, which is why the miracles are there for validation.
  - Let's stand back for a second: Suppose I'm wrong about my Moses and Elijah theory. After all, their two names are never mentioned in the text. It could just be "some two guys" who are given the miraculous power. It could also be symbolic. Remember that many theologians just see this as word pictures and don't take this too literally.

- i) My view is if one is to take the 1,260 time frame literally, than one has to see it as a future event. Some have tried to tie this to past events, but with no success.
- e) Now back to my opening theme: ""Doing God's Will in Difficult Times"
  - i) These guys were called to preach about God during the worst of times.
  - ii) How different is that from what Christians are called to do? The Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19) is Jesus commanding us to preach the Gospel Message.
  - iii) Paul told Timothy to "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season" (2nd Timothy 4:2, NIV). I paraphrase that command as "Preach God's word whether you feel like it or not!"
  - iv) Does this mean all of us have to quit our jobs and go be missionaries or pastors? No. I hold the view that if you and I have committed our lives to Jesus Christ, we are missionaries and we are preachers. God calls us to be missionaries to those around us. Our primary focus may be our children, our family and friends or those around us. The point is we are always on duty and always on call.
  - v) There are times when it is going to be real difficult to be a "good witness" for God. Let's face it, if we're in lots of pain, it's hard to tell others that we have the "peace of God in our hearts". This doesn't mean Christians have to be deliriously happy when life is tough. We just have to tell people we still believe in Jesus and still believe God is there when things are falling apart all around us.
  - vi) That is the point of these two witnesses. Grant it they are given special powers. With great power comes great responsibility. They were called to a pretty tough assignment: To preach Jesus at the entrance to a Jewish Temple!
- 14. Verse 7: Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.
  - a) I've argued that these two witnesses are truly men and not some sort of angelic creatures. One never reads of angels being born or dying. These two men actually die in Verse 7.
  - b) Notice they are not killed until "they have finished their testimony". That is a lesson for us: Nobody dies before their time. We die when God says it is time for us to be Him in heaven. What about children who die young? We have to accept by faith they are saved and their "purpose on earth" is finished. If God is perfect, then God will judge people perfectly. I accept by faith that people who die very young are saved. God would only be "fair" if there was some sort of heavenly after-life for say, children who die young.
  - c) Onto the killing itself: Verse 7 says, "the beast that comes up from the Abyss...kills them" The natural question is "Who is this guy doing the killing?"
    - i) Back in Chapter 9, we had the "angel with the key to the Abyss". This Abyss is also called "the bottomless pit" in the King James Version. That was where those locust-like creatures came out and "harmed" people for five months.
    - ii) Apparently, those locusts-like creatures aren't the only things in that pit. Here in Verse 7, we read of some "beast" that comes out of the same location.
    - iii) Most argue that this is "the" Antichrist, or some demonic spirit that controls the Anti-Christ. This guy will be featured when we get to Chapter 13. If he does rise to power, this is his moment of triumph as he personally kills these two witnesses.
- 15. Verse 8: Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.
  - a) I've stated for a few pages now that these two witnesses are in Jerusalem. The proof-text is Verse 8, which ends with "where also their Lord was crucified". Since Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, that means these two guys will also be killed in Jerusalem.
    - i) Notice this phrase says, "Their Lord". Jesus was the Lord of these two witnesses.
    - ii) That is why I argue their ministry was unpopular. Imagine standing in front of thousands of religious Jewish people and telling them to repent as Jesus is the Messiah. That wouldn't make you very popular. ☺

- b) In this Verse, the city of Jerusalem is "figuratively called Sodom and Egypt".
    - i) Try to "think Jewish" here: What do Sodom and Egypt have in common?
    - ii) The answer is they were both "judged" by God. The City of Sodom was destroyed in Genesis for their lack of obedience to God. (Ref: Genesis 19) The country of Egypt got the 10 plagues when Pharaoh refused to obey God in Exodus Chapters 7-12. Both locations suffered for a lack of obedience to God.
16. Verse 9: For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. <sup>10</sup> The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.
- a) For centuries, scoffers of the bible have used this verse as "proof" to not take the bible to seriously. Verse 9 says the whole world gazed at their bodies. Before modern times critics would argue it is not possible for the whole world to see this event.
    - i) The obvious answer is satellite television. Today, this verse can literally be true as the whole world watches their television sets and sees these three guys.
  - b) Verse 10 is more amazing: The death of these two guys makes the world act like it is Christmas time! Everybody buys each other gifts to celebrate their deaths!
    - i) That tells you the impact of these two witnesses. It is also one of the most tragic verses in the bible. It is saying people want to avoid God so much, when there is a temporary victory over God, nonbelievers rejoice.
    - ii) Do you think this doesn't happen today? Notice how many people gloat when a famous pastor is caught in sin. Nonbelievers cheer at our failures. It comes down to the fact people don't want to change their lifestyle and actually celebrate when Christians are "conquered".
  - c) Notice the time frame their bodies are exposed to the world: Three and one half days.
    - i) There's that pattern again: These two guys were witnesses to the world for three and one half years. That was stated in Verse 1-2. It is as if God wants everyone to "notice that number". I'll bet the cable news people will point out the connection of how they are lying dead for three and one half days just as they were prophesying for three and one half years.
    - ii) Remember that this is "half" of the seven-year tribulation period. I believe it is a literal future event. I also believe these two guys are here for the "first half" as to be a witness for things that are to come. In a sense, this event is "half-time" of the great judgment period. (Guys can relate to football illustrations. ☺) Even though the antichrist kills these guys, God uses this three and one half day event as another "witness" for His purpose, as we'll see in the next verse.
17. Verse 11: But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. <sup>12</sup> 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 looked on.
- a) Remember we have this world-wide party going at the celebration of their deaths. "All of a sudden" a voice from heaven says "Come up here" and the world watches the resurrection via satellite. That must have put a damper on the big celebration! ☺
  - b) You would think this visual demonstration is enough to get people to turn to God. You would think that the resurrection would make people repent. The sad part is it doesn't. My point is miracles are not enough to make people turn to God. Miracles will make people believe in the existence of God, but rarely make them change their lifestyle on a long term basis. True change comes from accepting the Gospel message and asking God to change them from the inside-out.

- c) Let's get back to the theme of ""Doing God's Will in Difficult Times".
    - i) We're these two witnesses successful? Depends on how you measure success. I suspect some Jewish people did accept their message. On a world-wide basis, we read more of their "failure" than success.
    - ii) By God's standards, this was an outstanding success. Why? Because they did what God asked them to do. Christians don't measure results in "numbers" but in obedience! Did God know the collective world would not accept the message of these two guys? Of course. So why send them in the first place? So the world would not have any excuse of "we didn't know any better".
    - iii) We as Christians are to spread the Gospel message to save as many people as possible and to carry out God's will that everyone possible know this message. My point is God never makes a promise to us that everyone we share our faith with is going to just accept it. We'll probably experience much more rejection than we will success. Still, that should not excuse us from not trying in the first place.
18. Verse 13: At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.
- a) Let's suppose you watched the death and resurrection of these two guys and think, "Oh well, at least their gone. Yes God resurrected them, but at least we don't have to deal with them anymore".
    - i) Then all of a sudden, a big earthquake happened and 7,000 people died.
    - ii) It is another way of God "getting everyone's attention".
    - iii) Remember the repeated message of "three and one half"? Now we get another "sign" featuring the number seven. One wonders if people put it together.
  - b) Now notice the second part of the verse: "The survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven." It appears that the two witnesses did have some success. Some people saw all of this and said, "Son of gun, they were right. Better repent."
    - i) Remember these two guys died prior to this event. An application is to realize that we may not see the "fruit of our labor" for God in this lifetime!
19. Verse 14: The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.
- a) Translation: Two down, one to go!
  - b) Revelation 8:13 had an angel proclaiming, "Woe, woe woe to the inhabitants of the earth".
  - c) If you recall in Revelation 9:12, an angel said, "one woe has passed, two to go".
    - i) The first "woe" was the fifth and sixth angel with their trumpets. That was when all of the "locust-stuff" happens and when a third of the earth got killed.
  - d) Here in Verse 14, it says, "The second woe is passed".
    - i) The second "woe" is this last section with the two witnesses.
    - ii) Luckily, we're saving the third woe for another lesson. ☺
20. Verse 15: The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."
- a) Remember the seven trumpets? That was a key point of the last lesson. Chapters 8 and 9 focused on six angels blowing six trumpets. After each trumpet, "something bad" happened on earth. Here in Verse 15, we have the "seventh trumpet" being blown.
  - b) With the first six trumpets, the angel just blew the trumpet, and then the focus would change from heaven to earth. Here with the seventh trumpet, the focus stays in heaven.
  - c) The announcement of the angel is, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."
    - i) There is a view that when Adam and Eve sinned, the "world" was given over to Satan. The idea is that people were given the free will to sin or not to sin. Since God gave us free will, He does not rule over us, unless we say so.

- ii) So if God is not "in charge" of our hearts (until we say so), who is? The answer is Satan. I say so because Jesus calls Satan "The Prince of this world" (John 12:31, et. al.). The word "prince" is a good word as Satan never does become king.
  - d) Back to the angel: This angel proclaims the world "now" belongs to God and His Messiah, which is Jesus. So what does that mean? It means until the actual return of Jesus, we have a free-will decision to accept Jesus as Lord of this World.
    - i) There is coming a day where people no longer have that choice. That is what the Second Coming is all about. This whole Tribulation period is one big "last call" on God's part to see who wants to make the free-will decision before one has to acknowledge Jesus by force. (See Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11-12, and Phil. 2:10).
    - ii) As to the announcement, the angels are not saying, "as of this very second, the transfer is happening". Jesus always had that right as the Son of God. Jesus was given that privilege of being "King over the World" for paying the price for us on the cross. God's "game plan" has always been for Jesus to rule over the world and those who follow Him get to rule along side of Him.
    - iii) What the angels are saying in effect is "done deal". The angels are proclaiming in effect, "The final aspects of judgment are finishing, and then Jesus will reign."
21. Verse 16: And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup> saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. <sup>18</sup> The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great-- and for destroying those who destroy the earth."
- a) If there is one thing I have learned about heaven from studying Revelation, is that one group cannot praise God without everyone else in the room chiming in. ☺ We might as well get used to praising God. We're going to be doing a lot of that in heaven.
  - b) In Verse 15, the seventh angel with the trumpet praised God in effect for "God's game plan". That is to judge the world and then have Jesus Second Coming.
  - c) In Verse 16, "the twenty four elders" join in the praise. Depending upon one's view, this group is either "the church" or a special group of angels. (See notes on Revelation 4:4).
  - d) Notice the praise is focused on God the Father. The gratitude is not for the destruction of human life, but for the fact that Jesus is going to rule. The idea is that this world is a mess due to sin and Jesus is "finally" going to come back and reign from earth.
  - e) Notice the event itself doesn't happen until Chapter 19. They praise God for what He is going to do in the future. That should give us a clue as to what we should do as well.
  - f) In Verse 18, this praise team is stating God's redemptive plan as part of their worship. They are stating how it now time to judge people, to reward those who follow God. My point here is praise is not just saying "Praise God". Praise includes stating God's promises to us and to the world. The purpose is not to remind God, but to remind ourselves. It is for us to remember that God is in charge and ultimately controls our destiny, and our salvation and even rewards us. For that, we should show gratitude.
  - g) Verse 18 says this group shows gratitude "for destroying those who destroy the earth." The question then becomes, "who is the one doing the damage?" There is a punishment for the demonic forces that turn people away from God and punishment for people who willfully choose to turn from God in the first place.
  - h) If this is a futuristic event, why does the "last" generation get punished more than others? The answer is they don't. Hell is a timeless place just as heaven is a timeless place. The purpose of all of this judgment on earth is God's "final call" to anyone to be saved.

22. Verse 19: Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.
- a) I've stated throughout this study of Revelation that the tabernacle in Exodus is a model of the throne room in heaven. The key piece of furniture in that tabernacle (portable temple) is a box called "the ark of the covenant". In this box was a copy of the 10 Commandments, among other things. The idea is that God "reigns" from this box. The word-picture is that God keeps His requirements to all of mankind as well as His promises.
  - b) As we mercifully wrap up lesson, ☺ it ends with the "presence of God" being shown. Then comes "lots of noisy and big visual stuff": flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. The point is whatever this "stuff" is, it is not good. It is about judgment on the earth. Whenever we have read of lighting, thunder, etc. before this, it preceded further judgment.
  - c) Why is more "judgment" necessary? Well, God has seven years to fill up with things. ☺ In all serious, God is delaying the ultimate end to see if anyone else will repent. There will come an end to God's patience and "seven" is associated with God's perfection. There are specific purposes of judgments to come, as well see in further lessons.
  - d) The good news is that we have now made it through the first half of Revelation. If you can handle the first half, you can handle the second half. ☺
23. Let's pray: Father, Help us, like John and like "the two witness" to boldly do what You have called us to do, which is to be a witness for You. Give us the discernment, the patience and the will to stand up and be a witness to a dying world. You have given each of us gifts. Help us to use those gifts for Your glory, just as you have used the witnesses as described in this lesson. May we all "bear fruit" for You, by sticking close to You. Finally, help us to praise You not only for what You have accomplished but will accomplish. Help us to accept the future as a "done deal" and praise You for it. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.