

### BOOK OF REVELATION

#### Lesson 24 - Chapter 11 Concluded

We're still in Revelation chapter 11 but we'll finally complete it today; and as customary we'll begin by reviewing what we discussed last week.

The focus of this chapter is the mysterious, and dangerous, two unnamed witnesses who suddenly appear in Jerusalem and prophesy for a period of 42 months on behalf of God. These are not only the first prophets anointed by God to appear since John, the writer of Revelation; so far as the Bible reveals, they also will be the last prophets humanity will ever encounter. The primary audience of these two will be Jews since they are operating in the city where the Lord died on a stake: Jerusalem. Of course, especially due to the instantaneous worldwide communications that are already in existence, their words and activities will be well known among the gentile world as well. Thus their celebrity will be global.

While no man can say with complete certainty just who these two witnesses for God might be, the scriptural evidence points heavily towards them being Elijah and Moses. Among Bible academics and pastors the person of Elijah is generally agreed upon as a top candidate for one of them, but the choice of Moses as the other is highly disputed because of the belief that the passage within the Book of Hebrews chapter 9 verse 27 ordains that it is appointed unto men **once** to die. While the Bible reports that Elijah did not die, it also reports that Moses did. So applying that passage as some take it to mean to this situation, Moses becomes disqualified as a possibility. However as we discussed, I think the idea that this statement in Hebrews applies to such supernatural events as God sending these two prophesying witnesses ignores the context of that Hebrews passage in which the author intended to explain that the Messiah only had to die once for all humankind; He didn't have to die a separate death for each sinner that was saved. Thus the author of Hebrews begins with the self-evident and undisputed statement that all men have to die once, and then uses it as an analogy to Christ's atoning death. That is, the "dying once" statement is not meant as some kind of rigid spiritual principle but rather as a simple illustration to explain the benefits for all humans of Christ's one-time death on the cross.

These two witnesses will become hated because they have divine power and authority to stop the rain, turn water to blood (meaning blood red), and to bring upon the earth some undefined plagues or blows that are most likely similar to what happened in Egypt so many centuries ago. Coupled with the catastrophes brought on from the Seal and Trumpet Judgments, it's not hard to understand why the earth's population will be looking to blame it all on someone. That "someone" will be the two witnesses. Of course the same world population will also be looking for someone to solve it and bring an end to the seeming endless series of miseries and devastations. That "someone" will be the false Messiah.....the Anti-Christ.

We read that at one point a beast arises from the Abyss to challenge the two witnesses, when no one else can. The beast is either the Anti-Christ or it is Satan who will empower the Anti-

Christ. I want to state at this point that while many do, I do NOT see the beast of the Abyss as the same as the beast that comes up out of the sea that we'll study later on when we get to Revelation 13. Thus the beast coming up from the Abyss (the place where unclean spirits are held captive) will be involved with the Anti-Christ killing the two witnesses and then he will be hailed by the world as its savior for doing so. This might seem like a defeat for God, just as it seemed so when Messiah Yeshua was executed on the cross. But what we also learn from this passage is that God only allows this to happen in His timing. The two witnesses can not be harmed until the God-appointed duration of the 3 1/2 years of their ministry has passed and their work is complete. Therefore clearly the Anti-Christ will be active during at least some of the time that the two witnesses are also active. At this point in John's Apocalypse, we know little more than that about the two witnesses or the evil works of the Anti-Christ.

Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 11.

### **RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 11:7 - end**

Only when the two witnesses' have completed their ministry does God allow their deaths. They are so hated, even by the Jews, that the unthinkable happens; their dead bodies are allowed to lay rotting on a city street in Jerusalem for 3 1/2 days. For Jews to allow the corpses of these two Hebrews (which no doubt these two witnesses will be) to go unburied for more than 3 days violates Torah and it violates Jewish tradition. The Law is that they must be buried by sunset (meaning the same day that they die). But the people are so joyous at their demise, just as they were so filled with hatred at their presence (because the people assume that in some way or another they are behind all the horror that has been happening), that they let their bodies lie in the street apparently right where they were cut down. In fact, verse 10 states bluntly that the people living in the Land rejoiced over them.....they celebrated over their corpses. The people being referred to are Jews and the land is the Land of Israel. So while without doubt the statement about "the people living in the Land" does refer directly to Jews, Israelis, it is not only Jews that will be rejoicing; the entire world will be ecstatic. The ecstasy rises to the point that the Jews give one another gifts! Might this hint that the two witnesses are killed during Purim or Hanukkah when gift giving among Jews customarily occurs? Perhaps, because I don't think a typical human response in modern times is for people to exchange gifts just because we're super happy that something happened to end our misery.

While it isn't directly said in the passage, I think we can use our common sense and see that while many (perhaps most) Jews will continue to reject the call to accept their Messiah Yeshua, others will indeed understand the supernatural and divine nature of all that has been happening and of the two witnesses themselves. These Jews will become Believers. So here we have a capsule of the rather typical reaction of people....Jews and gentiles...to hearing the Gospel. Some hearers are driven to rejection and anger, and others are driven to repentance and submission to God. Some have their stone-like hearts hardened even further; some have their stony hearts softened to flesh. This is all the more important reason to make Jewish disciples of Yeshua in Israel right now, immediately, because it is these who will mentor what is likely to be thousands of new Jewish Believers even in the midst of these apocalyptic calamities that we are reading about, and even under threat of their own death (which is bound to be the case at this time). And this is why Seed of Abraham Ministries and Torah Class

exists, especially in our two ministries located in Israel for the dual purposes of making new Jewish Believers and for helping and discipling those new Believers (under very challenging circumstances even today, I might add). And I take just a moment to encourage you to please support us in those efforts through your prayers and your gifts.

Suddenly, however, the exhilaration of the people of earth over the death of the two witnesses comes to a sudden and horrifying halt when, after 3 1/2 days, those dead bodies come to life again! Notice that the term of their lifelessness is 3 1/2 days. First, this is days and certainly NOT years that they lay dead in Jerusalem. I don't think I have to draw you a picture of what happens to a body laying in a hot street for 3 1/2 days let alone 3 1/2 years. However the point is that whereas there is validity to the theological theory of the so-called 70th week of Daniel whereby a week is to be symbolically interpreted as meaning 7 years (a week of years), this is not to be applied universally throughout Revelation whenever the time period is spoken of as a day. And, this amount of time (3 1/2 days) is also not to be compared with Christ's 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb before His lifeless body was reanimated. Instead the 3 1/2 days is to once again alert us to the symbolism of 3 1/2 being half of 7. Therefore it indicates an incomplete work; in this case there's more to come. The additional work isn't that the two witnesses will continue prophesying or bring on more damage and destruction; it is that God isn't done yet with His process of judgment, wrath and redemption, of which the two witnesses played a specific, but limited, role.

In verse 11 when we're told that the dead, but now alive, witnesses stand up on their feet, it is not a throw-away or redundant phrase. Rather this is a direct reference to Ezekiel chapter 37. Since context is everything, let's go to that Scripture passage and read it. Turn your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 37. (CJB page 691)

### **READ EZEKIEL CHAPTER 37:1 - 14**

Ezekiel 37 speaks symbolically, but clearly, of the restoration of the tribes of Israel to the land of Israel. The dry bones that grow ligaments and flesh upon them and are then reanimated by the breath of God represent a type of resurrection for the Hebrew people. This is why we find the words in Revelation 11 that say that the two witnesses were made alive again by "the breath of God" just as we find that same statement in Ezekiel 37. These Israelites of Ezekiel who were scattered all over the world, and died in exile from the Promised Land, are (in Ezekiel 37) resurrected and placed back into the Holy Land. Please note that what is depicted in Ezekiel is NOT only a spiritual resurrection, but rather it also is a physical, bodily resurrection. Similarly the two witnesses die and are resurrected in the Land....not only spiritually but physically, bodily.....and the connection with Ezekiel 37 means it has to do with the restoration of the Holy Land to God's people. Modern gentile Bible scholars regularly say that the mass resurrection of Israelites in Ezekiel 37 is fulfilled in the resurrection of the two witnesses, and thus there is no connection to restoring scattered Israelites to the land of their heritage in the End Times (a promise and prophecy they believe has essentially become handed over to the gentile Church). But no doubt John's Jewish readers immediately recognized the relationship of his vision of the resurrection of the two witnesses to the visions of the dry bones of Ezekiel 37 and it gave them great hope that soon their land would no longer be overrun by pagan gentiles, but also that all the tribes of Israel (especially those that are

known today as the 10 Lost Tribes) would eventually return from their long exile, in triumph, to the land that God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And that is the correct interpretation of this passage when the doctrine of Replacement Theology is relegated to the pit from whence it came.

While it is hard for Believers to imagine after reading Revelation what the "natural" or scientific explanation for the two witnesses coming alive again might be that the world is going to so readily accept, we learn that most of the world will continue to deny God's hand in it. Those who know God will understand that once again it is He who has defeated death; something no human has ever, or can ever, do. Yet we don't hear in these verses of thousands and millions marveling at what they have seen and experienced and finally laying down their crowns at the feet of the Lord. In this resurrection of the two witnesses God has also defeated Satan and the Anti-Christ who killed them; and they know it. I mean, if Satan and his stooge, the Anti-Christ, can kill someone but they can't KEEP them dead, how much power do they actually have compared to God?

**<sup>CJB</sup>Deuteronomy 32:39<sup>39</sup> See now that I, yes, I, am he; and there is no god beside me. I put to death, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; no one saves anyone from my hand!**

But the startling deliverance of God's two witnesses from death doesn't end there. In what can only be described as a rapture experience, a voice from above shouts to them to "Come up here!" "Up here" means Heaven. And so up they go in a cloud as those astonished people who wanted them to remain dead gawk in disbelief and disappointment. I cannot know for sure, but I suspect that when the global rapture of Believers occurs, it is going to be visible to those non-Believers who are left behind and it will not at all be as Tim LaHaye imagines as millions of people suddenly vanishing around the world and no one seeing anything.

It is my contention that the Word of God teaches us that the Lord does not punish the righteous along with the wicked. And yet, the punishment of the wicked nearly invariably involves some amount of collateral damage to the righteous. It is without doubt that since the two witnesses have been around for at least 3 1/2 years they have experienced, and suffered greatly from, the awfulness of the wrath God has been pouring out upon the earth and its rebellious residents. The two witnesses are righteous; so they are removed from the scene before even more severe divine judgment is administered to mankind in the form of a high magnitude earthquake. From a biblical perspective earthquakes are often involved in God's judgment. By verse 13 saying that "in that hour" an earthquake shook Jerusalem and the surrounding area, it means that this judgment happened immediately following the rapture of the two resurrected witnesses so that the two events would be seen as linked.

We're informed that a tenth of the city collapses and 7000 people die. But....there is also good news here. Verse 13 says that those who survived the earthquake were so in awe of all that has just transpired that they turn to God and give Him glory, rather than others who simply continued to curse God for their troubles.

Anyone who has been to Jerusalem knows that it is substantial sized city. However the Jerusalem of New Testament times is what is called the Old City today. The Old City is a

fraction of the totality of the entire modern city of Jerusalem, most of which has been constructed post WWII. The part that is of recent construction is the much larger part and it is called by the locals the New City. It is hard to tell by these scripture passages just where to draw the boundaries of Jerusalem as regards what part of it will collapse; the Old, the New, or some of both. But I suspect that while John was envisioning only what we call the Old City (because that's all there was in his era), that Jerusalem in its modern totality and nearby suburbs is what will be involved when this earthquake happens.

That the earthquake kills 7,000 people ought to catch our attention. Round numbers that especially involve the number 7 usually carry much symbolism with them, as does a round number like "a tenth". What I think is being portrayed here is that it is only a portion of the city that is destroyed; both of its inhabitants and of its structures. Jerusalem in John's era was a large city with perhaps 200,000 people living there and in the immediate surrounding area that combined could rightfully be called greater Jerusalem. Today that number approaches 1 million. So while the loss of 7000 people is significant, it doesn't come close to a wholesale wiping out of the residents or a Sodom-like total destruction of the city. That said, some multiple of that 7000 dead will also be injured. A tenth of all structures destroyed still leaves 90% standing. And you can bet that of that 90% the many that remain standing will be severely damaged. So if one was to look around wherever you happen to live and say that in some kind of disaster one out of every 10 structures will be destroyed, that amounts to a significant number. Beyond that it means that from a percentage standpoint the vast majority of people and buildings will survive. So it seems to me that the symbolism behind those numbers is that God has predetermined to limit the extent of the damage and death, and so this is sort of a shot over the bow (so to speak) when it comes to His judgment on the now wicked city of Jerusalem. It is meant to warn and to punish but also to induce repentance. And as we read in verse 13, indeed there was much repentance. Let me say one more time; the focus of what happens in chapter 11 in regard to the two witnesses and to the earthquake centered at the city of Jerusalem is the Jewish people. This is mainly about Hebrews, and not gentiles. And this is apparently a rather local, although very violent, earthquake; not particularly widespread. So God's judgment seems to be laser focused on Israel, the Jewish people, and Jerusalem in this case.

The words of verse 14 say that the second woe has passed but that the third woe (which is the same thing as the 7th Trumpet judgment) is coming quickly. Recall that the 6th Trumpet judgment that is pronounced in chapter 9 is the same thing as the 2nd woe. What we read about concerning the 6th Trumpet judgment in chapter 9 is primarily about a demonic army of 200 million soldiers crossing the Euphrates and into the area occupied by Israel. So chapter 10 doesn't seem directly associated with the 6th Trumpet judgment, also known as the 2nd woe. Rather chapter 10 is an interlude of some sort that tells us of some other happenings occurring perhaps in parallel with, or maybe before, the full brunt of the 6th Trumpet judgments.

So now in verse 15 comes the blowing of the 7th shofar (trumpet) and the accompanying judgment is announced. The first thing we see is that while after the interlude between the 6th and 7th of the Seal Judgments there was silence in Heaven, just the opposite is the case after the interlude between the 6th and 7th Trumpet Judgments. We're told NOT that there is just voices in Heaven speaking, but that they are LOUD! When we read what follows, it seems that



the loudness is not a product of righteous anger but rather it is of unbridled joy.

There is much disagreement in theological circles about whether what follows to finish chapter 11 is part of the 7th Trumpet Judgment, or it happens in concert with it. What we see are songs being sung in Heaven, the first one being the last part of verse 15 that pronounces that the Kingdom of God is no longer coming; rather it has arrived, in its fullest. The Messianic reign has begun with Yeshua as king. This is a fulfillment of too many New Testament verses to list them all, but also it is a fulfillment of several OT prophets including Daniel. I'll quote one of the most famous ones.

The lead-up to the passage I'm about to read is when Daniel is interpreting the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon about the statue made of several different kinds of metals, starting with the head of gold, and ending with the feet made of a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel ends that interpretation by saying:

**<sup>CJB</sup>Daniel 2:44-45 <sup>44</sup> "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not pass into the hands of another people. It will break to pieces and consume all those kingdoms; but it, itself, will stand forever- <sup>45</sup> like the stone you saw, which, without human hands, separated itself from the mountain and broke to pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold. The great God has revealed to the king what will come about in the future. The dream is true, and its interpretation is reliable."**

But perhaps the most enduring prophetic remembrance of a future Kingdom of God comes not from Prophets but from Christ in what has come to be known in Christendom as The Lord's Prayer. ***Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.*** So when Yeshua was still living He was anticipating the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, but here in Revelation 11:15, the future has arrived.

Let us look at the words of this first song because it speaks of a dramatic change of kingdoms. It says that the Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah. Satan has been the prince over the Kingdom of the world for a very long time; but there is a change, now, not only of the underlying character of the Kingdom that dominates earth but also of its leadership. Saying the Kingdom of the world is meant in the same sense as the term "world" is used throughout most of the Bible; that is the "world" is the opposite of "heaven". The world consists of everything that was corrupted at the fall of Adam and Eve. The world is carnal. The world is subject to the influence of the Evil One. The world is temporary, fallible, sinful and decaying. So the Kingdom of the world has been replaced, as of Revelation 11:15, with the Kingdom of Heaven. Notice that the Kingdom is mainly to be thought of in the sense of government. That is, a nation can regularly get a new government with different policies and different leadership; but the nation is still the same nation occupying the same piece of land. So the Kingdom of the world needs to be thought of as the form of government, and the governing dynamics and all of its policies, that has ruled the earth for millennia. When 11:15 happens, it represents is a complete change of government, leadership, and of governing dynamics.

It is so important for correct doctrine that we recognize that all throughout Revelation we get separate mention of God and Messiah; or of the Father and the Son; or of the Ancient One and the Lamb that was slain. Here the term is "the Lord **and** His Messiah". God the Father is always preeminent. God the Son is always the servant of God the Father. As we recall the Lord's Prayer, Christ said. "**Thy** kingdom come, **Thy** will be done", referring to The Father. He did not say, "**our** kingdom come, **our** will be done" as though they share power or are co-equal in authority. A good earthly model of what this is portraying is Joseph and Pharaoh in Egypt. The Kingdom belonged to the Pharaoh; but Joseph was given full charge and all the authority of the Pharaoh to run it. Yet, Joseph was not the Pharaoh, did not have the title of Pharaoh, and Egypt did not belong to Joseph. In the same way the Son was given full charge and full authority over the Kingdom of Heaven; but the Son is not the Father, and the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the Father and not to the Son. And yet the Father has **not** given merely temporary or provisional rule of His Kingdom to His Son; He has given it over to Messiah Yeshua to rule forever.

Next in verse 16, the 24 Elders in Heaven have their say, as they worship God. This hymn concerns the unequivocal establishment of God's Kingdom in its completed form. There's nothing more to add to it. In this song we also get some clarification of a phrase used in earlier chapters of Revelation, including those first chapters that concerned letters to the 7 Believing congregations in Asia. Notice that the God of Heaven's Armies is said to be the One who is and who was. However in those earlier chapters the reference was to the One who is, who was, and who is coming. We find this for instance in Revelation 1:8. But no longer in Revelation 11 is God the One who "is coming". Rather He is here; He has assumed power, and thus now He is and He was. Let me be clear: this is still a future event and therefore a future description of God to us. In our time the Kingdom of Heaven is still coming and God is still coming. God, in our day, remains the One who is, who was, and who is coming.

As the 24 Elders continue their praise, verse 18 begins: "The ***goyim*** raged". ***Goyim*** doesn't actually appear in the Greek New Testament manuscripts because ***goyim*** is a Hebrew word. Rather the Greek word used is ***ethnos***, meaning a group of people or a nation. Saying "the nations raged" could rightfully be translated as "the gentiles raged". Or even better yet because it gets to the heart of the matter, "the pagans raged". A pagan is a person who doesn't worship the God of Israel, the one true God. Biblically a nation is seen as a group of gentiles, and gentiles as inherently pagans. The one exception to this is those gentiles called "God fearers", meaning they bow down to Israel's God. So effectively the terms nations, gentiles and pagans all seek to communicate the same idea and the idea is that this is speaking of every living person on earth except for Hebrews....Israelites.

So the picture is of the gentiles of the world, the non-God worshippers who form the governments and the elite and the general populations of those nations where they live, as being enraged against God and acting against His people. This isn't terribly hard to imagine, is it, since to a fairly high degree this is the case right now? The West today consists entirely of secular human governments, and most of the elite who govern or who influence those who govern are the same. The East consists of largely Islamic based government systems that are, by nature, worshipping a false god. Russia and China and their satellites are based on the entirely godless Communist system. And it is all these various nations that by their actions

against Israel and against the Jewish people, show how enraged they are against Yehoveh God even though some think that they can deny it and get away with it. It is these same nations that are being called out to begin verse 18.

These nations, or nations like them, have engaged in warfare against God for a long time; now God's rage in the form of His wrath has come and these nations are being judged and condemned to eternal destruction. Something that we ought to notice is that since this passage says that it is the time for the dead to be judged, then this has to do with the final judgment that some Christian doctrines label as the Great White Throne Judgment. But even more, these final words of Revelation 11 are based entirely on Psalm 2. Listen as I read it to you.

**<sup>CJB</sup> Psalm 2:1 *Why are the nations in an uproar, the peoples grumbling in vain? <sup>2</sup> The earth's kings are taking positions, leaders conspiring together, against ADONAI and his anointed. <sup>3</sup> They cry, "Let's break their fetters! Let's throw off their chains!"***

**<sup>4</sup> *He who sits in heaven laughs; Adonai looks at them in derision. <sup>5</sup> Then in his anger he rebukes them, terrifies them in his fury. <sup>6</sup> "I myself have installed my king on Tziyon, my holy mountain."***

**<sup>7</sup> *"I will proclaim the decree: ADONAI said to me, 'You are my son; today I became your father.***

**<sup>8</sup> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance; the whole wide world will be your possession.***

**<sup>9</sup> *You will break them with an iron rod, shatter them like a clay pot." <sup>10</sup> Therefore, kings, be wise; be warned, you judges of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Serve ADONAI with fear; rejoice, but with trembling. <sup>12</sup> Kiss the son\*, lest he be angry, and you perish along the way, when suddenly his anger blazes. How blessed are all who take refuge in him.***

God is going to destroy the nations because they have troubled His people endlessly, rebelled against Him endlessly, and ultimately ruined the Earth that God had created. God is destroying the destroyers.....at last! And yet in the midst of all this judgment of the wicked there is also vindication for those who have loved Him and been faithful to Him whether they are dead or alive or with Him in Heaven. But make no mistake; there will be many Believers on earth at this time who came to faith after the Rapture, and during the time of God's terrible wrath, and will suffer greatly for their faith. Unfortunately the only mercy they will receive comes after their physical deaths.

I want to say right now that it is common for Bible commentators to attempt to place the timing of verses 14 - 19 as something that happens more or less all at the same time; I don't see it that way. From a purely literary perspective verses 14 - 19 are given to us as songs. The underlying nature of song is poetry. And the underlying nature of poetry is to express something in a memorable way (usually by rhyme), which doesn't focus on details or the precision of information but rather in words that elicit deep emotion and soaring truths. Thus how and precisely when (sequentially speaking) each of these actions of God takes place is



not the point; rather it is that these actions are part of the divine plan and therefore are 100% assured. Thus don't ask me where, exactly, to place the incredible drama of these verses on a timeline; I can't. And neither do I think we should devote much time to do so because it will divert us from the foundational message. And, besides, we're almost assured to get the timing wrong anyway.

To end this chapter we are given a glimpse of the Heavenly Temple of God being opened and in it we find the Ark of the Covenant. On earth, the Ark of the Covenant went missing at or before the time of the Babylonian destruction of the Temple and the Jews' exile. A new Ark was never built and so since around 600 B.C. the Jews have not possessed the Ark of the Covenant; rather even since the rebuilding of the Temple, up to and including the time of Christ, the Holy of Holies was but an empty space. I have heard it said that God took the Ark and moved it to Heaven, and it is this that is being revealed to us here in verse 19. To that I say: "no". Heaven contains nothing physical in it whatsoever. So what we see in this verse is figurative of the purpose of the Ark on earth; it is representative of the covenants God made with Israel and of His presence. Thus the sight of the Ark in Heaven says that God's covenants and promises remain intact and in fact all that is happening now at this point in Revelation is the culmination of the purpose of those covenants. But the process of judgment and restoration is still not over. Thus we are told that accompanied with the revealing of the Ark in Heaven are lightening, voices, thunder, an earthquake and violent hail. All of these represent God's wrath that is ongoing. In fact I would argue that where our modern Bibles end this chapter, it is an unfortunate error in judgment that does no favor to chapter 12. Verse 19 much more appropriately belongs as the first verse of chapter 12 where it says: "Now a great sign was seen in Heaven".

We'll study Revelation chapter 12 next time.