

“REVELATION: IS IT DESCRIBING OUR DAYS?” SERIES

#12: “Chapters Eight through Eleven” (Part Two)

INTRODUCTION:

We’ve covered the first description of the church age in chapters one through three, the second description in chapters four through seven, and now we’re in the middle of the third description in chapters eight through eleven.

We’re in the middle of the ninth chapter, verse 13, where...

...THE SIXTH ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET.

John says, ¹³ ***Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” ¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. ¹⁷ And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. ¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.***

²⁰ ***The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.***

The sixth angel is commanded by God to release four other angels, who have been **“bound”** at the Euphrates River. The Euphrates ran through the Garden of Eden, but later through the pagan Babylonian Empire. It represents Babylon, the symbol of the sinful, immoral world. God uses these angels to bring more severe judgment upon the wicked of the earth.

The released angels kill a third of mankind with a mounted army numbering twice ten thousand times ten thousand, according to the ESV – two hundred million, according to the NIV. The Greek translates literally *“two myriads of myriads.”* How many soldiers is that? How many is a *“myriad”*? According to *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, a *myriad* is either *“ten thousand”* or *“an indefinitely large number.”* So, take your pick. If you said 200,000, you figured it correctly, according to the ESV. But if you said two hundred million, you’re correct, according to the NIV. Should we

take this literally? Sure, if you take literally what John saw. But these horsemen represent war-machines – city-destroying, people-destroying war-machines that kill one-third of mankind.

Hendriksen comments:

*“The general meaning of these trumpets is clear. Throughout this entire period, extending from the first to the second coming, our exalted Lord Jesus Christ, who rules all things in accordance with the scroll of God’s decree, will again and again punish the persecutors of the church by inflicting upon them disasters in every sphere of life, both physical and spiritual. The blood of the martyrs is precious in the sight of the Lord. The prayers of all the saints are heard. God sees their tears, their suffering. Yet, in spite of all these warning voices, mankind in general does not repent. Foolish and stubborn men continue to transgress both the first (verse 20) and the second table of the law (verse 21). The persecuting world becomes the **impenitent** world. It is impenitent that brings about not only the outpouring of the bowls of final wrath, chapters 15 and 16, but also the culmination of this wrath, in the final judgment. Delay is now no longer possible”* (pp. 148, 149).

BUT NOW, ANOTHER ANGEL APPEARS (10:1-3)

He’s a giant – a colossus. ¹Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ²He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

This angel is clearly a symbol of something, but what? There is actually a close resemblance between this angel and Christ, if we consider references to Christ in chapter 1, verse 7 (**coming with the clouds**), chapter 4, verse 3 (**around the throne was a rainbow**), chapter 1, verse 17 (**his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters**). The angel is not Christ, but represents the holiness (his face), judgment (the cloud), mercy and faithfulness of God (the rainbow) toward His people.

Notice verse 4: **“And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.’”** Why was John stopped from writing what the seven thunders said? What’s the meaning of this?

Hendriksen comments:

*“The meaning is clearly this: never shall we be able to know and to describe **all** the factors and agencies that determine the future. We know the meaning of the lampstands, the seals, the trumpets, the bowls, etc., but there are other forces at work; there are other principles that are operating in this universe, namely, the seven*

thunders. What they are we do not know. Hence, let us be very careful in making predictions regarding the future: we may be leaving out a veery important factor!" (pp. 149-150).

The angel then ***"...raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."***

What is it that would not be delayed any longer? What is ***"the mystery of God"*** that would be fulfilled? It's the final judgment that would not be delayed any longer. ***"The mystery of God"*** is the knowledge of when that judgment will be that has been prophesied but is known only to God.

Before the final trumpet is sounded, however, John is told, ***"Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land"*** (v.8). When he went to take the scroll, the angel said to him, ***"Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth, it will be sweet as honey."*** John eats the scroll and finds it just as he was told. Then he was told, ***"You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings"*** (v. 11).

Now, what's that all about? What does the scroll represent? What does John eating it represent? Hendriksen comments:

*Ezekiel 2:9 through 3:11 and Psalm 119:101 makes it clear what is meant: the scroll is the Word of God, his Gospel in which the mystery of salvation is set forth. The Gospel is **in itself** glorious and sweet. But its proclamation is ever followed by bitter persecution. Just as the first rider (6:2) namely the Christ, is ever followed by the second, namely slaughter, so in the vision, John takes the little scroll out of the angel's hand and eats it. In his mouth it is indeed, sweet as honey; but when he had eaten it, it made his belly bitter. The meaning is very clear: the apostle must not merely understand and digest the message of the Gospel; he must **experience** both its sweetness and the suffering, the cross-bearing, which is ever the portion of those who truthfully proclaim it" (p. 151).*

LET'S MOVE INTO CHAPTER 11...

John is given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple and the altar and those who worship there... Verses 1 through 3: ***Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."***

So, what's this *measuring* all about? What's the meaning here? What's this 42 moths or 1,260 days about?

At the time this was written, the temple and Jerusalem had been destroyed, for the most part, by the Roman general, Titus, and his army. This occurred in A.D. 70. Revelation was written around A.D. 95 or so. Some, especially Preterists, believe that this reference to the temple and Jerusalem means that Revelation was written before A.D. 70, but most evidence says otherwise. We need to keep in mind that what John sees is a *vision*, not the actual temple. But, again, what is this *measuring* all about? Why is he told to measure the *sanctuary*, but not the court of the Gentiles? The sanctuary consisted of the two rooms: the area where the priests performed their duties, the Holy Place, and the area behind the curtain, the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant was and where only the high priest could go once a year.

This gives me an opportunity to explain why church buildings don't have sanctuaries. Only temples have sanctuaries. The Jewish temple in Jerusalem had a sanctuary. That's Old Covenant. We now live under a New Covenant. Under that New Covenant, we Christians are God's temple. The sanctuary is in us. Buildings where Christians meet don't have sanctuaries unless Christians are in them. Even then, the worship area is not a sanctuary.

Our reference to church "sanctuaries" comes from Catholicism and its "cathedrals," which had an area called "the sanctuary." There is no Scriptural directive for Cathedrals or sanctuaries as such.

One more thing: it's from this misconception of "the sanctuary" that gave rise to all the rules our parents and grandparents inflicted upon us while we attended church meetings.

Well, back to Revelation. John was to measure the sanctuary, but not the outer court or "Court of the Gentiles." What does this part of the vision mean? Hendriksen offers this:

"In the vision the apostle sees, indeed, earthly Jerusalem, the earthly temple, the earthly sanctuary, the earthly outside court, etc. The next question is: what does all this symbolize?"

*We answer this: this "sanctuary of God" symbolizes the true church, that is, all those in whose hearts Christ dwells in the Spirit. All true children of God, who worship him in spirit and truth, are measured, that is protected. They are safe guarded, while the judgments are being inflicted upon the wicked, persecuting world. To be sure, these saints are going to suffer severely but they will never **perish**; they are protected against eternal doom. But this divine protection does not extend to "the court," that is, to those who although outwardly belonging to the church are not true believers. Just as in the vision the heaven trample upon Jerusalem and even upon the outside court of merely nominal Christendom. The world invades this false church and takes possession of it.*

Worldly church-members welcome the ideas of the world; feel themselves perfectly at home with the world; have a good time in worldly company; in voting for political offices are prompted by worldly considerations; love the world. This condition lasts throughout the forty-two months, that is, throughout the Gospel age” (pp. 153-154).

NEXT, IN VERSE 3, WE ARE INTRODUCED TO TWO WITNESSES...

...Who will **“prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”** In keeping with the meaning of the symbolism of Jerusalem, the temple, and measuring the sanctuary but not the outer court, the two witnesses symbolize the church: its ministers and missionaries, who will carry on the work for 1,260 days, or during the entire church age, from the day of Pentecost to the time of Christ’s second coming.

What’s the meaning of **“clothed in sackcloth”**? Sackcloth, which would more accurately translate as “haircloth,” since it’s woven from goat hair or camel hair, symbolizes “repentance.” The church should be preaching “repentance.”

What a contrast to today’s churches, where “repentance” is rarely preached! On the contrary, it’s “feel good” sermons on love and opportunities to be saved by merely repeating a simple little “sinner’s prayer.” They don’t “measure up.” They’re in the “outer court.”

THEN WE COME TO TWO OLIVE TREES AND TWO LAMPSTANDS (vv. 4-14).

There are four things to note here, to begin with:

1. Zechariah 4 identifies the olive trees and the lampstands as Joshua and Zerubbabel, through which God blessed Israel. Correspondingly, the church, throughout her life, is blessed by preachers and pastors.
2. Just as Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, the church, throughout the gospel age, takes the gospel to the world.
3. Just as the fire of judgment and condemnation was spewed from Jeremiah’s mouth (Jeremiah 5:14), the true church condemns wickedness on the basis of God’s word and those who will not repent will be destroyed.
4. Just as Elijah received power to shut the heavens (1st Kings 17:1) so that it did not rain, and just as Moses was given authority to turn waters into blood (Exodus 7:20), the church, if its message is rejected, has authority to judge and condemn the world.

I apologize for going so long today, but I need to finish chapter 11.

BEGINNING IN VERSE 7, WE SEE THAT THE CHURCH WILL BE DEFEATED BY THE BEAST FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.

In other words, the gospel age – the age of the church – will come to an end. The antichristian world (as symbolized by the beast) will at last rid the world of most Christians (as symbolized by the Battle of Armageddon). Not every Christian will be eliminated – there will be some left when Jesus comes, but they will be few in number.

These conditions last a short time, represented by the **three and a half days**. Look at verses 11 through 13: ***“But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here!’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them (no secret rapture here, folks). And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.”***

AT THIS POINT, THE SEVENTH ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET.

Verses 15 through 19 describes the rejoicing and celebrating in heaven as the church arrives: ***“...there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.’***

“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen with his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.”

CLOSING:

Thus, the third description of the age of the church comes to its end. Chapter 12 begins another description of this age in which we live.