

Revelation 10.1-11.14

- I. Introduction:
 - A. Until Christ returns, Christians will be persecuted to the point of death, and we will often face severe defeat and loss of life.
 - B. The bible itself records the death of several Christians at the hands of those who hated Christ. Stephen and James are both mentioned in the book of Acts.
 - C. Persecution unto death causes the church to be shaken with the reality of opposition to the gospel and to Christ's reign on the throne.
- II. **Proposition:** We must be bold witnesses of the gospel amidst present defeat knowing that God has secured our ultimate victory in Christ.
- III. **Organizational Sentence:** To begin, we are going to walk very quickly through the text, and then we will see three responses that we must make.
- IV. **Explaining the Text:** The Christian life is a mixture of joy and sorrow.
 - 10.1-11.14 is an interlude in the vision of the 7 trumpet judgments. Just as there was an interlude in the vision of the 7 seals where John saw the 144,000 sealed and the multitude in heaven, so also is there an interlude in the vision of the 7 trumpets where John sees the relationship between the godly and ungodly up until the end.
 - 10.1-11 is a recommissioning of John as a prophet and witness, where John's message of the last days is a mixture of joy and sorrow.
 - 11.1-14 is a vision of the protection of God on those whom he calls as witnesses, and a warning that the witness of the church will be difficult, painful, but successful.
 - Together, these chapters show the relationship between the godly and ungodly until Christ finally comes in judgment with the 7th trumpet.
 - A. The scroll is bitter and sweet. (10.1-11)

^{ESV} Revelation 10:1 Then 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. ² He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³ and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 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." ⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶ 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, ⁷ 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. ⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." ¹⁰ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹ And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."
 1. John sees Christ as the king of the universe. (10.1-3)
 - a. John says that he saw a mighty angel and then he goes on to describe him.
 - b. John's description contains Old Testament allusions to the angel of the Lord who is the manifestation of divine glory.
 - i. cloud = God's glory in the tabernacle and Dan. 7:13

- ii. rainbow = God's glory in Ez. 1:26-28, also describes God in Rev.4:3.
 - iii. face like the sun = said of Christ in Rev.1:16
 - iv. legs like pillars of fire = said of Christ in Rev. 1:15
 - v. scroll in his hand = like ch. 4-5
 - vi. called out like a lion roaring = Christ is the Lion of Judah, Rev. 5
 - vii. right foot on the sea and land = sovereignty
- c. When looking at all the elements of John's description of this mighty angel together, it is clear that he is describing the Angel of the Lord and associating it with Christ himself. That John calls him an angel is not a problem once we realize the divine nature of the OT Angel of the Lord.
 - d. This mighty angel must be Christ because this mighty angel is sovereign over all creation, (he set his foot on the land and his other foot on the sea, which is symbolic for authority over these things).
 - e. Later, we will see the beast arise from the sea, but we have already been shown that Christ has authority over this sea and the beast that comes from it.
 - f. Christ calls out and seven thunders sound. These represent further judgments by Christ.
2. John learns that not all the judgment of God will be revealed to us. (11.4)
 - a. But, these judgments are not revealed to us since Christ tells John not to record the content of these judgments.
 - b. This surely means that along with all the judgments which are described in the book of Revelation, there are others which Christ is bringing down upon the ungodly of this age. We cannot know them all, nor do we need to.
 3. Christ promises that final judgment will not delay once the 7th trumpet is blown. (11.5-7)
 - a. Christ takes an oath that there will be no more delay in bringing final judgment once the 7th trumpet is blown.
 - b. This is an allusion to Deut. 32:40 (and Dan. 12:7) where God takes an oath to judge his adversaries.
 - c. The mystery of God is the mystery of final judgment which God will reveal. This is what God announced through the prophets, final judgment, but has never fully explained. That day will finally reveal fulfill there prophecies.
 4. John's message concerning the last days is both pleasing and difficult. (11.8-11)
 - a. John is now commanded to take the scroll from Christ. Christ took this scroll from the Father, the Ancient of Days, in chapter 5. He opened the seven seals of the scroll so that it was opened for the 7 trumpet judgments. In opening the scroll, Christ carried out the contents of the scroll which describe the last days mentioned in Daniel.
 - b. Now John receives this scroll and is told to eat it. This is a clear allusion to the call of Ezekiel in Ez. 2:8-3:3. There, Ezekiel was to eat the scroll God gave him as a sign of taking the message of God to Israel. He was to internalize the message. This message was a message of judgment, and it was sweet to Ezekiel because the Word of God is life-sustaining. Even though his message is one of judgment, repentance is possible which brings life.
 - c. When John eats the scroll, he is being commissioned again to report what he sees. The message of judgment that John is to report is what leaves a bitter feeling in his stomach. The sweet taste of the scroll symbolizes the happy elements of

John's message: the church is sealed, their king sits above all thrones, they will someday be in the presence of Christ in heaven, and they will be effective witnesses to the gospel.

- d. This event, the eating of the scroll, sets up the basic paradox of this interlude vision. The last days, the church age, contains joyful and painful elements. God has sealed his church through Christ. The Church is under God's protection. Not one will be separated from His love. But, the church will be persecuted unto death, often defeated, and its witness will at times seemed to be lost. More on this is seen below.
- e. Finally, verse 11 shows us that part of John's prophetic witness is to be accusatory. He is to prophesy against many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. This is a sweet part of his message because the saints will be vindicated.

B. The Church is secured from harm and yet suffers. (11.1-3)

^{ESV} **Revelation 11:1** 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, ² 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. ³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

1. Not only is John told to eat the scroll as a symbol of internalizing the message he is to give to the nations and to the church, but he is to measure the people of God.
2. In Ez. 40-48, God measures the actual temple to show his protection of it. His measuring is a sort of a reverse quarantine where God protects it from the contamination of the wickedness of the nations. The measuring was meant to show God's ownership of Israel and His protection He provided them.
3. So, when John is told to measure the temple, we must remember the nature of the temple of God in the New Covenant. We are repeatedly told in the New Testament that we as individuals and as a church corporately are the temple of God. We are being built up stone by stone into the dwelling place of God (Ephesians 2). We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and so we should not engage in sexual immorality (I Cor. 6). We are a spiritual house that is a royal priesthood which is to offer up sacrifices to God with our lives (I Pet. 2:4-5). We are the temple.
4. God is measuring us as His church through John. John is symbolically measuring us to show that God's protection is upon us to keep us from idolatry.
5. But, the outer court is not measured. In the temple of Jerusalem, there was an outer court where Gentiles could worship. The fact that this section of the temple in John's vision is not to be measured shows that there will be some aspect in which the church is given over to be trampled by the nations. This does not mean some Christians will fall away, but rather it is providing a bitter perspective to the measuring which is sweet.
6. Taken together then, we see that God will protect God's people from idolatry and apostasy, but there will be suffering at the hands of non-believers during the time of tribulation.
7. The tribulation is described as 42 months. This equals 3 ½ years. This time period is an allusion to Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:7,11-12. In Daniel, 42 months is not a literal time period, but a period of tribulation repeatedly prophesied by Daniel. The Jews understood this time period in three ways: 1) a general time of trial for the faithful, 2) the time associated with Israel's captivity in Babylon, and 3) the period that must pass

- before Israel's final redemption. Notice that all three time periods mentioned in this passage represent the same time period: 42 months, 1,260 days, and 3 ½ years.
8. So, even though the outer-court will be trampled for 42 months, God's 2 witnesses will prophesy for ,1260 days (the same time period).
 9. Who are the two witnesses? Dispensationalists argue that Moses and Elijah will return to earth and prophesy for the first half of the seven year tribulation period after the rapture. But, again this view assumes a literal interpretation that is not consistent with the way the bible interprets itself. The minor prophets told of the coming of Elijah before the Messiah of Israel appeared. John the Baptist showed up and called himself Elijah, not because he was Elijah literally, but because he was a prophet who was similar to Elijah in that he accused Israel of covenant unfaithfulness and called them to repentance. Jesus himself said that John the Baptist was Elijah. So, this literal reading is unnecessary.
 10. Instead, we must recognize the Old Testament background to the idea of 2 witnesses. The Law in Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15, and Numbers 35:30 shows us that 2 witnesses were required in their legal system to affirm the truth of testimony. No one could be convicted on the basis of one witness. Jesus uses this same language in John to explain why Israel should accept him as the Messiah, for both the Father and the Word witness to him.
 11. The 2 witnesses then are not 2 individuals, but the church collectively. The witness of the church is valid legal testimony. This fits with the symbolism of the temple so that the two taken together show us that the church is protected by God from apostasy, but will suffer at the hands of God's enemies because they are witnessing to Christ.
 12. Therefore, the church is secure from harm, and yet it suffers.

C. Christians will complete their witnessing mission and yet be defeated. (11.4-14)

Revelation 11:4-14 ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. ⁶ They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. ⁷ And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, ⁸ and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, ¹⁰ and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

1. The symbol of the two olive trees and 2 lampstands again symbolize the church and is to be taken together with the 2 witnesses. Zech. 4 provides the background for these symbols. For a deeper understanding, look there. But, to summarize briefly, the lampstands represent the light of the witness. That they stand before the Lord shows the legal setting of their witness. The church witnesses as in a courtroom before the Lord to the world which then provides the basis for Christ's judgment upon them when they persecute his witnesses.
2. Thus, the church will stand as God's witnesses and not be defeated even though we will be opposed. The measuring of the temple ensures that the church will remain a faithful witness and will not be able to be put out. In fact, their light will shine so

- brightly that the fire will even consume their enemies. Verse 6 alludes to mighty acts performed by both Moses and Elijah (which is why Dispensationalists think the witnesses are literally those two). The allusion is meant to bring us, the church, in line with their prophetic authority.
3. We do not carry the literal power of causing plagues on the earth, but our witness when rejected is condemnation upon those who reject the gospel.
 4. Though 11:1-2 shows that the church will be successful in its witnessing task, chapter 11:7ff shows us that the church will suffer and often look defeated in the eyes of the world.
 5. The beast is an allusion to Daniel 7 and this beast will show up several more times in Revelation. The beast in Daniel 7 stands for an evil king who opposes and persecutes the saints of Israel. Here, the beast rises from the sea which we have already said represents chaos and sin. This beast is not literally going to arise from the sea, but instead, he represents the Devil or antichrist who stands behind all persecution throughout the church age. But, this passage seems to have in mind especially the final end time persecution that will occur just before Christ's return where he will conquer this devil. Before Christ's return, it appears that there will be an especially brutal attack on the church that will seem to be a defeat. The witnesses of Christ will seem to lose their witness through death.
 6. The bodies of the saints will lie in the great city. This great city represents Babylon later in Revelation. It is also called spiritually Sodom and Egypt because these places too represent those who oppose God's people. Some think this to be a reference to Jerusalem since it says that our Lord was crucified there. However, this is grammatically unlikely. It is more likely that the phrase 'where their Lord was crucified' modifies 'that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt.' This means that John is saying that Jesus was crucified in the realm of the ungodly. This is the world-city where the ungodly powers rule.
 7. But, after almost total annihilation of the church to the point that its witness is almost wiped out, God intervenes and puts an end to the persecution through the resurrection from the dead. The allusion here is to Ez. 37:1-14 where God restores Israel after the Babylonian captivity. In Ez., Israel is likened to dry bone corpses which God revives through his Spirit. In Revelation 11, the dead are brought to life after the tribulation of the church age. Christ calls forth the dead saints as he called Lazarus up from the dead. The church is raptured, caught up into the air, and the judgment of Christ follows upon the ungodly. We will see more concerning this final event in chapter 19.
 8. Verse 13 records that the earthquake described before in the 7th seal kills a portion of the earth, not total, but we know from Revelation 19 that there will be a great slaughter when Christ returns with his saints. Christ's return is both a coming for his saints and a coming with his saints, so that saints are taken up but also brought with Christ as his army for the great battle where Satan is finally defeated.

V. **Response #1:** Recognize the problem of persecution and defeat.

- A. John's message is a bitter message. We Christians must receive it with the recognition that following Christ will be painful and costly. This passage at least should squash all

our notions that God wants us to be healthy wealthy and wise. The gospel is not meant to make us rich.

- B. John tells us that we will be handed over to the nations to be killed. The church will actually be so severely persecuted that it will appear to many that we no longer exist. It even appears that the church will be close to elimination, but that Christ will return just in time to stop it.
- C. The world will continue to get more wicked and even more hostile to Christians.
- D. Our response is to recognize that this is how Christ the king has ordained it to be. We are to share in the sufferings of Christ. Paul considered this a great joy. He said, "It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake," (Phil. 1:29). This is one of the great joys of the Christian life, that we partake in the fellowship of his suffering.
- E. If you are not prepared to suffer, you are not prepared to be a disciple of Christ.
- F. Now, you might ask, "Why would I want to suffer?" The answer is, you shouldn't want to suffer. But, by God's grace, it is through suffering that we learn to treasure Christ more. Suffering refines us so that we let go of the empty things that we find joy and security in. God made us to find our ultimate joy in him, and suffering helps us to seek joy in Christ.
- G. We have to recognize that until Christ returns, we will be persecuted and even defeated. We will be killed and even be very close to being wiped out.

VI. **Response #2:** Embrace our role as those granted with authority as witnesses.

- A. But, until Christ returns, we have a mission. We have been called and commissioned to be witnesses to Christ. We are to function as prophets to this wicked world by calling people to repentance and faith in the gospel. We have authority to proclaim the truth to a wicked world of which we were once a part. We will not fail in our witness even though we will be severely harmed.
- B. As Christians, we are all witnesses. All Christians are to be witnesses to Christ no matter what they do. Pastors are not the only ones who are to share the gospel of Christ, but the whole church. Where ever you are, you should be thinking about how you can be a witness in that situation.
- C. Our witness serves two purposes.
 - 1) It is the means by which God calls his elect people to himself.
 - 2) Our proclamation of the truth serves as one of the things that condemn those who reject the gospel. Our testimony is true. We are 'two witnesses' which represent a legal standard for the truth. When the gospel is preached and rejected, those who reject it stand condemned. Christ is righteous to judge them.
- D. But, as witnesses, we will be attacked and killed and hated. We will almost be destroyed.

VII. **Response #3:** Take assurance in the gospel remembering that we have been measured.

- A. However, we can be sure that our witness will be successful. We have been granted authority and power. We have been measured by God, which is a sign of his protection. We will succeed in our mission. All of God's elect will believe and all of the those who are appointed to be martyred will be killed, and then Christ will return when things look their bleakest.
- B. The gospel itself provides us with the power to persevere unto death. Because Christ died, rose again, and ascended into heaven, he has sent us his Spirit as a down payment

promising our future resurrection. This Holy Spirit in us will empower us to persevere in hard times. The Holy Spirit in us will resurrect us on the last day.

- C. We must be comforted and take assurance in the gospel remembering that God's protection is upon us. He who began a good work in us through His Spirit will be faithful to complete it in us. God has begun conforming us to the image of His Son, and He will complete that process by uniting us to His sufferings but also finally making us victorious over them.