

LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

By

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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE TWO WITNESSES AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

(Lecture 11)

IN the first thirteen verses of this eleventh chapter, which we are now to consider, we have the remainder of the parenthesis which has occupied us in our study of chapter ten. The careful student of the Word of God will, upon reading this portion, immediately call to mind the measuring of Jerusalem in the 2nd chapter of Zechariah and the measuring of the millennial temple in the 40th chapter of Ezekiel. In this same Book of Revelation we also read of the measuring of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, in chapter 21. In the opening verses of our present section, John says,

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months” (vers. 1,2).

The vision clearly involves Jerusalem and the future temple in the last days.

I think we may say that throughout the Bible when God speaks of measuring anything the thought is implied that He is marking it off as that which belongs to Himself. When one purchases a piece of ground, or is about to take possession of a property, it is a very common thing to measure it and mark off its lines.

In the second chapter of Zechariah we are told that the prophet beheld a man with a measuring line in his hand, to whom he put the question, **“Whither goest thou?”** and the answer was, **“To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.”**

And in the fourth verse the angel who is interpreting the visions for Zechariah says to another angel:

“Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”

Then, in the balance of the chapter, we have a very distinct prophecy of the future deliverance of God’s earthly people from all their foes, when they will be brought from the land of the north and from all parts of the world where they have been carried in the days of their captivity.

This will not be fully accomplished until the Lord Jesus Himself has appeared in glory, for verse eight reads, **“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake my hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me.”**

The daughter of Zion is then called upon to rejoice because the Lord Himself will dwell in the midst of her. **“And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be His people”**: and He will dwell in the midst of them, and they shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent His prophet unto them. **“And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again,”** is the sure Word of God.

Clearly, it is this very restoration that God had in mind when He gave to John the vision of this eleventh chapter.

The angel calls upon him to **“Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.”**

That is, once more God owns a witnessing company, a worshiping people in Jerusalem, and this, observe, is in the days of the great tribulation before the complete fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy, for the glory will not yet have appeared. Therefore he is instructed to leave out the court which is without the temple, and measure it not, for it is still to be given to the Gentiles, **“and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”**; that is, for the last three and a half years of the final seven that compose Daniel’s 70th week, which, as we have seen, has not yet been fulfilled, nor can be until Jerusalem and the people of the Jews are again owned by God as His own.

It is very evident that already God is overruling events with a view to this restoration.

The marvelous deliverance of Jerusalem in December, 1917, when the Turkish flag was hauled down after practically 1260 years of misrule and oppression, and the banners of the Entente Allies raised in its place, was preparing the way for this very thing.

It was indeed a most important event, fraught with greater meaning than millions dreamed of, when General Allenby received from the Turkish Governor of Jerusalem the surrender of the Holy City. And it is well known that General, now Lord, Allenby, to whom God gave this great victory over the Turkish Army, was instructed in the truth of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This event was clearly ordered of God in view of the promised restoration of Israel to the land. It was one of His hidden purposes when He permitted the World War.

The surrender of the Holy City, without the firing of a shot, as the airplanes of the allied forces circled about over the ancient capital of the land of Palestine, was undoubtedly in answer to the prayers of thousands of the people of God who could not bear to think of the representative of a so-called Christian nation shelling the city where our Saviour taught and died, and which must ever be sacred in the eyes of both Jew and Christian.

When the armies of the Allies entered through the Jaffa Gate, as Allenby walked in before his troops, Arab, Jew and Christian alike recognized the fact that the hour had struck for God to open the way for the fulfillment of many prophecies of bygone ages, as recorded in His Word.

Many stories have been told of this event, some of which have not been substantiated, but even allowing for a large percentage of unverified tales, it is evident that the whole civilized world saw in it a most extraordinary event, and it was undoubtedly the turning-point of the entire conflict, for in eleven months afterwards the armistice was signed.

Zionism has from this time taken on new and remarkable vigor, and money has been pouring into its coffers to transplant the poor of the flock from the lands of the north and the country where they have suffered so much, to their own ancient patrimony. Alas! they little realize what they are going back to! Their hopes are high, their jubilation great, but Scripture makes it very plain that they have before them the bitterest experiences they have ever known, and these to be endured right in their own land.

For though the Turkish power no longer holds Jerusalem, yet it is still subject to the Gentiles, and will be, until the Lord Himself returns in person for its complete deliverance. He declared that from the days of Titus Jerusalem should be **“trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”**

The expression, **“the times of the Gentiles,”** refers to the entire period of Gentile supremacy, beginning with the day when God gave Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and continuing on to the time when the Stone from heaven shall smite the image on its feet; that is, when the Lord Jesus Christ, at His second coming in judgment, shall destroy all Gentile dominion, and His own kingdom shall supersede every other.

The last three and a half years, designated here so definitely as forty and two months, will be the worst of all this period of Gentile treading-down. So dreadful will be the tribulation of those days, our Lord has told us, that except they be shortened, no flesh would be saved. And the center of all this tribulation will be the land of Palestine itself. But during this time, and immediately preceding it, God will not leave Himself without witness. So we read:

“I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (vers. 3, 4).

I speak somewhat diffidently here, but it seems clear to me that the twelve hundred and sixty days of these verses refers to the first half of the week. during which God will have a witnessing remnant in Jerusalem testifying to the near coming of the kingdom, and calling upon all Israel to repent in view of that time of the restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets.

I do not know that we need limit the witnesses to two individuals. Two is the number of testimony, and we need to remember that we are dealing here with symbols, not necessarily with the literal personalities. Therefore the two witnesses might well symbolize the witnessing remnant of Judah as a whole. But I would not be dogmatic as to this, for it might be the mind of God to send two individuals, as here described, to herald the near coming of His Son.

The fourth verse again links the prophecy with the Book of Zechariah, chap. 4, ver. 3: **“And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.”**

There, the two olive trees are priesthood and prophetic testimony, keeping the candlestick shining for God. Here the olive trees are said to be two candlesticks, but the thought, I take it, is the same. It is worship and testimony in that time when Jacob’s trouble is just beginning.

These witnesses are “immortal until their work is done,” for, we are told that **“if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed”** - that is, if any man willeth or desires to hurt them, he is cut off in judgment.

We next learn that **“these have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will”** (ver. 6).

It is a testimony in the power and spirit both of Elijah and of Moses. Hence, some have drawn the conclusion that the two witnesses would be Moses and Elijah sent back to earth ere the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I admit the possibility of this, though it does not seem to me probable; but just as John the Baptist came of old in the spirit and power of Elijah - and, to those who would receive it, he was Elijah which was to come - so these witnesses, whether actually two only, or in reality a much larger company thus symbolized, will be in the spirit and power both of the prophet who came to restore Israel to the true God, and the great prophet who first led them out of Egypt.

Nothing can interfere with their witness-bearing until they shall have finished their testimony; then **“the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit”** (of whom we shall learn more when we come to study chapter thirteen) **“shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.”**

They will be the objects of the bitter enmity of the vile head of the coming revived Roman Empire, or Western Federation of Nations, who will not tolerate any worship but that which is offered to himself.

He, therefore, will destroy them, **“and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified”** (ver. 8).

It is Jerusalem, God’s holy city, which through apostasy, culminating in the worship of the Antichrist and the Beast, shall sink at last to the level of Sodom, from which Lot was only saved by fire, and Egypt, out of which Israel of old were delivered by The Lord. Through them (the unbelieving Jews) **“the name of God has been blasphemed among the Gentiles”**; by them the Lord of glory was crucified, and wrath shall come upon them to the uttermost.

In verses nine and ten we have the sad picture of joy amongst the nations because this last testimony for God on earth has been destroyed. We see the whole apostate world - Christendom and Judaism alike - congratulating one another that there is no longer any voice raised to call in question their apostasy and wicked ways.

“And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies. to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth” (vers. 9, 10).

In the present time of our Lord’s rejection and His session at God’s right hand, Christendom, in the very manner here depicted, pretends to observe Christ’s coming to earth. Having crucified the Lord of glory, the nations join in celebrating what is called “His birthday,” sending gifts one to another. In that coming day, in the same way, they will make merry and manifest their delight because the last voice on His behalf has been silenced, and they will rejoice over the dead bodies of His witnesses.

What a solemn scene it shall be - civilized peoples making merry in that awful day when the wrath of God is just about to be poured out in all its fulness upon that guilty, guilty world. For three days and a half it will seem as though Satan was triumphant, and everything that is of God overthrown!

“And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them” (vers. 11, 12).

It is another rapture - another cohort of the first resurrection - taking place in the midst of that final week.

These martyrs, who had sealed their testimony with their blood, are raised in power and caught up to be with their still rejected Lord. Like Himself, they shall ascend to heaven in a cloud, but, unlike their Master, their enemies will behold them. And it would seem as though this visible rapture will have some effect upon those remaining in Jerusalem, for in verse thirteen we learn:

“The same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

Observe He is still the God of heaven, but in a little while He will be manifested as the God of the whole earth, as verse four has already intimated. This is the first time that we read of any during that period of tribulation giving glory to God, but whether this implies any true turning of heart to Himself on the part of some, I dare not attempt to say. All that this Scripture says is that **“the remnant were affrighted,”** and this in itself does not necessarily imply that there is any true conscience work.

With this great earthquake the second woe is past, and we are told, **“Behold, the third woe cometh quickly.”**

This third woe is none other than the seventh and last of the trumpets, which ushers in the world-kingdom of our God and His Christ. It is a woe only to His enemies, but a cause of great rejoicing to all who love His name, in view of creation’s deliverance from bondage to sin.

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth” (vers. 15-18).

I purposely refrained from reading the last verse, as it properly belongs to the next chapter. What we have before us completes the present prophetic series. The seventh angel’s trumpet brings in Christ’s long waited for and glorious kingdom. And upon its proclamation, the saints in heaven, as symbolized by the four and twenty elders, will fall before God on their faces, worshiping Him and giving Him thanks - He, the everlasting Lord - because He has taken to Himself His great power to reign.

The eighteenth verse covers the entire millennium and carries us on to the judgment of the wicked dead, to the end of time, for to the Lord Jesus Christ all judgment has been committed. And we need to remember that the entire millennium is a period of judgment.

- Judgment upon the angry nations when the wrath of God is poured out upon them at the beginning of the millennium;
- Judgment for His own servants who shall be rewarded in that glorious kingdom according to their faithfulness during Christ’s rejection;
- Judgment upon the wicked dead who, at the great white throne, will answer for the deeds done in the body, and be dealt with accordingly.

Those who have arrogated to themselves the right to judge and destroy others will then be judged and destroyed themselves when the great moral Governor of the universe, who has kept Himself hidden so long, will be fully manifested, If you will refer to the chart, you will see that the seventh angel's trumpet brings us to the end of the first prophetic outline. That is, chapter 11: 18 carries us as far along chronologically as chapter 20:11-15.

NOTE: *(the chart is linked on the title page of this book, above the chapter links).*

And now may I press upon all here present the importance of being prepared for the near coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, in view of the remarkable manner in which Palestine, the Jews, the nations of Christendom, and the professed church of God are even now being prepared for the very experiences we have been attempting to describe? These things are not “**cunningly devised fables**” but stern realities, and anyone who has his eyes opened and understands something of the teaching of the prophetic word, can see clearly that we are very near the end of the present dispensation.

I remember on one occasion speaking in the city of San Jose, California, before a group of ministers, something over forty being present, on the second advent of our Lord. Many of them ridiculed the idea - only four declared themselves as believing in it. Most of them were non-committal, having no definite convictions either for or against my theme.

One dear old minister seemed to resent the thought of the Lord's coming as a future thing, declaring that, to him, Christ came when, some forty years previously, he had been converted to God. But I was invited to return a week later, and for an hour and a half we had a most animated debate on the subject.

Finally one clergyman declared that he thought the personal coming of the Lord Jesus was an absolute absurdity. He did not believe He existed as a distinct personality, clothed with a resurrected body; His resurrection was entirely spiritual, and, to quote his own words, “He only exists today as part of the all-pervading spirit of the universe.”

“Therefore,” exclaimed he, dramatically, “I believe, my brethren, in no apocalyptic coming of Jesus. I never expect to see Him in a body, but I believe in the ever-coming Christ. He is coming in the clouds, but they are not literal clouds. He comes in the clouds of affliction, in the political clouds, in the war clouds, in the clouds of sorrow and distress, but a personal pre-millennial advent is, in my judgment, an utter impossibility.”

This brought to his feet the minister who had somewhat opposed me at the previous meeting, and he cried in distress, “Do I understand, Doctor, that I shall never see my Lord who saved me by His death upon the cross?”

“I think not,” was the reply.

“Have I then,” exclaimed the other, “been wrong all these years as I have sung,

“I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
As redeemed by His side I shall stand;
I shall know Him, I shall know Him
By the print of the nails in His hand?”

“Oh!” replied the other, “that’s all very well as poetical license, but I don’t think you should take it literally.”

“Brethren,” cried the aged minister, as the tears burst from his eyes, “I take back what I said last week. I find I agree with this brother, who has been speaking to us on the coming of the Lord, far more than I thought I did. I look to see the personal coming of my Saviour. I shall never be satisfied until I behold the King in His beauty. But I have always supposed He would not come until the day of judgment; but as I think it over, it seems to me that, after all, that is what my brother believes; only he thinks the day of judgment will be a thousand years long. And, Doctor,” he said, turning to the minister who had presented such unscriptural and unholy views, “I am afraid, if there are many in the church like you, it will take a thousand years to put things right.”

My friends, this is indeed what I would impress upon you, and what the seventh angel’s trumpet so clearly intimates.

The day of judgment will be a thousand years long.

- The judgment-seat of Christ takes place in the heavens immediately after the rapture of the church.
- The judgment of the living nations referred to in Matthew chap. 25 will take place upon the earth when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, to establish His kingdom over all the world.

That thousand years will be the reign of righteousness, when He shall rule all nations with a rod of iron, and judge unsparingly everything that ventures to lift itself up against His authority - all that refuses to be subject to His dominion.

And at the close He will judge all the wicked dead, who shall be raised for that very purpose, and cast into the lake of fire because they have rejected His grace. And in view of all this, I plead with you who are out of Christ, “**Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him.**”

In other words, come to God in Christ Jesus now, and have your case settled out of court, for if you first meet God in that solemn hour of judgment, you will be forever beyond the reach of mercy.

For all who trust in the Lord Jesus now, there will be no judgment in that solemn day, for He has said, “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life**” (John 5:24).

How sweet and precious the promise here given to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Observe that all such possess eternal life now. It is not that they are looking forward to receiving eternal life in the day of judgment, or at the coming of the Lord - though they will enter into life then; that is, they will become participants in that scene where eternal life is fully revealed. But they have that life now by virtue of having received Christ, for “**he that hath the Son, hath life.**” Therefore they shall not come into judgment.

They will be called to appear at the judgment-seat of Christ to give an account of their service for the Lord. Since His grace saved them they shall never be called into judgment for their sins, and that for the best of all possible reasons - because those sins have already been judged upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ when He died on Calvary's cross where He bore the condemnation of all who would put their trust in Him.

Such have already passed out of death unto life, and enjoy even now the earnest of the coming glory.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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