



Revelation

2020 - Lesson

11

Chapter 11

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- Welcome to the mid-point of Daniel’s Seventieth Seven, or as we call it, the Tribulation
 - We’ve reached the middle of the seven-year period designated to end this age and bring about Christ’s Second Coming
 - It’s a time the prophets have been speaking about for millennia
 - It’s a time of unimaginable calamity, death, destruction, mayhem
 - And at the center of it is one man who takes over the world, the Antichrist
 - As we learned earlier, anyone who opposes Jesus is – by definition – an antichrist
 - And beyond that, we also learned that the spirit behind that opposition is always the same spirit, Satan
 - So while there are many antichrists on earth today and everyday, there will be one particular man who rises above them all
 - That man is the focus of our attention from this point forward in Tribulation
 - Last week we studied Chapter 10, which was a transition chapter leading us into the middle of the Tribulation
 - The mid-point of the seven years is so important that Scripture measures in three different ways
 - It’s marked as times, time and half a time, 1,260 days and 42 months
 - We will find one of these references in all the chapters that describe the events of mid-Tribulation
- In Chapter 10, John received a small scroll from a powerful angel
 - That scroll was originally written by the prophet Daniel, but he was told to seal it up and hand it back to a powerful angel for safe keeping
 - Then in Chapter 10 that same angel handed the scroll to John and told him to eat it
 - Symbolically, John took in Daniel’s prophecy so he could then share it with us
 - What was this special prophecy? Back in Daniel, we’re told that this secret prophecy regards the second half of Tribulation

Dan. 12:7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

- The Lord tells Daniel that the events contained in this secret prophecy would last 3.5 years
 - And at the end of those 3.5 years, Daniel is told the events of this prophecy would be completed
 - That tells us this prophecy deals with the final 3.5 years of the Tribulation, which is what we now go to study in Revelation
- And Daniel 12:7 also reminded us that the point of all this calamity was to shatter the power of the holy people

- The holy people refers to the people of Israel, and shattering refers to breaking their resistance to God and His word
- So as we learned before, the ultimate outcome of Tribulation is to bring Israel to faith and fulfill the promises God gave them
- And the events of mid-Tribulation and beyond put that plan in high gear
- Finally, remember that the events of mid-Tribulation are centered on the 3.5 year moment, but they span time on either side of that point
 - So what we study in chapters 11-14 are all happening at the same time
- And so at the very end of Chapter 10, John has now taken in the prophecy originally given to Daniel and he's commanded to deliver it to us

Rev. 10:11 And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”

Rev. 11:1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.

Rev. 11:2 “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

- Although the disasters of Tribulation are focused on Israel, nonetheless the scale of what God does impacts every nation and tongue and even kings
 - But it's centered on one place, one region of the world, and that place takes center stage during the middle of Tribulation
 - John is taken to a Jewish temple and told to measure it and make note of who worship there
 - Interestingly, John is told to measure the temple but never gives us the measurements
 - So clearly, the size of the building is not the point here
 - The point is much more obvious...there is a temple in Israel again and it has worshippers around the altar
 - The temple of Israel was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, and it has not existed since that day
 - Though the orthodox Jews dearly desire to rebuild their temple, they have been unable to do so for nearly 2,000 years
 - But according to John's vision, there is a day coming when the temple will return in some form
 - And when it does, the nation will once again worship there before the altar of God
 - In the design of the temple, the altar sits outside in a courtyard around the building housing the Holy Place and Holy of Holies
 - That courtyard is itself surrounded by a wall separating Jews from Gentiles

- John is told to measure only the courtyard where the altar stands and the worshippers gathered but not the Gentile court
- Those instructions serve to focus our attention on three facts concerning mid-Tribulation
 - First, as we enter the middle Tribulation period we learn that the temple is operating in Israel and the Jewish people are worshipping there
 - So despite the war and supernatural calamities taking place during the first half of Tribulation, the temple continues to operate
 - That suggests strongly that the Lord has been sparing Israel from these disasters during this time
 - And if so, it would only serve to reinforce Israel's desire to return to their God and to worship at the temple
 - So while the rest of the world is in turmoil and cursing the name of God, Israel is at rest (to a degree) and in worship
 - Secondly, we learn that the existence of the temple doesn't mean the Age of the Gentiles has ended, at least not yet
 - Notice in v.2 we're told that the Gentiles continue to tread down the holy city
 - We remember that the Age of the Gentiles was defined by Jesus in Luke 21

Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- The Lord has placed Gentiles over Israel during this age, and as Daniel 2 & 7 taught us, this age won't end until Jesus' Second Coming
 - So even though we are only 3.5 years away from Jesus' return, still the city of Jerusalem remains trampled by Gentiles
 - And that trampling is about to get much worse
- Which brings us to the third and final important detail at the opening of Chapter 11... our mid-Tribulation reference
 - Remember last week I told you that the chapters of Revelation that deal with the midpoint of Tribulation will all contain a time reference
 - These chapters will each have one or more mentions of the midpoint using one of our three ways of measuring time
 - In this case, we see the mention of 42 months, which is 3.5 years
 - That reference tells us that this chapter is anchored to the middle of the seven years
 - And therefore it has something to say about how we move from the first half to the second half
 - But the question becomes how does this chapter relate to the mid point?
 - And to learn that, we must keep reading

Rev. 11:3 “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Rev. 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

Rev. 11:5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

Rev. 11:6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not 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 plague, as often as they desire.

- Abruptly, John begins describing a new scene involving two prophets
 - We were hearing about the temple, but now we’re suddenly talking about two prophets
 - These two topics may seem unrelated, but as we’ll see the two are closely connected
 - John says these men prophesy for 1,260 days, which is another of our three ways of describing 3.5 years
 - So John is connecting the operation of the temple with the ministry of these men
 - That during the time the temple stands (42 months), these men also prophesy in Israel (1,260 days)
 - So like the operation of the temple, the ministry of these two men is also closely connected to the midpoint of Tribulation
 - They are called the Lord’s two witnesses, and a witness is someone who testifies concerning the truth in some matter
 - And we’re reminded what the Law says concerning the necessity of witnesses prior to condemnation

Deut. 19:15 “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

- Before the Law condemned someone for sin, their offense must be confirmed by the testimony of at least 2 witnesses
- So the ministry of these two men serves the purpose of condemning the world for its sin prior to judgment
- We often talk of being witnesses for Christ, but don’t forget there are two biblical purposes in witnessing
 - One purpose is to bring a message of the truth so that a person might be convicted and repent and be saved by faith
 - But a second purpose of a witness is to testify concerning someone’s sin for the purpose of conviction and condemnation

- Their ministry seems to serve both purposes, but especially the latter
- They wear only sackcloth, which is the traditional garb of prophets mourning and suffering in Israel, and they have supernatural powers John says
 - Like the 144,000 in Chapter 7, many speculate on the identities of these two individuals
 - People love to conjecture over which Old Testament prophets these men might be
 - And some believe they are entirely symbolic, even going to so far as speculating that they represent the World Trade Center towers
 - But like the 144,000, all that speculation is completely unnecessary because the text itself tells us who they are
 - In v.4 John tells us these characters are men we've heard about before
 - They are the two olive trees and two lampstands before the Lord, John says, which is a clear reference to Zechariah 4

Zech. 4:1 Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.

Zech. 4:2 He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;

Zech. 4:3 also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."

Zech. 4:4 Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?"

Zech. 4:5 So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

Zech. 4:6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.

Zech. 4:7 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"

Zech. 4:8 Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Zech. 4:9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

Zech. 4:10 "For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel — these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth."

Zech. 4:11 Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?"

Zech. 4:12 And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?"

Zech. 4:13 So he answered me, saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I

said, “No, my lord.”

Zech. 4:14 Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.”

- Zechariah was written shortly after Daniel and Ezekiel wrote their books, and it addresses similar topics
 - Specifically, the book is written to those exiles of Israel that returned to the land after the 70 years of exile was complete
 - Remember, the Lord designated that Israel spend 70 years outside the land to make up for ignoring the land sabbath
 - And then that 70 years of exile would be followed by another seventy sevens (490 years) for the Age of the Gentiles
 - But after the first 70 years, the people of Israel were allowed to return to the land, but there wasn't much waiting for them
 - And in particular, they lacked a temple since it had been destroyed by Babylon
 - It took 49 years for Israel to rebuild it
 - And in that time the Lord spoke to His people through several prophets including Zechariah
 - Zechariah's book speaks to Israel about the Lord restoring their fortunes while judging the nations around Israel that took advantage of her
 - In particular, the Lord assures Israel that His servant Zerubbabel will succeed in rebuilding the temple
 - This accomplishment will be done not by the man's might but by God's Spirit
 - And that temple will sit atop a plain on the mountain of God, and therefore do not despise the day of small beginnings
 - The Lord is alluding to the future of that modest temple
 - What Zerubbabel builds will eventually become Herod's Temple, one of the greatest structures of the world
 - And it will sit atop a flat plain built to hold the massive building
- But then Zechariah wonders about the lampstands and olive trees standing on either side
 - And the Lord tells Zechariah these are the two anointed ones but the phrase in Hebrew literally reads the two sons of oil
 - And these two men stand by the Lord of the whole earth
 - That phrase means that their ministry will have worldwide impact, meaning they literally impact every person on earth
 - It's hard to imagine how any one person could have a worldwide impact in ministry...not even Paul impacted every human being
 - And according to Zechariah their worldwide impact is connected in some way to the temple
 - And now in Revelation 11:4 were told the the two prophets of Tribulation will be the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy

- Back Revelation 11 we're told that these men have a supernatural protection that prevents their enemies from harming them
 - In fact, they can make fire come from their mouths to devour an enemy that tried to harm them
 - That's quite some superpower, and it leads us to wonder why are these men so hated that they need this defense?
- The next verse explains why...they also possess power to make life on earth utterly miserable for everyone
 - They can stop rain from falling on earth during the time of their ministry
 - Additionally, they can turn water to blood and strike the earth with every plague as often as they desire
 - Now we know why the earth wants to harm them and yet for 3.5 years the Lord protects them from harm
- So we know these guys were prophesying to the world for 3.5 years, and in that time they could not be harmed
 - Meanwhile, they brought great harm on the earth and naturally everyone hated them for it
 - What was the point of their ministry? We don't know what they were saying specifically
 - But since the Lord calls them witnesses it's not hard to guess
 - It's likely they were declaring the end had come and that the judgments the world was experiencing were a preview of the end
 - In a sense, these guys were the narrators for the natural disasters that were playing out everywhere
 - They provided an explanation to accompany the seal and trumpet judgments so that no one missed the point
 - In that sense, they testified to the truth of God's purpose in these events
 - But interestingly, these guys are also gifted by God to bring many of the same judgments themselves
 - So while Jesus is producing drought by holding back the four winds of the earth, these guys are doing the same
 - While Jesus is causing the seas to turn to blood, so are these guys at times
 - While Jesus brings plague after plague through the seal and trumpet judgments, so will these guys do the same
 - Why have the duplication? Well, consider how it must look from the standpoint of how the world experiences the first half of Tribulation
 - They can't see what Jesus is doing in Heaven, but they do see what happens on earth and they see what these men are doing
 - And so naturally, the world will see these men as the specific cause of all the tragedies that come upon the earth
 - During the first 3.5 years of Tribulation, they will be blamed for everything bad that happens

- Which will ensure that the world connects the events they see with the explanations that these men offer
- No one will pin it on “climate change” or aliens or Brexit...everyone will hear these things are a judgment from God
- But the world will choose to see these two men as the cause and they will look no further
- But the Lord only appoints these men to warn the world for 3.5 years, so when we reach the middle of Tribulation, their time is up

Rev. 11:7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

Rev. 11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Rev. 11:9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

Rev. 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

- John says that as these men finish their testimony after 3.5 years, the Lord will allow them to be killed
 - In v.7 he says they will be overcome by a beast that comes up out of the abyss
 - We know what the abyss is since we studied that back in Chapter 9 as part of the trumpet judgments
 - It's the place where the Lord has confined the disobedient angelic realm
 - So clearly the beast is connected to the demonic realm, and the term reminds us of the beasts mentioned in Daniel 7
 - For now we know nothing more about this beast
 - But we'll soon know a lot more about the beast later in the mid-Tribulation chapters
 - After they are killed, their bodies will remain visible in a great city for three days
 - Although unnamed here, we can clearly see what city this is
 - It's the city where their Lord was crucified, which can only be Jerusalem
 - But John says this city is also mystically called Sodom and Egypt
 - Sodom was a city of great depravity while Egypt was the nation that first introduced idolatry to the Jewish people
 - So John is saying that in the day of these events Jerusalem will not be a holy city as God intended
 - On the contrary, by the time of mid-Tribulation Jerusalem will become a city of great depravity and idolatry
 - And as we learn later, the beast will be connected to these things

- After they die, their bodies are left unburied for three days, and during this time the world is celebrating their death like nothing else the world has seen
 - The world turns the occasion of their death into a cause for celebration, even like Christmas
 - They give gifts to one another and rejoice
 - And why? Because they say these two prophets tormented the earth
 - Remember, I said that the world is likely to conflate their plagues with those coming from Heaven
 - So the world blames these men for everything bad that's happened since the start of Tribulation
 - Can you imagine how much the world must have hated these men after seeing so much destruction?
 - Just the first woe judgment of five months of stinging would have been enough to make these two men hated like no other
 - No wonder the world was trying so hard to kill these men, and no wonder the Lord had to give them supernatural powers to defend themselves
 - And when they are killed, the world believes the bad days have finally come to an end, like the end of WWI but far greater
 - And what do we suppose the world will think of the one who defeats them?
 - The “beast” will certainly be celebrated as a world hero
 - How were these men connected to the operation of the temple?
 - According to Zechariah 4, these men will conduct their ministry out of the temple
 - So during the first half of the Tribulation, the Lord uses them as a form a protection for the nation of Israel and the temple
 - They seem to protect the temple from the destruction of the plagues and enemy attacks
 - That's why in the narrative of Revelation 11 the operation of the temple is associated with the ministry of these two men

Rev. 11:11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

Rev. 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

Rev. 11:13 And in 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.

- After 3.5 days, the Lord will resurrect their dead bodies so that they return to life and stand upright again

- Naturally, seeing two dead bodies return to life after 3+ days of death will strike fear into the hearts of the world
 - But even more than the miracle of resurrection, the world fears the prospect of these men returning to ministry again
 - The world is watching this resurrection and becomes terrified that the plagues will start again
- But then the witnesses heard the Lord calling them up to Heaven
 - And as their enemies watched, these men were taken to Heaven in their resurrected bodies
 - The message to the world is clear: God approved of these men and what they did and what they said
 - So the world was rejoicing prematurely
- In all these things, we now see how Zechariah's promise that these men would have a worldwide ministry could be true
 - Not a person on earth won't have heard of these men and/or won't be impacted by what they say and do
 - And not a person on the earth won't be happy to hear they have died or be afraid when they return to life
 - And the worldwide impact of their ministry goes one step further as their bodies are viewed by the whole world
 - Many speculate that the world's unified response to the events of the two witnesses is made possible by modern technology
 - But I believe all modern technology will be inoperable by this point of Tribulation
 - The disasters will have been too great to allow modern infrastructure to operate
 - So the whole earth knows of what they do because the whole earth will be reduced to a relatively small community centered on the Middle East
 - Furthermore, the impact will be so widespread that everyone is talking about the same thing
 - And the two witnesses are known to everyone as a result
- We know these men are connected to mid-Tribulation, but some wonder if they operate in the first half of Tribulation or the second half
 - They are operating in the first half of Tribulation and as we look back on the events of this chapter, we see that clearly
 - First, the timeline can't fit in the second half of Tribulation
 - We know the second half ends with Jesus' Second coming exactly 3.5 years after the mid point
 - But we're told these men serve for 3.5 years and then their bodies are viewed for an additional 3.5 days after that
 - Those extra few days aren't very long, but still they are more time than exists in the second half of Tribulation

- Secondly, these men will be killed by the rise of the beast from the abyss at the end of their ministry
 - And as we will learn in a couple of chapters from now, the rise of the beast happens at the midpoint of Tribulation
 - Since they are killed at the midpoint of Tribulation, they must serve in the first half of Tribulation
 - Finally, look at the final verse of the chapter

Rev. 11:14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

- We know that there will be three woe judgments and then the Tribulation will come to an end
 - The first woe judgment was the demonic scorpions
 - After that woe ended, we were told that one woe was past and two more woes were still coming
- And then the second woe judgment was the army of 200 million demons who killed a third of mankind
 - That woe judgment brought us to the middle of Tribulation
 - The final woe judgment will be the seven bowl judgments which come at the very end of Tribulation
- But as we leave Chapter 11, we're told that the second woe judgment is done yet the third one remains
 - That would indicate that we are still waiting for the seven bowl judgments to start
 - So the second woe has just ended and the third has yet to begin, and meanwhile the two witnesses are now dead and resurrected
 - So clearly, they were living and ministering during the first half of Tribulation and have died now at mid-Tribulation
- Which leads us to a brief moment to end the chapter, which looks forward to the coming end

Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and 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 will reign forever and ever."

Rev. 11:16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

Rev. 11:17 saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign."

Rev. 11:18 "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of

His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

- The seventh angel sounds in v.15, and this refers to the seventh trumpet, which are the seven bowl judgments that end the Tribulation
 - At the sounding of that seventh trumpet, there are voices in Heaven declaring that the world has become the Kingdom
 - In other words, the seventh trumpet leads us to Christ's Second Coming and into the long promised Kingdom on earth
 - And with that proclamation, the elders fall to their faces to worship God for fulfilling His promise
 - Since we are made to live in bodies and on earth, I must imagine that the saints in Heaven are specially eager to see the Kingdom
 - As much as we look forward to it, at least for now we have a body and live in a world we call home
 - But these elders are living in the Heavenly realm, which brings them a step closer to the Kingdom but yet is not a real home
 - So I wonder if they are even more eager for the Kingdom having come so close to it
 - And in vs.18-19 the elders begin to tell the story of the Lord's faithfulness to His promises, retelling the events of Tribulation
 - The nations were enraged against God and then God's wrath came, which is a reference to the bowl judgments
 - Following that is the time to judge the dead and to reward the believers
 - And the temple in Heaven was then opened and the ark in that heavenly temple appears along with great natural powers
 - The overall scene at the end of Chapter 11 serves as a foreshadowing of where the story is going, but it's not there yet
 - In fact, we will see this preview a second time in Chapter 15, the chapter that leads us out of the mid-Tribulation chapters
 - But the bowl judgments are coming without doubt
 - And when they come, they will be followed quickly by the Lord's return and the events that follow leading into the Kingdom
 - And that's where we return next time...