

Can't Keep a Good Man Down • Rev. 11:1-14

INTRO • Read vs. 1-6

Half-Way

1. As we come to ch. 11, we're half way thru Rev.
2. We're also about half-way thru the Tribulation, the last 7 yrs of history before Jesus comes again.
 - a. The first half of the Tribulation is marked by seeming peace & a measure of prosperity led by the deceptive reign of the antichrist.
 - b. That false-peace is punctured now & again by catastrophic upheavals in nature.
 - c. But at the mid-point of the Tribulation, everything changes.
 - 1) You see, during the first half of the Tribulation, God slowly withdraws His grace & evil moves in to take its place.
 - 2) Picture it like what happens at the beach right before a tsunami hits.
 - a) The water suddenly recedes from the shore.
 - b) It lowers way beyond the low tide mark; exposing the sea bottom.
 - c) But then the water comes surging back in a massive wave that covers everything.
 - 3) The first half of the Tribulation sees God's grace withdrawn from Earth in answer to humanity's long rebellion and desire to be left alone by God.
 - a) As God's grace withdraws, evil emerges in the form of the antichrist.
 - b) And creation, cursed by the fall of man, but held up & sustained by God's grace for thousands of years, begins to unravel now that grace has been withdrawn.
 - d. Then, at the mid-point of the Tribulation, God's wrath begins to be poured out in a tsunami of judgment.
3. While the **first half** of the Tribulation sees the **natural result** of man's rejection of God; a reaping of what rebellion has sown; the **last half** sees the *outright judgment* of God.
4. Now: As we saw last week, Chs. 10 & 11 are a kind of pause in judgment.
 - a. John has behind the scene visions of heaven & the spiritual realm.
 - b. Last week in ch. 10, a mighty angel declares that there's going to be no more delay.
 - c. The time has come to wrap up history.
 - d. And John is told his vision aren't over; God's got more for him to see & share.
5. The next thing God shows him is a **reminder** that even in the midst of judgment; God's heart is to save those who'll turn to Him.

Vs. 1-2

¹ Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for* 42 months.

1. The reed John was given is a cattail which grow in great numbers along the Jordan river.
 - a. They're light & straight & make for great measuring sticks.
 - b. John is given 1 and told to measure the temple, altar; & to number the people found there.
2. Now, how are we to understand this, because there is no temple in Jerusalem?
3. Well—there will be.
4. The prophet Daniel, Jesus, & the apostle Paul all said there will be a temple in Jerusalem in the Last Days.
 - a. The temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans.
 - b. Today, Islam's 3rd holiest site, the Dome of the Rock & Al-Aqsa Mosque sit on the Temple Mount.
 - c. While the obstacles to rebuilding the Temple are immense, plans are already underway.
 - 1) When we tour Israel, we stop at the **Temple Institute** in Jerusalem to visit the organization remaking the furnishing & retraining the priests for service in the temple.
 - a) They've remade the golden menorah, the table for the showbread, the golden altar.
 - b) The tools & utensils, and have remade the priest's garments.
 - 2) All the materials need to construct the temple have been secured & warehoused.
 - 3) Each year a group tries to lay the cornerstone on the mount, but the Israeli blocks them.
 - 4) And now, according to the most recent polls, a **majority** of Israelis support rebuilding the Temple, even though they know it would inflame Muslim hostility.

5. So there's no temple in Jerusalem today; but there will be.
 - a. Many of us believe it's the antichrist's granting the Jews the right to rebuild the temple that moves them to think he's their Messiah.
 - b. That is what many Jews in Israel are already saying; that the Messiah will oversee the rebuilding of the temple. That's how they'll know who he is.
6. The point is; John saw a real temple. He knew it was real because he was told to measure it.
7. But he was told **not** to measure the outer court because it was the place for Gentiles, meaning unbelievers.
 - a. Here's the temple mount. [Dome of the Rock, Al Aqsa Mosque]
 - b. Assumed by most, temple where Dome of Rock sits.
 - c. But is this open area to N. Note this little shrine.
 - 1) Only place on entire mount where bedrock is exposed, besides in DotR.
 - 2) Significant because ancient Jewish tradition says ark set on bedrock.
 - 3) Also, the ancient Eastern Gate lines up w/this northern site; & that gate aligned with the temple.
 - d. The temple could be rebuilt here w/o the need to demolish the DotR.
 - e. And that would mean the DotR would end up, guess where – in the outer court John was told not to measure because it was given to the Gentiles.
8. Now remember, the key to unlocking Revelation is the OT.
 - a. When John's original audience read this, they immediately thought of Eze 40-41 & Zech 2, where the prophets were told to measure something **in preparation for judgment**.
 - b. Measuring shows ownership & the right to do what one pleases w/what's measured.
 - c. Well, the temple is about to become the scene of what's called the abomination of desolation.
 - d. This is the ultimate sin the human race commits. It's a consummate act of arrogant defiance.
 - e. It's an abomination because it's the original temptation the devil used in the Garden with Eve, that she could be a god, raised to the nth degree.
 - f. A man, the antichrist, will actually **make the claim** to be god; IN the Holy place of the re-built temple. Then he demands the world worship him.
 - g. That abomination is so great, it results in desolation as God's wrath is poured out.
 - h. So John is told to measure the temple because God is "sizing it up" (if you will) in preparation for judgment.
9. V2 says the outer court & City of Jerusalem will be given to the Gentiles for 42 months.
 - a. That's 3½ years, the last half of the Tribulation.
 - b. In Luke 21:24 Jesus said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the *times of the Gentiles* are fulfilled."

Vs. 3-6

1. Now we have a scene change ...
- ³ And I will give **power** to my 2 witnesses, and they will prophesy 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."
2. That's also 3½ years. In the Hebrew calendar, a year is 360 days.
3. The Million Dollar question is: Who are these guys?
4. Since John doesn't ID them by name, at best all we can do is speculate.
 - a. They do some things that remind us of a couple other figures.
 - b. But before we jump to that, let's be careful to see what John **does** say about them.
5. They're **witnesses** of God, which means their message is the Gospel.
6. In vs. 3 & 6 they **prophesy**, which means they call people **into covenant** with God by repenting of sin & trusting in Christ.
7. They **wear burlap** = Sackcloth; the attire of those prophets **announcing judgment**.
8. And there's 2 of them.
 - a. Deut. 17 & 19 requires the testimony of 2 witnesses to establish a fact in a court case where a guilty verdict meant death.
9. While John doesn't give us their names, he does say in v4 ...
- ⁴ These are the 2 olive trees and the 2 lampstands standing before the God of the earth.
10. That's a clear nod to Zech 4, where the prophet has a vision of a Jewish ruler named Zerubbabel and a priest named Joshua as a lampstand continuously supplied oil from 2 olive trees.
 - a. **That** vision showed that the king & priest of Zechariah's time were supernaturally empowered by

God to fulfill their office of leading & teaching the people.

b. They worked together to rebuild the temple destroyed by the Babylonians.

11. God wanted John to link these future two prophetic witnesses to the old story of Zerubbabel & Joshua.

a. They also will receive power to accomplish their mission during a time of massive opposition & difficulty.

b. In fact, God will **supernaturally protect** them

⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

12. All this gives us clues to who these guys might be.

a. They perform miracles of judgment reminiscent of both Moses & Elijah.

b. When some soldiers came to arrest Elijah one day, fire fell & consumed them.

c. Elijah prayed & a drought settled over Israel.

d. Moses was the agent by which plagues devastated Egypt. He turned the water of the Nile to blood.

13. In Malachi 4:5 we read this –

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

14. Since John is told of these 2 end times prophetic witnesses right after measuring the temple, we can assume Jerusalem is the scene where they work.

15. What better witnesses to bring to Jerusalem during the Tribulation, when God has turned His redemptive attention **back to Israel**, than the 2 men who stand at the very head of the Law & the Prophets Moses & Elijah?

16. It's also significant that Elijah never died; he was taken up bodily into heaven.

17. Moses' body was taken care of by God Himself; no *man* buried him.

18. Finally, in Matt 17:1-6, it was Moses & Elijah who appeared with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

19. These 2 have a special role to play as the witnesses of God.

20. **Whoever** the 2 witnesses are, they're **unstoppable** as they bear testimony to God.

a. When they're attacked, the **attacks** aren't merely **answered**; their **attackers** are **smoked**!

21. This goes on for 1260 days - 3½ years.

Vs. 7-10

⁷ When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies 3½ days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰ And those who dwell on the earth [earth-dwellers = Rev. label for the allies & supporters of the A/C] will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to 1 another, because these 2 prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

1. We saw this beast from the bottomless pit in ch9. It's the devil.

2. As we'll see in a later study, it's at the mid-point of the Trib that the devil will possess the A/C in a kind of unholy incarnation & mockery of the Incarnation of Jesus.

3. The 2 witnesses are *invincible* until their ministry is complete.

4. Then they'll fall to the attack of the A/C.

5. Refusing to bury the dead was a **great cruelty** in the ancient world.

a. It was regarded by all cultures impious & *ungodly* because it was *inhuman*.

b. It's a mark of the wickedness of the world at that time that the 2 witnesses are left unburied.

c. And instead of people being ashamed of that, they rejoice over it.

d. It's a time to celebrate & party.

6. The scene of all this is **Jerusalem**. V7 it's the city where Jesus was crucified.

a. But God labels it Sodom & Egypt.

b. Though it's supposed to be the Holy City of the Righteous God it's become the home of perversion and corruption.

- c. Trampled under the foot of the earth-dwellers, it becomes the scene of the abomination bringing desolation.
- d. And now it's the place where the 2 witnesses are brutally murdered by the A/C.
- 7. BUT! Not until they've completed their mission.
 - a. Look at v7 -

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

 - b. Look at v3 -

And I will give *power* to my 2 witnesses, and they will prophesy 1,260 days ...

- 8. Their assignment was to prophecy for 1260 days; not 1258 or 9. 1,260.
 - a. When the sun sets on the 1260th day, their job is done & there's no more reason for them to hang out on a planet of Earth-dwellers who absolutely HATE them.
 - b. They've fulfilled the purpose for their lives here, & it's time for them to retire to their eternal rest.
- 9. So Satan kills them.
- 10. And while the scene of all this is Jerusalem, v9 says the entire world sees it.
 - a. Which isn't difficult with TV, the internet, and modern media.
 - b. Be assured the A/C will be a savvy manipulator of the media.
- 11. The death of the 2 witnesses may seem tragic & a win for the devil's team; but it isn't. ***Far from it.***
 - a. Oh the A/C & his cronies will ***think*** it is. That's why they celebrate.
 - b. They hi-5 each other.
 - 1) They tweet, "Ding Dong the Wits are dead."
 - 2) Hallmark makes up new cards - "Roses are red. Violets are blue. The witnesses are dead, Yahoo!" See you at the party!
 - 3) But their congratulating each other is premature.
 - c. Their death is as much part of God's plan as their lives. Watch this

Vs. 11-14

¹¹ Now after the 3½ days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹² And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. ¹³ In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a 10th of the city fell. In the earthquake 7,000 people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

- 1. You know why we're here today/ Because Jesus rose from the dead!
 - a. Because He rose, that means everything He claimed & said is true!
 - b. If Jesus hadn't risen, he'd not even merit a footnote in history.
 - c. But His resurrection changes EVERYTHING!
- 2. Without their death, these 2 witnesses ***couldn't be resurrected.***
 - a. Their rising will confront the entire world with the FACT ***what they said was TRUE!***
 - b. It ***validates*** their message.
 - c. Even to a world that categorically rejects God; refuses the Gospel & kills those who share it – God still faithfully sends it!
- 3. Once again, try to imagine this.
 - a. ABC, NBC, & CBS; The BBC, CNN, MSNBC, FOX News all have their Jerusalem news teams reporting on the big events in there.
 - b. The 2 odd-ball preachers who've spent the last 3½ years calling people to repent, warning of God's judgment & saying the A/C is a devil while the rest of the world thinks he's a savior, are finally dead.
 - c. Up till now, anyone who's tried to take them out has themselves been burned to a crisp.
 - d. They called for no rain and the skies sealed up tight.
 - e. They announced pestilence and plague & that's what happened.
 - f. They were invincible until the A/C took matters into his own hands & went after them.
 - g. Now they're dead, and the news cameras continue to show shots of them lying on the grounds of the temple.
 - h. But half way thru day 4, when the news cycle is about to turn to something else – suddenly, the

bodies of the 2 prophets move.

1) They slowly climb back to their feet and lift up their heads as though seeing something in the sky.

2) Then a voice everyone all over the planet hears calls out, "Anabeetay = Come up here!"

3) The 2 prophets ascend as all watch; mouths hanging open in wonder & not a little fear.

i. But that's not all! As though making sure the lesson is clear, God gives Earth a good shake.

j. So people will remember; a 10th of the city crumbles & 7,000 die.

4. Don't miss the collective impact all this has; end of v13 –

and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

a. Not because they suddenly become believers.

b. There's no genuine faith here.

c. No. These people CAN'T just pass all this off to coincidence or some kind of natural phenomenon.

d. It'll be hard to find an atheist at that time.

e. Humanity will be backed into a corner, unable to ignore the reality of God.

f. But they will be no closer to faith in Him.

g. They glorify Him here only in the sense of admitting His power and faithfulness to His own.

h. But they will not themselves trust in Him.

i. All of that is what makes them even more deserving of judgment which is what the v14 announces

¹⁴ The 2nd woe is past. Behold, the 3rd woe is coming quickly.

Conclusion

When They Finish . . .

1. I want to end today by reprising the beginning of v7.

When they finish their testimony . . .

2. The 2 witnesses are unstoppable, invincible, **until** they complete their mission.

3. Once that mission is complete, there's no need for them to stick around.

4. What's true for them is true for you & I.

5. Just like these 2 **future** witnesses, God has a plan & purpose for us.

6. We **too** are God's witnesses; the **true** Jehovah's Witnesses for Jesus IS Jehovah.

7. These 2 had 1260 days. I don't know how many I have. You don't know how many you do.

8. But know this: We can't live a day past the number God's set for us.

a. We could, through our own foolishness, go **before** the number God's set, but not past.

b. You can eat bran muffins, drink broccoli & kale smoothies, & wear SPF 50 lotion & you still can't add a single day to the total God's allotted you.

c. You could also go before that limit by eating too many Flamin' Hot Cheetoos, drinking a case of Mountain Dew Code Red every day, & street racing a '78 Ford Pinto.

9. But as long as we're faithfully following the Lord and walking in the Spirit, death can't touch us! We're invincible.

10. David understood this & in Psalm 23 said; I paraphrase

Even when I walk in death's shadow, no fear, 'cuz You're with me. You set me down at a table with enemies; & at that table You honor me while protecting me from their attacks. Without a doubt, your goodness and mercy are with me every day. And when my days on Earth are done, I'll get to hang out with You in Your place forever.

11. God wants us to live without fear.

12. My friend, don't fear death, for death has lost it's sting in the resurrection of Christ.

13. Death can't come until God's plan for you is done.

14. After that, who would want to stick around?