

Revelation 10 and 11 • "No more delay" and the Two Witnesses

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

All right. We are going to get into some Revelation tonight. Revelation chapter 10. Open your bibles there please. The Book of Revelation is challenging. It is a book that many people have avoided because of its challenging nature. But it's a very important book for us to go through and to study. So, we've been in the trumpet judgments when last we were here in Revelation.

We finished chapter nine and the sixth angel had blown his trumpet. Now we're at chapter 10. We better start with prayer. Father God, as we get into the Word tonight, we pray for your Holy Spirit to lead us in understanding. We believe, Lord God, that it is through the ministry of your Spirit that we are made to understand the Scriptures, that we are literally given spiritual insight and illumination. And so heavenly Father, we pray that you would do that tonight as we go through these verses. Be with us we pray, and minister grace to each person. Lord, I'm so thankful that you know everybody. You know what they're going through. You know the challenges they're dealing with. You know the burdens that they're carrying, you know the pains that they endure. You know the cry of their heart. And I'm so thankful, Lord, that you are able to speak to each and every person. And I ask you to do that tonight in a very special way. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Chapter 10 begins in verse one by saying,

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."

Can you imagine? John seeing these glorious angelic beings. I mean, just the description that he gives, "Wrapped in a cloud rainbow over his head, face like the sun, legs, like fire," truly glorious. And John says,

²"He had a little scroll in his hand." (We assume that the angel's holding details of the rest of the judgments that the Lord is going to be bringing through the remainder of this period of time).

And I'll explain why we think that here as we go on. But it says,

²“*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. (And John doesn't tell us exactly what the angel said but he said,) When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.*”

Now you know, here we are introduced to this idea of the seven thunders. We don't know what the seven thunders are. Growing up in the Midwest of America, I spent a lot of summer nights listening to thunder, but this is obviously different because you'll notice it goes on and verse four it says,

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.”*”

You know, of all the years I heard thunder, I never heard words coming out of that thunder. But with this thunder, John heard a specific message and yet he was told to seal up what the seven thunders had said. Now, this idea of sealing things up is not completely uncommon in the Bible. You'll remember that Daniel was given a similar message after hearing something that was very important.

Let me show you this. On the screen from Daniel, chapter 12, he says,

Daniel 12:7-9 ESV

⁷“*And I heard the man clothed in linen, (and he's referring to kind of his own angelic vision) who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. ⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” ⁹ He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed (Notice that) until the time of the end.”*”

So, Daniel was told that these things are for a later time. And there are things that God simply just tells us to wait, concerning in terms of finding out. You'll remember when the disciples wanted to know, they wanted to know the timetable of God restoring Israel to its position of glory or giving it that position that God had prophesied. You remember that.

Remember what Jesus said to them. Look at Acts Chapter one, verse seven. It says that,

Acts 1:7 (ESV)

⁷*“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons the Father has fixed by his own authority.”*

And so, there are things that God says to you and me that's not for you to know. And, you know, the longer I walk with the Lord, the more I realize my need to leave room for mystery. There are certain personalities that don't do that very well, I've noticed. Some people just don't like mystery. And I get a lot of questions from people asking about things that we're just, we haven't been given revelation about. And so, they'll say, what about da, da da?

And I'll say, well, we don't know. And that just, I know that doesn't satisfy. I know that they're just kind of like, yeah, I'm looking for an answer. Well, there's a lot of things that we just don't have answers about. Can I share a quote with you from Aw Tozer, probably one of my favorite authors. He writes and he says,

“No one should be ashamed to admit that he does not know, and no Christian should fear the effect of such a confession in the realm of things spiritual. Indeed, the very power of the cross lies in the fact that it is the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of man. The day we manage to explain everything spiritual will be the day that we have (for ourselves) destroyed everything divine.”

Isn't that a great quote? I love that. In other words, make room for mystery. Leave room when you read your Bible, when you're doing your best, your level best to figure these things out along the way. Leave room for mystery. John goes on in verse five,

⁵*And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶and 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, ⁷but 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.”*

There's an important phrase in this section of Scripture that I think is very key, and it's the phrase, “no more delay. No more delay.” This is a statement that is declaring that the outpouring of God's wrath is now set irrevocably in motion, and there's no stopping it. There's no moving to the side or this, or there's no further delay. There's no turning back.

And so, he makes this declaration, “no more delay.” I want you to also notice that John is told that the, “mystery of God is going to be fulfilled.” Did you catch that? Now, I said just a moment ago to leave room for mystery.

And when I said that to you earlier, I was using the word mystery in the way that you and I commonly think of the word mystery. To us, a mystery means something that is, no one knows. No one really understands. But you need to understand that when the Bible uses the word mystery, it has a different meaning.

The word mystery in the Bible refers to something that no one could know without God making it known. But in most cases, God has made it known. And so, you'll notice that he speaks here and talks about the fact that the mystery of God would be fulfilled and that how does that verse end there? At the end of verse seven? It says, “just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”

In other words, this has been foretold. So biblically a mystery is something that you and I could not know apart from God revealing it. Okay? That is the biblical definition of a mystery. So, in this case, when he says the mystery of God is going to be fulfilled, he's really talking about a two-pronged redemptive program that God has set in place, to bring about a final expression of wrath to those who have rejected his Son and also to usher in the kingdom of his Son, which of course he does during the millennial age. And John is now given some instruction as we go on in verse eight and following. He says,

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.”

And by the way, this is the reason I said earlier why we believe that that scroll, that the angel was holding, holds God's plan for the remaining judgements that are going to be poured out upon the earth.

It's bitter in his stomach because of the bitterness of the message. But it is sweet in his mouth because the Word of God is always sweet. Have you tasted of the Word of God? Do you know it's sweetness? Do you remember what the psalmist said? Let me show you this on the screen.

Psalm 119:103 ESV

¹⁰³“*How sweet are your words (the Psalmist says) to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*”

The psalmist says, sweeter than honey to my mouth and. The word of God is always sweet, but sometimes the message is bitter and this is the case, and that is why John's stomach was made sour. Verse 11,

¹¹ “*And I was told, You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.*”

Chapter 11. Now, as we get into chapter 11, you'll notice that it begins by saying,

¹ “*Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, (and I guess, for you and me that would be something like a yardstick) and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,”*”

All right. We need to talk a little bit about this idea of measuring the temple.

I'm sure you all know that. Remember, this is prophetic. This is speaking of the future. But I think you know, there is no temple right now. The Jews don't have a temple. They haven't had a temple since AD 70 when the Roman Army invaded Jerusalem breaking through the walls, destroying the city, and bringing down the temple. There hasn't been a temple since that time.

And you might be interested to find out that most Jews today aren't that concerned about it. There is a, there's a small group of very passionate Jews who are dedicated to the rebuilding of the temple. They are preparing for the rebuilding of the temple. They are building the implements, and the furniture and the pans and the altar. They're building these things in preparation for the temple.

In fact, I don't know if you knew, but there are priests who are preparing for the temple to be rebuilt so that they can regain and reinstitute the sacrificial system. But this is a very small percentage of Jews. The vast majority of the Jews don't care.

Well, you probably know that the majority of Jews today consider themselves to be atheist. Now, there are Orthodox Jews, who believe very strongly that the

temple, it will be rebuilt. But they believe Messiah is going to come back and rebuild the temple. I believe that is where the anti-Christ gets his foothold. And he in fact will be perhaps considered the Messiah by some.

But the prophet Daniel, tells us that the anti-Christ is going to make a covenant with the Jewish people for a period of time. And then, he's going to break that covenant halfway into the agreement. And then he is going to set up his own image in the temple and demand to be worshiped as God.

Now this is how we know that the temple will be rebuilt. And we know that. Building can happen pretty quickly in this day and age. But let me show you some of these passages from Daniel on the screen. First, from Daniel 9 27. It says,

Daniel 9:21 (ESV)

²¹ *“And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, (and he is referring specifically to the anti-Christ) and for half of the week (and the week there refers to seven years) he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”*

So, Daniel is prophesying of that period of time during the great tribulation when the anti-Christ will renege on his agreement with the Jews and will set up an abomination. And that abomination is his own image, which he will demand worship to. Then Daniel 11 goes on and it says,

Daniel 11:31 (ESV)

³¹ *“Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.”*

There you see that, once again, the forces of the anti-Christ will come together to take away the regular burnt offering, which will be re-established, I believe during the first part of the Great tribulation.

And then finally, Daniel chapter 12, verse 11 says,

Daniel 12:11 (ESV)

“And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.” (And you know that is roughly three and a half years)

So, the Jews will enjoy a period of time. This first three and a half years of the great tribulation period, with a restored, sacrificial system until three and a half years in, the enemy the anti-Christ will renege on that. Now, Jesus also spoke about this. Let me put this also on the screen from Matthew. We're doing a few different verses here from Matthew 24. And Jesus warned him, he said,

Mathew 24:15-16, 21 (ESV)

¹⁵ "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, (he's referring back to Daniel's prophecy, the very ones we read. He says), standing in the holy place (let the reader understand). ¹⁶ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."

And that's Jesus's way of saying that, that is the point. That midway point in the great tribulation where things really heat up. And then the Apostle Paul added this from Second Thessalonians chapter two.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (ESV)

³ "Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day (the day of the Lord) will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, (And of course, that is the Antichrist. He calls him here) the son of destruction ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple, (Notice that) of God (It's not just A temple. It is THE temple of God, according to Paul) proclaiming himself to be God."

So, from all of these passages, we know that the temple is going to be rebuilt. We know that. And we know that the anti-Christ will allow, through some, we don't know the means. But will make possible, is maybe a better way of saying it, the Jews to have a restored, sacrificial system, for a period of time, until he finally removes that by force and exalts himself proclaiming himself to be God and requiring worship. And of course, that's when the mark of the beast comes forth by which people are enabled to buy and sell.

So, John is told to measure the temple, and this is something that has happened in the Old Testament as well. But God tells him, or the Lord tells him, in verse two,

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.”

Now, I want you to notice here, that the number of days that John mentions that the two witnesses are going to prophesy during the great tribulation, is 1,260. Now, that's 30 days less than the number Daniel was given.

And Daniel, you remember, was given the time from when the sacrifice of the Jews commences. In other words, when the restored sacrificial system goes into place, until the anti-Christ puts a stop to it. Is 1,290 days, three and a half months. This number, which is just shy of that by 30 days, is the number of days that the two witnesses will prophesy.

So, it is just less than that, three and a half years. So, we're introduced to these characters, these individuals who are referred to as the two witnesses. Now, this is interesting, verse four, check this out,

⁴“These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands that stand before the Lord of the Earth.”

Now you need to know your Old Testament a little bit. Because if you do, you know that in the Book of Zacharia, he was given a vision of two olive trees. Who, and the, and of course the olive trees are where olive oil comes from, and the oil is a picture of the anointing or the flow of God's Holy Spirit. In Zacharia's vision, the two olive trees were two men named Joshua and Zerubbabel, who were critical in the rebuilding of the temple at that time, after the exile.

But here, the two trees refer to the two witnesses. And the picture that is being conveyed of two trees, is a picture of them receiving a continual and abundant supply of power and anointing from the Holy Spirit. And we're going to see how that plays out. Notice what it says about these two witnesses. It says,

⁵“And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes.” (That's pretty crazy) 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, (this is important) the beast that rises from the bottomless pit (and that surely refers to Satan himself), 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.”*

Now those are interesting statements. Are they not? This reference to the city where they are killed, which is symbolically called Sodom. What is Sodom symbolic for? Sexual immorality. He says that it's also symbolically referred to as Egypt. What is Egypt symbolically seen as, or for in the Word? Oppression and slavery. And yet it goes on to say, it tells us what the city is. It's the city where their Lord was crucified.

So, the two witnesses are going to be put to death in Jerusalem. All right, we can see that for sure. Verse nine,

⁹“*For three and a half days, some of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb.”*

In other words, they will be denied burial. You have to understand, this is to the Jewish mind, this was one of the worst curses to come upon an individual to be refused burial. The Jews were very, very careful about respecting someone's life in the way they buried the person. And the Jews didn't wait around. They buried them the same day they died. That was just tradition. But it was a very purposeful, and respectful act on their part. To leave someone unburied was to do the worst that you could do to someone in terms of cursing them, disrespecting them, and so forth.

But I want you to notice the response of the people of the Earth to the death of these two witnesses. It says,

¹⁰“*and those who dwell on the earth (verse 10) 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.”*

(But God always gets the last laugh). 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. ² 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. (Obviously due to the earthquake) Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.” (Doesn't mean they're going to be saved necessarily, and they were told here), ¹⁴“The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.”

Wow! This is just amazing. But of course, one of the big questions people always have to ask when we go through this section of Revelation is, who are the two witnesses? Well, you know how I feel about speculation. We simply don't know.

Here's the only thing we know about the two witnesses. Every noun that is used in the Greek when mentioning them is masculine in gender. That's all we know. We know they're men, but that's all we know. We don't know their identity. There's been, people have had all kinds of fun over the years saying, well, I think it's going to be and that's all good and fine, but at the end of the day, it's just speculation and nobody really knows. And if anybody ever tells you they know who the two witnesses are, tell them they're full of bologna. Okay.

John says verse 15,

¹⁵*“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, 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 shall reign forever and ever.”*

Anybody hear the Hallelujah Chorus going on in your head? I do. I hear the Messiah and the Hallelujah Chorus, and “He shall reign forever and ever.” Kind of a victory hymn that John is hearing in heaven.

And even though the bold judgements are still to come, heaven is already going through this victory hymn, the rejoicing because of the fact that God's Will is being established. God's Will is being poured out and so forth.

And verse 16 says,

¹⁶*“And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying,*

*“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.*

*18 The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.””*

Did you notice the prophets and the saints are going to be rewarded? The servants, the prophets, and the saints.

Who are the saints? Well, if you were raised Roman Catholic, you have an idea that probably came from Roman Catholic tradition, that the saints, or those whom the Roman Catholic Church has deemed to be saints because they have met certain criteria. First of all, they've got to be dead, and then there have to be miracles that are proven that are done in their name. And then there's all these things they have to attain to and so forth.

In the Bible, a saint is a saved person. If you are in Jesus Christ today, you are a saint. And you might be thinking to yourself, well, I don't know, I'm pretty far from a saint Pastor Paul. Well, it doesn't mean saintly. It doesn't mean perfect.

It means you've been set apart as a holy one. Yes, I said you, you are a holy one. And the word holy at its root means “other.” God is holy. Meaning he is “other”. God is like no one, or no thing, in all the universe. He is “other.” So, when the Word of God says to you, “*be holy for I am Holy,*” God is saying, be “other” for I am “other.”

What are you to be “other” from the world? The world has its ways. The world has its thoughts. The world has its beliefs. You and I are to be “other.” God says, be “other.” Don't live the way they live. Don't talk the way they talk. Don't think the way they think. Don't worship the way they worship. Be “other.” Be holy because you're a saint.

Pretty cool. I'm going to go ahead and just read verse 18. Here again,

*18 The nations raged, but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name, both small and great, (and look at this), and for
destroying the destroyers of the earth.”*

God is going to finally destroy those who destroyed the earth.

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, (and this is in heaven) and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple."

And this is a powerful statement that, because you'll remember that God told Moses how to build a replica of the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat of God. And God said, my presence will be there among my people. But it was just a replica. But he was told to, to build it with very specific dimensions and so forth, because it was meant to be a picture of what is in heaven.

Now John is seeing the real thing in heaven. He says the temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen. And this is a picture that God had not forgotten his people, Israel.

And the ark of the covenant is a symbol to Israel of the presence of God among them. And John said after this temple in heaven was open that,

19 There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail."

Awesome occurrences that are reminiscent of other times that the Lord revealed his presence, such as on Mount Sinai when He gave Moses the ten Commandments and how awesome that must have been. So great and incredible phenomena occurring here. And that's chapter 11.

And when we continue next time, we're going to get into chapter 12. So that's where we're going to actually end tonight. I know that, whenever we go through the book of Revelation there, are a lot of books in the Bible for which there's probably not a ton of devotional content.

Right now, I'm reading through the book of Leviticus in my own personal reading time. And I gotta tell you something about Leviticus. I have loved teaching through the book of Leviticus. Every time I've done it. I've done it three times now. I enjoyed it. I don't really enjoy reading it quickly.

Studying through it is very interesting, but Leviticus is just kind of one of those, you know, and this is how you're to do this offering, and this is how you're to do that. And it's very you get in reading and you don't end up with all kinds of warm fuzzies going, oh God, you love me so much, you know.

And it's a little bit like that as we go through some of these passages or chapters in the book of Revelation, because we are seeing the culmination of God's purpose to pour out his wrath upon the earth. And wrath is never one of those subject matters that we necessarily gravitate to naturally.

Because it's just, it conveys, I guess, an attitude or a picture of God, that we don't necessarily like to dwell upon. But these are important things to learn. And it is important, that we, as believers know and understand God's redemptive program from beginning to end. Starting with the creation of the universe. The creation of the man and the woman. Placing them in the garden in literally perfect circumstances. And then giving them an opportunity to exercise their free will.

So many times, people write to me and say, why did God put Satan in the garden? Why did he allow God? Or why did he allow Satan to be in the garden? Guys, He had to. He had to. God created the man and the woman in His own image, and that image is the freedom to choose your path.

There is no other being on earth other than human beings who are made in the image of God.

And that freedom had to be tested. If it were never tested, it would never be genuine. It would be a, like a gift unopened. So, Satan was used by God. Did he know that the man and the woman would choose badly? Yeah, he did. Well then why did he let that happen? Well, He thought it was worth it.

There's so many things we don't know. But it's all part of God's redemptive program and then, just everything as you read in your Bible, everything there forward; calling upon the nation of Israel, revealing Himself to them, expressing His holiness and His law, and then opening the Gospel to the Gentiles and all the things that we see in the Word of God that are going to be finalized in the last days. And I believe we are very close to these very time periods that we're reading about here.

I don't know how close. No one does, but the stage appears to be set. And I tell you, I've never seen the world in which we live become more broken. More crazy. We are literally living in a day and age when we are asked to acknowledge people's insanity, and call it normal. That's the world we live in today.

And it's, do you see it escalating? Do you see it going faster now? We're, it's like a snowball. The more it picks up as it goes down the hill the faster it goes.

And there's just, there's a movement today that is just moving toward this ultimate conclusion. And we see it happening and we all, you don't even have to be smart even to see it happening. You just have to open your eyes and there it is. It's happening all around us.

But God has a plan, and that's the thing that I want you to take away from the study of Revelation and frankly, the study of the Word at large, God has a plan and he's moving that plan according to his predetermined order.

And the purpose of His plan, and the goal of His plan is to restore. This wrath thing that we're reading about here in Revelation. That's not the end. That comes before the restoration. Then we begin to get into restoration where God restores. And he begins to make new. The Bible says he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There's one and all of these things that have been heaped on to God's creation, which he calls enemies, are slowly being eliminated.

And what's the last enemy to be eliminated? The Bible says the last enemy to be destroyed is going to be death itself. That's the final one. And we're all looking forward to that. Amen? I hope you guys are looking forward to that. Let's pray.

Lord, we see your plan. We see your purpose. And it has been revealed to us in ways that are undeniable through this inspired work, that you have given and protected for us called, the Bible. And we are so grateful Lord, because without it, we would be in the dark. But you have not only given us the understanding of these things. You have poured hope into our hearts.

Hope, that springs eternal and is seen most beautifully in this celebration that we have upcoming on Sunday, resurrection Sunday,

And we look forward to that celebration because we see your plan. We see it unfolding. And we rejoice together in the purposes of the Lord our God, coming to fruition.

Father, we thank you for this study tonight. We thank you for your Word. We thank you for your Holy Spirit who brings the Word to life and speaks to us of things eternal. We thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross. To pay the penalty of our sin that we might be born anew.

And we praise you for the opportunity to gather together, to fellowship, to pray with one another, and to rejoice together. And we commit the remainder of our time tonight to you. In the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

And all God's people said together. Amen. God bless you.