

## A SERIES ON REVELATION: is this the end?

Week 16 – where is God?

**Transition:** A lot of powerful and cataclysmic events happen between Revelation chapter 6 and the end of chapter 9. Devastation is heavy and it is rampant. Literally, half of the world has been killed by one disaster or another. People have been tormented by creatures that only appear in our worst nightmares. To say that it is a chaotic and traumatic time is a severe understatement. And yet, although words fall woefully short, how else can we picture today what will happen in the future? Despite all this, beginning with chapter 10, through His prophet John, God offers us a bit of a respite. He wants us to know that despite the madness, He still has everything under control.

**Context:** Many scholars believe that Revelation 11 is not merely the most difficult chapter to understand in the book of Revelation, but that it is also the most difficult in the entire Bible! The reason for this is simple enough: it is difficult to know which parts are to be understood literally and which are figurative, and likewise, many of the images (literal or figurative) can be understood a number of different ways. Take the temple of God mentioned in v1 for instance. Is he speaking of a literal or figurative temple? Was it one of the previous temples? Or is it possibly a new temple that will be built at some future time? Why are measurements not recorded? Does it include the temple grounds since people are included or is it just the temple proper? You get the idea. There are many legitimate questions. Because of this, let's all do our part to be open to various possible valid understandings that might be shared in the group.

### Opening Question:

- Have you ever witnessed mass hysteria? If so, what was it? How did it make you feel at the time? If you haven't ever witnessed mass hysteria firsthand, have you seen it second hand (such as watching what happened on 9/11 on TV.) If so, what was it? How did it make you feel at the time?
- Have you ever been through something terrifying or devastating and wondered where God was? Explain.

**Scripture/Storying:** Revelation 11

### Discipleship Questions:

- The passage starts with God telling John to measure the temple of God, the altar, and the ones who worship there. If you are one of the ones who are alive at this time, what will this imagery mean to you? What does it mean in your life today?
- What is your understanding for why God allows the nations (Gentiles) to trample the holy city?
- Why does God first call the two prophets His witnesses? How do the images of likening them to olive trees and lampstands help you understand their role? If you are alive at this time, how important would hearing from these prophets be to you? Explain your answer.
- Describe the prophets as well as what their ministry will be like (what they say/do). Why is the "world" against them? Share a time when you stood up/were outspoken for God. Why did you make a stand? How did it turn out?
- Does God speak to His people today? If so, in what way(s)? Share a time when you were certain that God spoke to you (even if His voice was inaudible). What did you learn from it? What might someone else learn from it?
- Why do you think the world is celebrating the death of the two prophets? Have you ever witnessed people celebrating evil/wickedness (that they perceived as goodness)? If so, describe it. How do you think followers of Jesus should respond to evil today?
- After the prophets are resurrected, they rise up to heaven. Then there is a powerful earthquake which destroys part of the city, kills many, and terrifies the rest who likewise glorify the one true God. What do you make of this? How will you apply truth from this to your life?