

Session 8 Prophetic Ministry in the End Times (Rev. 10-11)

For answers to fill-in-the-blanks spaces and for *additional study material pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Revelation 10:1-11:13 is an angelic explanation (parenthetical section) that follows after the worldwide crisis described in Revelation 9. Angelic explanations answer questions such as “What happens to the saints?” in the crisis described in the chronological section that it follows.
- B. In the crisis in Revelation 9, demons will kill one-third of the earth, leaving many in deception and confusion. There will be more demonized people on earth than at any time in history. The earth will be dominated by four strongholds—murder, sorcery, immorality, and theft (Rev. 9:21).
¹⁵So the four angels...were released to kill a third of mankind...²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent...that they should not worship demons...²¹They did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or thefts. (Rev. 9:20-21)
- C. There will be many false signs at that time (Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 18:23; 19:20; cf. 2 Thes. 2:8-9).
⁴Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵Many will come...and will deceive many...¹¹Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many... ²⁴For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24)
- D. In this angelic explanation (Rev. 10:1-11:13), God assures His people that He will release prophetic direction and great power to help them. They will understand God’s heart and plans.
In Revelation 10, God promised to release new, significant prophetic understanding that will help people avoid deception and overcome confusion.
In Revelation 11, the two witnesses will preach with great power and release God’s judgments against the Antichrist’s systems during the final 3½ years of this age.
- E. There will be a great outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21; Eph. 4:11-13; Rev. 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24). All believers will receive prophetic dreams and visions, etc. The Lord released a “down payment” on Joel’s prophecy on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16). Yet it was not completely fulfilled in Peter’s generation. For example, the signs such as the sun and moon growing dark with blood, fire, and smoke did not occur. In Acts 2, the Spirit rested on only 120 believers in *one city*. The fullness of Joel’s prophecy requires a *global dimension*.
- F. One of the greatest needs in the end times will be the need for prophetic understanding (Jer. 23:20; 30:24; Dan. 11:33-35; 12:3, 9-10; Joel 2:28-29; Mal. 4:5; Mt. 17:11; Acts 2:17-18; Rev. 11:3-6; 3:18; 13:18; 17:9; cf. Isa. 28:19-23; 43:18-20; Dan. 9:22).
³³Those of the people who understand shall instruct many...³⁵And some of those of understanding shall fall [martyrdom], to refine them [believers], purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time. (Dan. 11:33-35)

II. THE GLORY OF THE MIGHTY ANGEL (REV. 10:1-3)

- A. John's description of a mighty angel with authority gives insight into aspects of God's glory that will be released in the end times. He saw three mighty angels in Revelation (5:2; 10:1; 18:2).

¹I saw another mighty angel...clothed with a cloud. A rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. ²He had a little book open in his hand. He set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ³and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. (Rev. 10:1-3)

1. *Mighty angel*: the release of the might or power of the Spirit
2. *Robed in a cloud of glory*: the release of God's manifest glory
3. *Rainbow around his head*: the release of God's promises and mercy
4. *Face shines like the sun*: the release God's radiance and strength
5. *Feet are like pillars of fire*: the release of God's holy judgment to establish love
6. *Feet on the sea and land*: the release God's inheritance for His people
7. *Cries out like a roaring lion*: the release of prophetic prayer in the boldness of a lion

- B. The seven thunders prophecies (Rev. 10:2-4)

²He [mighty angel] had a little book open in his hand...³When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices [messages]. ⁴When the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice...saying, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." (Rev. 10:2-4)

- C. This open little book in the angel's hand is not the same as the scroll taken by Jesus (Rev. 5:7). The little book may contain part of the prophetic information contained in the Father's scroll.

An open book reveals that the contents in it are knowable. The angel may have read its contents to release the seven thunders.

John understood the seven messages enough to be able to write them. He was told to seal them until the end times. This indicates that these seven prophetic messages will not be made known until the end times.

When a book is "opened," it implies that its prophetic information is being made known. When it is "sealed," it implies that its information is kept private until later.

- D. This was similar to what happened to Daniel when he sealed up his prophecies (Dan. 12:4, 9).

⁴Daniel...seal the book until the time of the end...⁷He [angel] held up his right hand...and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time [3½ years]...⁹For the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end...¹⁰None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. (Dan. 12:4-10)

- E. Daniel 10-12 is a parallel passage to Revelation 10-13. Daniel sealed up prophetic information with an angel of similar glory and a similar oath related to the same 3½ years (Dan. 12:4-10).

III. THE END-TIME RELEASE OF THE SEVEN THUNDER MESSENGERS

A. The angel swore by God's person that there should be no more delay

⁵The angel whom I saw...raised up his hand to heaven ⁶and swore by Him who lives forever and ever...that there should be delay no longer. ⁷but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished (Rev. 10:5-7)

No more delay: the second coming of Jesus is described in the next chronological section (Rev. 11:15).

*⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—
⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15:51-52)*

The mystery of God finished: includes Jesus returning to rule the earth with His people

¹⁵The seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever... ¹⁸and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints...and should destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev. 11:15-18)

B. John had to assimilate fully the prophetic message that he had been given (Rev. 10:8-11).

⁸The voice which I heard from heaven...said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel..." ⁹I went to the angel and said, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." ¹⁰Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. ¹¹And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." (Rev. 10:8-11)

John ate the prophetic scroll similar to Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:10-3:3). The principle being taught is that God's messengers must take time to digest God's prophetic purposes.

¹Son of man...eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. ²So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. ³He said, "Son of man, feed...and fill your stomach with this scroll..." ⁴He said, "Go to Israel and speak with My words to them." (Ezek. 3:1-4)

John was to eat it and then prophesy again. Some assume that John prophesied the remaining contents found in the book of Revelation (Rev. 11-22). Thus, the essence of what John saw was the Antichrist (Rev. 11-13) that Daniel prophesied about (Dan. 7-12).

C. *Sweet:* speaks of the message of victory, salvation, justice, and deliverance for the oppressed

D. *Bitter:* speaks of the message of judgment that also brings persecution to the messengers

IV. THE TRIBULATION TEMPLE AND THE TRAMPLING OF JERUSALEM (REV. 11:1-2)

- A. The paradox in the tribulation temple is that it is God’s temple, yet the Antichrist will use it. This temple is referred to as the “temple of God” (2 Thes. 2:3-4; Rev. 11:1).

¹I 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. ²But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles.” (Rev. 11:1-2)

The tribulation temple will be built by unbelieving Jews and desecrated by the Antichrist in context to the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 11:1-2; 13:12-18; cf. Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31, 36-37; 12:11). This temple is not the millennial temple.

¹⁵When you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... (Mt. 24:15)

³The son of perdition [Antichrist], ⁴who...exalts himself above all that is called God... so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thes. 2:3-4)

The millennial temple will be built by Jesus (Ezek. 37:26-28; 40-48; cf. Isa. 2:3; 60:13; Jer. 33:18; Joel 3:18; Mic. 4:2; Hab. 2:20; Hag. 2:7-9; Zech. 6:12-15; 14:16-21; Mal. 3:1-3).

- B. **Measure the temple:** John was told to measure the temple, altar, and its worshipers. To measure something spiritually means to evaluate it carefully and to discern its quality and purpose.

Amos saw a plumb line in God’s hand indicating that He “measured” Israel’s obedience.

⁸The LORD said, “Amos, what do you see?” I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said: “Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

During Belshazzar’s royal feast in Babylon, a finger appeared and wrote on the wall that God had weighed or “measured” their kingdom and found it lacking (Dan. 5:27).

²⁶This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; (Dan. 5:26-27)

We are to measure or carefully weight the issues related to God’s purpose for the tribulation temple including what God-fearing Jews will do related to it in the end times. This will require insight from God into the various paradoxes and tensions related to it.

- C. God has a purpose for unbelieving yet God-fearing Jews being involved in various temple activities. We are not to dismiss all their activities in the temple as worthless. However, the only way of salvation for these God-fearing Jews is *through Jesus*, not through their temple activities.
- D. The temptation of some will be to criticize *all* the activities related to the tribulation temple, while the temptation of others will be to accept *all* these activities as being good and godly.

E. The city of Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles (Rev. 11:2).

²Leave 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 forty-two months. (Rev. 11:2)

F. ***Tread the city underfoot:*** To be trodden under foot is symbolic of being conquered and crushed to the ground. Grapes were trodden under foot (Judges 9:27; Isa. 16:10; 63:2).

Jesus prophesied that Jerusalem would be surrounded and trampled by Gentile armies. This was partially fulfilled in AD 70, and it will completely fulfilled in the end times.

²⁰When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

²¹Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains...²⁴They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles. (Lk. 21:20-24)

¹⁵Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation”...¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Mt. 24:15–21)

The trampling of Jerusalem includes its siege and capture by the armies of the Antichrist.

²I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...half of the city shall go into captivity... (Zech. 14:2)

²...when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem...³all nations of the earth are gathered against it. (Zech. 12:2-3)

G. ***42 months:*** This is the same 3½ year time frame as 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), *times, time, and half a time* (Rev. 12:14), and 42 months (Rev. 13:5). There are eight scriptures and four phrases that describe the final 3½ years before Jesus returns—1260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6); 42 months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5); *time, times and half a time* (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7) and the *middle of the week* (Dan. 9:27). Different terminology is used so that the meaning is clear and no one would easily be able to dismiss this significant prophetic time frame as symbolic.

H. In Revelation 11, Jerusalem is called the *holy city* (v. 2), the *great city*, *Sodom*, and *Egypt* (v. 8).

²They will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months...⁸the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (Rev. 11:2, 8)

Holy city: Jerusalem is the only city upon which the Lord placed His name and glory.

Great city: Jerusalem is great in its importance and prominence in God’s plan.

Sodom: Jerusalem will be called Sodom because of the *perversion* that will occur there.

Egypt: Jerusalem will be called Egypt because of the *oppression* that will occur there.

V. THE TWO WITNESSES (REV. 11:3-6, 10)

- A. The two witnesses are powerful prophets who will release God’s judgments on the Antichrist.
³I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophecy one thousand two hundred and sixty days...⁵And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies...⁶These 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. (Rev. 11:3-6)
- B. The two witnesses will release God’s judgments on the Antichrist’s empire in a way that will be similar to what Moses did on Pharaoh’s empire. The plagues of Egypt are the prototype of the end-time judgments. The confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh gives us insight into the confrontation between the two witnesses and the Antichrist. The miracles done by Elijah and Moses will be done by the two witnesses—miracles like these were referred to by the prophets (Mic. 7:15; cf. Isa. 10:22-25; 11:12-16; 30:30; Jer. 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Ezek. 38:22; Joel 2:30).
- C. Food was supernaturally provided in God’s plan in the days of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (who fed the 5,000). This may happen again as indicated in Revelation 12:13-17.
- D. The two witnesses will be killed and then raised from dead before all the nations (Rev. 11:7-10).
⁷When they finish their testimony, the beast [Antichrist] ...will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem] which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. (Rev. 11:7-10)
- E. The nations will rejoice at their death to the degree they rage against Jesus’ taking them over. They will see the two witnesses as those who tormented them.
¹¹Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹²And 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. ¹³In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Rev. 11:11-13)

VI. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (e.g., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?