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REVELATION

The Interlude – Part 2

Revelation 11:1-14

I. Interlude

a. A Bitter-Sweet Faith

- i. The dichotomy of loss for the Christian – dear friend processing the death of a loved one – learned that joy and pain can coexist – both things can be true
- ii. Principal in scripture – To whom much is given, much is required
 1. Ask what I asked our Wednesday night group – what is the most valuable thing you have on this earth, the thing you love the most – to be a parent and a grandparent is to experience great joy and great pain
 2. The more blessings we are given, the more gifts, the more responsibility – the more pain, the more heartache
 3. King David is a perfect example – unwilling to sit on the sidelines – being used by God comes at a cost
- iii. As God grows our faith and we become more like Christ the joy and the pain only intensifies

b. That's what we see in this interlude between the 6th trumpet and the 7th trumpet

- i. Chapter 10 – 11 mark the halfway point of Revelation and the halfway point in the 7 years of tribulation that follows the rapture of the church
- ii. Chapter 10 John saw a messenger clothed with a cloud, a rainbow on his head, his face was like the sun, feet like pillars of fire, a voice like the roar of a lion, and a scroll in his hand
 1. With one foot set on the sea and the other set on the land – he reaches to heaven and swears “by the one 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, “There will no longer be a delay, in the days when the 7th angel will blow his trumpet, then the ministry of God will be completed – finished – accomplished
 2. Just like the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah – John is told to take the scroll from the hands of the messenger and eat it – and the scroll was sweet on his lips and bitter in his stomach

- c. The message of Revelation is bittersweet. The life of a Christian is bittersweet. Triumph and heartache – rejoicing and mourning – joy and pain – celebration and suffering
 - i. And the more we share the heart of Christ, the deeper that joy and pain becomes

Rev 11:1 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 forty-two months.

II. The Temple

- a. Chapter 11 begins with John given the instruction to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there
 - i. This would have been strange for John to see because the Jewish temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans 25 years earlier
 - ii. This means that at some point a new temple will be built in Jerusalem
- b. The Jewish temple has played a vital role in worship for the nation of Israel beginning with the tabernacle in Moses time
 - i. It was their central place of worship – the place where their sins were atoned for, covered by the blood of their sacrifices – a place where the presence of God dwelt behind the veil in the Holy of Holies
 - ii. The first temple was built by King Solomon on Mount Mariah in 1050 BC, but it was destroyed 400 years later when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the city, capturing the people of Israel
 - iii. 70 years after the Babylonian invasion, Joshua and Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple
 - iv. Then in 20 BC – 20 years before the coming of Christ, King Herod began a decades long project to expand the temple in hopes that he would find favor with the Jewish people
 1. This was the temple that Jesus taught His disciples in front of and told them in Matthew 24 – “not one stone will be left standing”
 - v. And that prophecy came to pass – history tells us the temple was burned during a Roman invasion in 70 AD – and the fire burned so hot that the gold melted in the temple and began seeping through the cracks in the stones.
 1. The soldiers, not wanting to miss out on the opportunity, began to tear down the temple stone by stone, to get to the gold
- c. God was in complete control of all these events – the condition of the temple reflected the condition of the hearts of the Jewish people and their relationship with the Lord
 - i. When their hearts were right towards to the Lord the temple operated as it should – but when they turned their hearts from Him the temple was defiled and destroyed
 - ii. Interesting that in Jerusalem there is no temple on the temple mount today – instead there is a Muslim Mosque – we know it as the Dome of the Rock
 1. God has prevented the rebuilding of the temple to this day – a reflection of their rejection of the one true Messiah
- d. But, as we see in chapter 11, the temple will be rebuilt
 - i. Why hasn't it been built? The temple mount is under the control of the Muslims. It would take a diplomatic miracle for the Muslims to allow the Jews to rebuild the temple.
 - ii. Who could possibly convince the Muslims to allow the Jewish people to rebuild their temple?
 1. Do you know what event marks the beginning of 7 years of tribulation?
Dan 9:27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

2. When the anti-Christ appears, he will bring about peace between Israel and the Arabs. A peace treaty will be signed and that will pave the way to the temple being rebuilt
3. There's still a problem – the Dome of the Rock. The Muslim's won't simply let it be destroyed.
 - a. If the temple was built to scale using what is believed to be the center of the Holy of Holies as a reference point – there would be room for both structures. The Dome of the Rock would be in the temple's outer courts
4. What did we read in verse 2? Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it for it has been given to the gentiles
5. After 3 ½ years the anti-Christ will break the treaty, enter the temple, sit on the throne and demand to be worshipped – an event scripture calls the Abomination of Desolation

³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

⁴ These are the two olive trees (Spirit Empowered) and the two lampstands (Bearing Witness just like the churches) standing before the God of the earth. 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.

III. The Witnesses

a. Who Are These Witnesses?

- i. They are quite possibly Elijah and Moses
- ii. 2 Kings 1 – Per the Lord's direction, Elijah pronounced judgement on King Ahaziah for seeking guidance from false gods – King Ahaziah sent 50 of his men to bring back Elijah – in *verse 10 we read If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!* Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men. At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, this is what the king says, 'Come down at once!'" "If I am a man of God," Elijah replied, "may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men. So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. "Man of God," he begged, "please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!"
 1. Then in 1 Kings 17 Elijah stops the rain for around 3 ½ years – 1,277 days
- iii. Moses is associated with the plagues and just like Elijah he was with Jesus at the mount of transfiguration
 1. Consider what these men represent – Moses was given the law, Elijah was a prophet
 2. What did Jesus say in *Matt 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."*

3. ***Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”***
4. The law and the prophets bear witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - a. The sacrificial system, the priesthood, the moral law, the tabernacle, it all points to our Savior Jesus Christ
- b. Let’s move from speculation to what we know for sure -
 - i. They are clothed in sackcloth – sackcloth was a cloth made out of camel hair or goat hair – we’re not talking cashmere or cotton or silk – imagine a shirt made out of Brillo pads and you’ll get the idea. Great for sacks, not great for people.
 1. Why would anyone wear something made from something as uncomfortable as goats hair? It was a symbol of mourning often after a death. After the death of Abner, David instructed his company of men to put on sackcloth. It was a sign of great sorrow and pain
 2. It was also the attire of repentance – In a demonstration of repentance someone would put on sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. (As we see when the people of Nineveh repented)
 - ii. ***2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.***
 1. God does not take delight in the destruction of the wicked. His love for every individual is greater than we can possibly understand. But His perfect love is inseparable from His perfect righteousness.
 - a. All too often we look at the world with apathy or bitterness - “How unfortunate for them, at least I have my ticket.”
 - b. Or we fall on the opposite of God and think Him cruel because of His judgement on an unbelieving world”
 2. Both extremes miss the heart of Christ
 - iii. Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem crying out - *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together; as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.*
- c. In a culture of comfort, it becomes increasingly difficult to put on the sackcloth
 - i. We run from pain and discomfort. We don’t want to hurt, and we don’t want our kids to hurt. So, we do everything we can to set up this perfectly painless and protected life.
 1. Today we often barricade ourselves in our homes – not letting others in too close and not letting ourselves get too close to others.
 - ii. Consider the mind of Christ - The man of sorrows - Jesus wept over the coming judgement of Israel, He wept over their unbelief
 1. As it was with His followers - Paul wished himself accursed from the Lord if that meant his brothers would be saved
 2. When Barnabas and Paul preached the gospel in Lystra and healed a man paralyzed from birth the crowds missed the point completely and started worshipping them as gods. Barnabas and Paul were appalled at what they saw, and they tore their robes.

- iii. People often ask – “Why is God revealing to us, His church, what will take place after we are gone?” – so that His revelation will be sweet to our mouths but bitter as we digest it.
 - 1. When that happens – when we are sickened by where our loved ones are headed – we are moved to share – just like Ezekiel, just like Jeremiah, just like Paul, and just like John – how can we know what the future holds for the lost and never tell them how to be found?
- d. Here’s the balance - If anyone seeks to harm them fire comes from their mouth and devours them
 - i. Why did Jesus come to earth? “To bear witness to the truth” and in 1 John -
 - ii. (ESV) *1 John 3:8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*
 - iii. *John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*
 - 1. That’s exactly what the Lord is in the process of doing during the Great Tribulation – He is dealing with sin once and for all
 - iv. He has already dealt with the sins of those who have put their trust in Him at the cross
 - 1. The prophet Micah spoke of this in (ESV) *Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*
 - 2. *Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*
 - 3. The author of Hebrews reminds us of God’s promise in *Heb 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*”
 - 4. *Col 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.*
 - a. But many will reject Christ and His work on the cross
 - v. Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, ends with this proclamation from the Lord – *Mal 4:1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.*

⁷ When they finish their testimony, (not a moment earlier) 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 (sexual immorality) and Egypt (idolatry), where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ Then 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. ¹⁰ And 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.

IV. The Witnesses Killed

- a. People rejoice because the messengers have been killed but the message doesn't change, and it doesn't carry any less weight
 - i. You can kill the messenger but that doesn't change the truth of the message
 - ii. You can ignore me, ignore people who care about you, cut them out of your life – discredit them with your selective research, but killing the messenger of the gospel doesn't change the truth of the gospel
 - iii. They killed the prophets and their prophecies still came true. They killed Jesus and every promise He made came to pass
 1. We can avoid going to the doctor to avoid from hearing our diagnosis, but it doesn't change our condition
 2. Jesus said I haven't come for the well but for the sick, because those who are well don't need a physician – no one is well! Only those who think they are because they have silenced all the messengers in their life.
- b. Maybe these people thought God had been defeated, they were very wrong

¹¹ Now 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. 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 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. ¹⁴ The second woe has passed. Take note: The third woe is coming soon!

- c. *and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven*
 - i. A first in Revelation – not harder hearts, not an increase in sin, not a plea for death – they gave glory to God
 - ii. Rev 14 – that is the message of the angel - "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth..."- the fruit of their witness and their final reward -
- d. Come Up Here
 - i. Those wonderful words