

The 2nd Interlude!

Revelation 10-11:14

In the next week or two we will begin hearing about players reporting to training camp for the next NFL season to begin. I love football. Each position is specialized so much that you can't use your pro bowl quarterback to kick a game winning field goal. Your all star running back can't serve on the offensive line.

I watch every Vikings game and enjoy the half time analysis. Today is halftime! Join me as we open up to Revelation 10 and get our halftime update on the tribulation.

(viii) The 2nd Interlude Revelation 10-11:14

Now, just like in a halftime show as we look at the analysis there will be some colorful language as John describes what he is seeing and how he is engaged in the story. There is a lot of symbolism in this section of the book, but let's work our way through it.

Revelation 10:1-4, "Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the

sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

John writes, "Then I saw" which indicates that he is in a new vision. In this vision he is not around the throne of heaven but on earth. Here he sees a huge angel with one foot on the sea and one on land. This isn't like some guy standing on the beach with one foot in the water.

The symbolism that we find here is first, the rainbow represents God's covenant of mercy in the midst of judgement. Which is great because the lions roar in Scripture represents judgement just as thunder does.

The 7 of the 7 thunders represents completeness. So, this interlude is preparing for the final judgement, the 7th trumpet of judgement.

Now, John hears what the seven thunders say and is about to write it down and God tells him not to write it down. God has not revealed all truth to us yet, only some, only as much as we need up to this point.

This reflects the limited wisdom of mankind. We think we know better than God, but He is the only one with all knowledge. The arrogance of mankind also demonstrates our ignorance because we don't know as much as God.

Revelation 10:5-7, "Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

The angel makes this great declaration, "There will be no more delay!" The time has come for the final judgement, the 7th trumpet. The tension just keeps building toward this final release of God's judgement upon mankind.

Then we see this word, Mystery. We think of mysteries as a crime or a puzzle to be solved, but in Scripture a mystery is a truth not yet revealed.

One commentator believes that the truth that is about to be revealed is the prophesied 1000 year reign of Christ.

It's interesting that immediately after God tells John not to reveal what the seven thunders said that we have this teaser about the mystery, the truth that is about to be revealed.

Revelation 10:8-11, "Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies 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 asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'" 10 I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

So, John is told to eat the scroll. This, to us, sounds a little strange, but look at:

Ezekial 2:9-3:3, “Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, 10 which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. 1 And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.” 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

3 Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.”

OK, so it happened to Ezekial, what does it mean. Eating the scroll, I believe, means this:

Eating the scroll symbolized God’s message being internalized by John, then what he writes isn’t his words but God’s. This message in Revelation is first sweet because we, as believers, are safe but as you realize your safety you also realize that those outside of Christ are in danger. Thus, it sours the stomach.

John is then told to continue to write the prophecy.

Before we move into chapter 11 let’s look at this comment by Paul in:

1 Timothy 4:1, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”

Keep this in mind as we walk through these verses in chapter 11.

King Solomon built the 1st temple in Jerusalem which stood until it was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar.

After the exile Zerubbabel built the 2nd temple. It was this temple that Ezra returned and restored worship in during the same time Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Later King Herod expanded the courtyard around the temple so the temple became known as Herod’s temple or the 3rd temple.

This temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD following the rebellion of Israel. John wrote Revelation in 95-96 AD, around 25 years after the temple had been destroyed.

Revelation 11:1-2, “I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the

temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. 2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.”

Now, imagine being John, Jewish by heritage, now being asked to measure the temple. Why is this significant? It means there is a temple to be measured. This will be the 4th temple.

We know that the rebuilding of the temple is a huge sign of the coming tribulation.

Daniel 9:26-27, “After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 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.”

We could do an entire series on these 2 verses. This is the passage known for the 70 weeks of Daniel. The

point I want to show you here is that the anti-Christ will make the peace treaty for 7 years and at the middle of that 7 years he will cause an abomination of desolation which will end the sacrifices being offered in this temple. The 70th week of Daniel is the 7-year Tribulation.

Paul writes about this in:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

In Ezekial 40 Ezekial was told to measure the temple in the same manner as John is told to measure it. This is interesting because in Ezekial 38-39 we are told about an attempted invasion of Israel by Russian, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Libya and others that will take place just before the 7-year tribulation which will fail because of a miraculous intervention of God.

This failed invasion paves the way for anti-Christ to step in as the peacemaker.

If we were to see the building of the temple begin, we would understandably get very excited knowing that the time is almost upon us. But the rebuilding of the temple does not reflect a return to God for Israel. We know the final sacrifice has been made so the sacrifices in this new temple will only be works of man.

What is the real temple? You know, what is it?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

We are now the house of God! God is not off in a temple being served by priests any longer. Do you see how much better this is?

I'll comment on the 42 months as we move on.

Revelation 11:3-6, "And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth." 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and

devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want."

7-year timeline

We are now introduced to the 2 witnesses. They are called the 2 olive trees and 2 lampstands. Zechariah 4 records Zechariah's vision which included the 2 olive trees and 2 lampstands.

The connection between the olive tree and the lampstand is that the lamps burnt olive oil and when connected to the olive tree it gives them an eternal source of energy.

So, who are these witnesses? Some commentators speculate that they are Moses & Elijah while others speculate Enoch and Elijah since neither died but were taken up into heaven without dying. But that is just speculation. We don't know who they are since they are not named.

I suspect they are two people God calls and sets apart for this very purpose. They are not named, but

can you imagine if they were? If John had named them here, wouldn't they then become targets before God's protective hand were to come upon them.

Here is what we do know. They will prophecy for 1,260 days. They are preaching, they are speaking truth, they are declaring holiness, and this really ticks the world off. These 2 men are globally hated!

These 2 witnesses are putting the world on trial. In Jewish culture it took 2 witnesses to bring a charge against someone. Here God provides the 2 witnesses.

Notice also the similarity their ministry has to Jesus'.

Jesus had a 3-year ministry after which He was killed, the earth shakes and 3 days later, He rose. Then later Jesus ascended into heaven. Now read this:

Revelation 11:7-12, "Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them

burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on."

It is hard to understand if the 2 witnesses were active during the first or second half of the tribulation. I have wrestled with this question a lot this week. If they were active during the second half of the tribulation I have to ask, "what were they doing during the first half of the tribulation?"

Regardless of when they serve, we know they do serve. And just like Jesus, they could not be killed until their mission was accomplished.

When they are killed can you imagine the scene? The news cameras are on them 24/7, celebrations break out and people are so joyed by their death that they

give gifts like it is some kind of Christmas. It's actually the anti-Christmas.

It's not too hard to imagine the press comments on this scene, is it? Maybe that is a sign that we aren't too far away.

Now, can you imagine being the reporter on duty when the bodies start to twitch, then they stand up. The terror of this moment will be overwhelming. The entire world will be watching this. Then they hear God's voice, and the 2 witnesses rise up into the sky while the whole world watches.

I want to see this!!

Revelation 11:13-14, "At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon."

And there it is, the 2nd woe is finally complete.