

Well, there's no doubt about it – the book of Revelation is a book that people react to in very different ways... Since we've begun this series:

- some people have said to me “I'm really loving this series on Revelation – the teaching is opening it up for me, and helping me to understand it, and I'm loving it.”
- And some others have said “I'm not enjoying church at the moment – I reckon we'd be better off **without** the book of Revelation.”...

And that's pretty much always been the attitudes of those who hear the book of Revelation... And that's why most preachers will never venture into it, and very **rarely** will someone dare take a church through the whole **book** of Revelation... I'll be honest with you: I reckon our numbers have dropped off a bit **here** since we began this series...

But the Lord has told us, that we'll be blessed by reading it, and we'll be blessed by hearing it, and so we're going to keep pressing on, because I believe The Lord's word is true, and we **will** be blessed by studying this book... **And** I refuse to leave anything out – no matter how harsh it may sound to our delicate ears, we **can't** leave anything out, because in Chapter 22, there is a warning for those who do....

So, it may be tough going, but Jesus commanded us: ^{Matthew}
22:37..... **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**

And that's what we're going to be doing today – Loving the Lord with our minds, as we wrestle with Revelation 10 & 11...

Revelation 10-11:14 (ESV)

The Angel and the Little Scroll

10 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. ² He had a little scroll open in his hand. 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. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 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." ⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶ and 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, ⁷ but 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.

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

The Two Witnesses

11 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, 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."

⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. 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, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit 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. ⁹ For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, ¹⁰ and those who dwell on the earth 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. 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. ¹² 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. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

¹⁴ The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

Let's have a little recap:

The Apostle John, had a vision. And in the Spirit, he was taken to the throne room of Heaven. And there, Jesus was handed a scroll, sealed with 7 seals. And this scroll contains God's plan for history. And Jesus was the only one who was worthy to break the seals.

And as the 7 seals were broken, we were given something like a table of contents, revealing a little hint of what's going to come through, in the rest of the Revelation.

After the 7 seals, were 7 trumpets...

And these 7 trumpets reveal God's judgment of the world in greater detail... So far (in our studies), 6 trumpets have been blown, and by the end of today's message, we will see what the 7th trumpet represents.

The final 3 trumpets – trumpets 5, 6 & 7, are **also** called the 3 woes, because (from the perspective of the ungodly) they are so terrible.

In a couple of weeks time, we'll come to the 7 bowls, which will reveal God's judgment in even greater detail...

And so (as I explained last week) we have to understand, that the Book of Revelation, is **not** a 'start to finish' sequence of events – it describes the **same** events, several times, in different ways...

*And last week I told you how Phillip Jenson uses the analogy of the instant replay that we have with our sporting events, and I reckon that's a good analogy... In footy, somebody makes a spectacular try, and we don't only see it **once** on the*

tv – they show it 4; 5; 6 times, from different angles, shot with different cameras... Each time we're seeing something different, but it's recording the one event... And that's what we have in the book of Revelation...

And that's what's happening here now... Between trumpets 6 and 7, we are given another camera angle. Alright, so what are the angles we have so far:

- The **7 seals** gave us a brief overview, of what's going to happen in the book of Revelation, and we caught a little glimpse of the suffering of Christians....
- The **7 trumpets** tell us in more detail, about the judgment that is coming upon the world, and it focuses on the impact that it will have on the **ungodly**...
- But now we get a different camera angle again: What are Christians **doing**, during this time? What are God's witnesses **doing**, as God pours out His wrath upon the world??? I'll tell you what they're doing: What do you think witnesses would be doing? – they're witnessing ...

They're preaching. They're telling the world that these woes – these **disasters** – are God's wrath against the sinner, and that they should repent while there is still time... And (of course) they're preaching the grace and the mercy of God, for all who will repent, because that has always been, the message of the preacher....

But how do the ungodly respond to this preaching? Well, they hate it, and they treat God's faithful witnesses, very badly.

Just like Israel, during the plagues of Egypt, were treated more harshly by their slave masters (they worked them even harder),,,,, Well, the ungodly harden their hearts against God, and God's faithful witnesses get the blame for all of their suffering, and so Christians become public enemy No. 1, and they are hated more vehemently, and treated more violently.

So, Chapter 10 begins with a mighty angel, (who's obviously sent by God), with a **little scroll open in his hand**. And John hears **the seven thunders**, But we don't know what they said, because he's told not to write it down... There are some things, that we are not meant to know about the future.

We're not meant to know the hour or the day (It's going to be a surprise). We aren't meant to know every little detail of how the end of the world is all going to unfold... If we **were** meant to know these things, God would have told us (very plainly). But He hasn't. And so there **are some** very important lessons for us to learn from the Revelation, but let's not spend our every waking moment, trying to work out what every single detail means... Because even if we were to understand completely, every single word of the Revelation, we still won't have a full picture of God's plan, because he's chosen not to reveal everything.

Righto.

At this point, the angel swears that there will be no more delay, and that once the 7th trumpet gets blown, "**the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to His servants the prophets**"... Alright,

when the 7th trumpet gets blown, God will be revealing to us, a glimpse of the final scene:

- of the resurrection of the righteous;
- the reward of the righteous;
- Jesus coming in His Kingdom; and
- the judgment of the dead

We won't be shown **much** of it at this stage, but we will catch a glimpse of it.

But we're not there yet. We're only up to V8.

John is told to take the scroll from the angel. He asked for it to be given to him, but the angel said, "No, you've got to take it. And eat it." And he did. And it tasted sweet in his mouth, but then his stomach was made bitter...

In the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel had a similar experience, but without the bitterness.

In Ezekiel 3, God said to Ezekiel... **Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.**" And Ezekiel says: ² **So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat.**

³ **And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it."** Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. ⁴ **And he said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them.**

The image here is very clear: the duty of every disciple of Jesus, has **always** been to be a witness for Him. How are we witnesses? By devouring the word of God, and then speaking

the word of God to the world. If you're not regularly reading your Bible, you **should** be... Do you know what Greek word is used here for "scroll" βιβλίον (biblion), from which we get our word "Bible"...

John was given the word of God. **We** have been given the word of God, and that is what we are to take into our inner being, and that is what we are to tell to the world...

And it is sweet in our mouth... Oh, how wonderful it is to take it in, and know the grace and the mercy of God. How sweet it is, to know that we've been saved, and we will be with our Lord in glory.... The Gospel is **truly** good news... Sweet as sweet can be... Relief of burdens; filled with hope and peace and joy... Sweetness...

But then as we digest this book, there is a bitterness to it...

I gotta tell ya, since we've gotten into this section of Revelation, and as I've prepared and preached these messages, there has been a bitterness in my stomach... Because the sweetness – the salvation of God's faithful, is accompanied by the torment of the wicked...

And I suspect that's why some people **love** the book of Revelation so much – because they **only** take in the sweetness... or maybe they don't love like God loves, and the destruction of the wicked doesn't faze them any...

And I reckon that's why some people also **hate** the book of Revelation – because they fail to catch the sweetness – and all

they see is the wrath; judgment; and condemnation – and everything to them seems bitter...

But we have never properly understood the Gospel, unless we both recognise the sweetness and the bitterness of it...

Leon Morris said:

*“The true preacher of God’s word will faithfully proclaim the denunciations of the wicked it contains. But he does **not** do this with fierce glee. The more his heart is filled with the love of God the more certain it is that the telling forth of ‘woes’ will be a bitter experience.”ⁱ*

And I have to agree with that. I have had no joy describing these woes... There **is** a bitterness to the Gospel... A bitterness for those who reject Jesus – but a wonderful; wonderful sweetness for His faithful....

Let’s move on: We’re now into chapter 11.

And John is given 2 tasks: - to measure the temple and its (altar), and to measure those who worship there. But he’s told **not** to measure the court of the gentiles, **outside** of the temple.

So, is this an image of a temple that’s been rebuilt in Jerusalem? Currently, a Muslim shrine (the Dome of the Rock) stands on the Temple mount... And many Christians, and of course many Jews have plans to demolish the Dome of the Rock, and to rebuild the temple, to the designs prophesied by Ezekiel, and of course, the Christians want to have all of this done before Jesus returns.

But you know, I don't reckon the temple described in Ezekiel, is a physical temple at all, because **of** this temple God says that it **Ezekiel 43:7****is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever.**

This does not sound like a literal temple...

In Acts 17, Paul says that God does not **live** in temples made by man.... It seems to me, that the temple being described in Ezekiel, is the same metaphorical temple that is described in the book of Revelation...

Throughout the book of Revelation, it refers to the temple in heaven. And yet when we get to Chapter 21, John says that he **saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.** – Alright, there is no temple: **God** is the temple...

Are you getting this? The temple is the symbol of God's presence. (It always has been). And here the temple seems to be getting used as a symbol for God's presence with His people. It's talking about the church, and His presence **in** the church.

It is something in existence – it is measurable... Even through all of these terrible plagues, the church will continue to exist... And you understand, don't you, that Biblically the church is not a denomination – the church is not an institution – the church of Jesus Christ, is wherever Christians will continue to meet together to worship God.

- What was the purpose of the temple of old?
- The temple was the sign of God’s presence among His people.

- But how is God present with us today?
- By His Holy Spirit.

- Back in chapter 7, God sealed His people.
- When God seals His people, **how** does He seal His people?
- With His Holy Spirit...

- So, why is there no “court of the gentiles” in this temple? Because those who are not disciples of Jesus, are not sealed with the Holy Spirit....

And so, the main message here (don’t get caught up in timelines and causes to get a temple rebuilt in Jerusalem...) – The main message here, is in spite of everything, there is still a place where God’s people are meeting. Alright, the church continues to be present in the world – it hasn’t been snatched out of it yet... And the Lord our God has sealed us. His Holy Spirit is with us.

And for 3.5 years; or 1260 days; or 42 months (it’s the same period of time), God’s church will be trampled on... And once again, these numbers are most likely symbolic. 7 years would mean complete. But here we’ve only got half of that – we’re being told that this time will be cut short... Yes, it **is** a

definite period of time... But it's not going to go on and on forever – it **will** come to an end.

And the Christian church will be persecuted (dreadfully) (they will be trampled upon), but hold on, because it does come to an end...

And during this time, from this church will arise, 2 preachers. Who are they?

They sound like Moses and Elijah (with the miracles they perform). But they're also described as 2 olive trees, and so this takes us to the book of Zechariah and makes them sound like Zerubbabel & the High priest, Joshuaⁱⁱ

Who are these 2 witnesses? Well, it is **possible** that 2 individuals will be raised up to preach, and this tells us about their miracles and signs and wonders, and about their demise & resurrection... But once again, we have to understand, that this is apocalyptic literature, and that these 2 witnesses – these 2 lampstands – these 2 olive trees, are a symbol of faithful witnesses who are raised up to preach.

Let me explain:

We already know that a lampstand represents a church. And they're described as 2 lampstands... Now, if you can remember back to the letters to the 7 churches, there were only 2 churches who Jesus didn't have anything bad to say about.

- They hadn't taken on the ways of the world;
- They were free from idolatry and immorality;
- They continued to love;
- they continued to be witnesses for Him; **and**

- they were being persecuted because of it...

And so the 2 lampstands, represent the faithful church, who are faithfully witnessing for Jesus.

What else does the No.2 tell us? Well, in the Old Testament, and the New, one witness is not enough. There has to be **2** witnesses, both saying the same thing, for their testimony to be considered true... And so the fact that there's 2 witnesses, signifies that what they say is trustworthy.

What about the 2 olive trees? Well, that takes us to the prophet Zechariah, where the 2 olive trees represent Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua. They were given the task of getting the temple rebuilt, and getting the people back right with God again... And it all seemed way too impossible for them, because they were so **insignificant** – how could they possibly achieve it?

But God said something to Zerubbabel (And I know you've heard this verse before, but I bet not many of you know where it comes from), ^{Zechariah 4:6...} **Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says YHWH of hosts.**

So, let's bring all of this imagery together: These 2 witnesses, represent all of God's faithful Christian witnesses, who in the power of God, and despite worldly persecution, continue to call the world to repentance... That's why they're wearing sackcloth (by the way) – it's a symbol of repentance.

And they might **seem** insignificant – After all, what can a few witnesses do for Jesus? What could **you** do for Jesus? What

could **I** do for Jesus, in a world that is set against us? But just like God said to Zerubbabel ^{Zechariah 4:6....} **Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says YHWH of hosts.**

Wow...

Whether it **be** 2 witnesses, or whether it symbolises the witness of the whole Christian church, it doesn't matter... It's not by **our** power – It's not by **our** might – but by the spirit of **God,,** that we witness for Him.

I was going to say, “Don't ever feel that you're incapable to be a witness for God.” But that would be entirely the wrong thing to say... You **are** incapable. You're just as incapable as **I** am incapable... But God can do it through us...

- Yes, we are incapable to be witnesses for Jesus...
- Yes, we are incapable to stand up as His witnesses...
- Yes, we are incapable, at the threat of death, to remain faithful...
- But by the Holy Spirit of God, we have **every** capability

...

You don't have to be strong enough, because God is.

Sadly though, I cannot paint a rosy picture on this for you...

Anyone who dares to be a witness for Jesus in these days:

- Yes, God will be with them
- Yes, God **will** do mighty miracles through them
- Yes, God **will** protect them from their enemies... that is until their time is up...

And the antichrist who persecutes God's church, will kill them...

And I feel, that this is the part that makes me feel the worst, in the whole book of the Revelation... When God's faithful witnesses are killed, the world throws a party... They leave their bodies lying in the street for a while, and even their corpses are humiliated. And they give presents to each other, to celebrate their demise...

It is not very popular, to be a preacher of repentance in a world that doesn't want to repent... And so God's great witnesses will be absolutely despised by the world....

I believe we're beginning to see this already. *There once was a time when even non-Christians respected and listened to, and even sought what men and women of God would have to say on all sorts of issues... But not any more... Anyone who dares to call the world to repentance, is hated; and vilified.... And if one of them should happen to fall, doesn't the world celebrate???*

I remember, years ago, the news covered the Sydney mardi gras, and they celebrated with a float, and on this float, was the giant papier mache head of a well-known preacher (Fred Nile), severed and on a platter.... And they danced in glee, in the streets around it...

This sort of thing will become common place – only it will be a reality – not just a papier mache caricature... Witnesses for Jesus will be killed in the street, and the world will party.

Where's all this going to happen? Well, it does mention a **great city**, symbolically called "**Sodom**" and "**Egypt**"... It does mention that it's **the place where their Lord was crucified**...

So it could be Jerusalem... but then again, more likely it's another symbol... We have the heavenly city opposing the earthly city. As one commentator said, "*It is man in organised community and opposed to God.*"ⁱⁱⁱ Where will this happen? Where organised community – wherever society, is opposed to God...

So, Jesus' faithful witnesses are killed... But they don't stay that way.

- After a short while they're raised from the dead;
- ascend to heaven...
- More terrors fall upon the city
- A great earthquake
- 7000 people are killed (by the way, 7 meaning complete; 1000 meaning a large number) I think this probably means the final death-count before Jesus comes back to judge

And here, for the first time, people are not only terrified, but they actually give glory to God... Now, I don't know if that means they repent and are saved, or whether they just finally acknowledge that God is behind it all...

The 2nd woe has passed – the 3rd woe is about to come....

Do you know what the 3rd woe is??? I find it very hard to think of this as a woe... Jesus has come.....

Rev 11:15-19 The Seventh Trumpet

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." 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."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Even though we still have a fair bit of the Book of Revelation to go, the 7th trumpet is talking about the time when Jesus returns... The camera is looking forwards now, to the coming of the Kingdom... All those who die in the Lord, will be raised from the dead... All those who have been killed for their faithful witness, will live...

Back in Revelation 1:7, it said:

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

You know:

- when you love Jesus as much as you probably do
- when you're anxiously waiting and looking forward to His return, as much as you probably are

it's hard to imagine that anyone would weep and wail because Jesus is returning... It's hard to imagine why this is one of the 3 woes...

Because it is so sweet to us.... But remember, there is also a bitterness...

Here, on the 7th trumpet, we're catching a glimpse of the final judgment... It's the time, for even the dead to be judged...

But to God's faithful, there is a sweetness – it is the time
for rewarding [God's] servants, the prophets and
saints,
and those who fear [his] name,
both small and great,
and [it's the time] for destroying the destroyers of
the earth."

Well, today has been tough going, folks, and I hope you've kept up with me... By the way, when we get into these sections of the Revelation, there are so many different interpretations that people can come up with... We couldn't possibly have time for me to give you every possible alternative... And you may have sat there today, stewing away, saying "This is a load of rubbish. That's not what that means... I know what it means"... That's fine.

I've done a lot of reading, and read lots of different opinions, and what I've shared today, I believe is (to my way of thinking), is truest to God's word... It is certainly the direction the Lord has taken me...

And the main message for today, is:

- *through all of the great tribulation, and even today, we are called to be God's faithful witnesses*
- *And yes, the world will hate us because of it...*
- *But God is with us*

- *and it is not by our strength that we do this – it is by His strength.*
- *And we do this not **for** ourselves, but because we love our neighbour, and we earnestly desire for them to be saved.”*

Not by might. Not by power. But by My Spirit says the Lord.

And even if (and when) it results in death, we are raised from the dead to a heavenly reward in Christ's coming Kingdom.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
We pray for your faithful witnesses, all over the world today.
We pray for ourselves – we pray for this very church.
May we be faithful witnesses for you.

Lord, even though the world may hate us,
Help us to love them enough,
That we should share the sweetness;
And the bitterness of the Gospel.

Not by our might. Not by our power.
But by Your Spirit, be our strength;
Be our comfort;
Be our confidence;
Be our hope;
Be our salvation

And Lord, we pray that you would take the words that we speak;
And may they be life-giving words
Words that would lead a broken and lost world,
Out of the darkness and into the Light.

In Jesus' name
Amen.

Next week, we're going to get another camera angle, of the great tribulation – we're going to get a view of the spiritual battle behind the physical reality...

ⁱ Morris, L., 1987. *Revelation: an introduction and commentary*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

ⁱⁱ Zechariah 4:3–14 (ESV)

³ And there are **two olive trees** by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.”

⁴ And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” ⁵ Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” ⁶ Then he said to me, “**This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. ⁷ Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.** And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’ ”

⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹ “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. ¹⁰ For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

“These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.” ¹¹ Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?”

¹² And a second time I answered and said to him, “What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?” ¹³ He said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” ¹⁴ Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Morris, L., 1987. *Revelation: an introduction and commentary*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.