

Rev 26-02-22a

Greetings fellow enthusiasts, those who take time to investigate the truth of the Word of God and seek to understand it and live in its light. It is wonderful to have fellowship together on this Sunday morning, the 22nd of February 2026. We continue our study in the Book of Revelation.

We are about halfway through the book at this point, here in chapter 11. We have seen the seals open, the sixth trumpet has sounded out of seven, and we are in the interim period after the sounding of the sixth, which introduces the second woe. We had four related judgments followed by three woes and we will move through the latter part of chapter 11 as we endeavor to continue our journey through the book.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and intake of the Word of God and we'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for another opportunity to enjoy the benefits of contact with one another, to rejoice in the things that you have done for us, to lift one another up in prayer and receive the benefit of the prayers of our fellow believers. We're grateful for this portion of your Word and we ask that you will bless it to the nourishment of our souls, that we will be strengthened with might in the inner man, we will be fully equipped for every good work, and we'll be ready for service and function now and in the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. In chapter 11, we saw that John is in view.

He comes to the forefront. He has been in many ways something of a passive observer through the first 10 chapters, but then he begins to serve as a metaphorical means of communication to us and sort of takes the stage in chapter 11. We saw this with the introduction of the angel that stands with one foot on the sea, one foot on the land, and one hand in heaven.

In many ways, you can think of our situation as similar. The sea representing the chaotic forces of unbelieving mankind, the influence of secular humanism in our day, the dismissal of Christian faith in particular as mythology and backwardness and being unscientific and something of an artifact from days gone by. Aren't you enlightened? What happened to education? Don't you know better than to believe these old dusty Hebrew myths? So that is the sea, and you can't build anything on the troubled sea.

The Lord Jesus and Simon Peter are the only ones I know of to have walked on the water, to have trotted underfoot in the sense of being dominant over it and not attacked by it. And Peter didn't maintain for very long. But you have the land, which is the solid ground on Christ, the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand, shifting sands, unfit to build something permanent. And as believers who are in the process of being saved, if you go to Galatians 1.4, Paul uses the word *sozo* in terms of us being delivered out of this present evil age. And we have an ongoing aspect of our deliverance.

We are not yet fully saved in that sense. We still bear the cross of our sinful nature, the inevitable influences of sin and evil and the spirit of Antichrist that is at work in the world. But we have contact with the outside, the unbelieving and oppositional hostile world.

We have one foot on solid ground, which is our reality, our understanding based on what the word of God reveals. And we have a future hope. And this is the hand that is lifted to heaven, as it were, representatively by this messenger angel.

And in his other hand, he has a little scroll, which is the portion of the word of God that is pertinent for John, because this scroll isn't read to the world. It isn't revealed to us by way of its contents. It is consumed by John.

He tastes it and he digests it. And there is sweetness and bitterness in that process. But you think about those four elements.

I think this is very pertinent. And one of the reasons the Lord Jesus has addressed the revelation to you and to me, to us, and to all of those who participate in this phase of God's plan, the church age, as the body of Christ, is to remind us that God's plan incorporates contact with the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. It addresses our contact with the solid ground.

It gives us the future hope of what is in heaven, and it offers to us that portion of the word of God that is personally applicable to us, that will sustain us and guide us and enable us to function in those realms. So as you recall, we've seen this now a couple of times, that there's a voice from heaven that says, go take the little scroll, which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth. Once again, the angel has a hand in heaven.

Now there is a voice from heaven. Take and eat the scroll. And this is our constant reminder.

And the fact that you're here this morning means that you understand, we understand, recognize, and we not just understand, we act on the knowledge that the word of God is essential for us to make any sense out of this life, to redeem the time, to be transformed and enabled and equipped so that the Lord can use us now and in the future. The means by which God does that is his word. And it's not every single part of the word.

We sometimes think, well, but what about these poor souls who don't know that much about the Old Testament Israelite history and example, or they haven't really understood the Sermon on the Mount, or they're completely adrift when it comes to Romans. They see the Roman road. You get five verses out of Romans and tell somebody how to be saved and the rest of that book is too complicated.

There are believers that are going to have so many stars in their crown because the portion of the word of God that they grasped, that they heard the exhortation from heaven to go and take it and imbibe it, internalize it, and act upon it, whatever portion that is, and it's different for different ones of us. We all don't know everything. Not everything is pertinent for all of us.

But that portion that is, when we digest it, we appreciate it as sweet in the mouth, and we recognize that there are times when it will cause bitterness and some painful means of application. We have to do hard things. We have to make hard choices to preserve ourselves, to reflect the righteousness and justice that is a part of God's revelation.

So it can be bitter in the stomach. But look at John. He continues to be an example for us.

And so in our chapter now, in chapter 11, he is given a reed like a measuring rod. And we looked at this last time. He could have just been told to go measure and we don't have the tool by which it is done.

But it says, arise. This is *agiro* in Greek, e-g-i-r-o. And it is the word used for be raised up in the sense of resurrection.

If Christ is not raised, and so on in 1 Corinthians, that's your verb all the way through being raised. And so John being told to rise, he's on the earth and he is going to traverse the earth and he's going to be in an earthly context, vision wise, if you will, as he measures this temple and the crowd that dwells near it and worships at it and the altar. Three things he's told to measure is the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there.

Those who worship there. And you think about these times that are being described, the hostility toward anything that attaches to the God of Israel, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And those who will publicly go to the temple and worship, John is going to measure them.

And we get the idea that this would be count them or survey them, note who they are. But the reed is like a rod. This measuring reed is like an authority rod, the rod of Aaron, the rod of Moses, the scepter of authority, that this word *rabdos*, r-h-a-b-d-o-s is used for a rod that is a part of a shepherd's authority over his sheep, thy rod and thy staff.

They comfort me. It is used for stability in difficult terrain or in dangerous territory, as we saw when the Lord Jesus said, some of you, 12, when I send you forth, you'll need a rod. Others of you won't.

So what is this a picture of? If we think of John as our exemplar here, and these future things give us applicable principles now, just as looking at past things has done and can do. What do we draw from this? There is a sequence. John is, first of all, required to respond to the call to take in the word of God.

He does so, and he has a personal experience of it that is bittersweet. Personally, this is what he feels. Once he has done this, he is told you are going to do something with this word that you have taken in.

John is an apostle and a prophet. And so in his area of spiritual function, he is going to fulfill that function. His apostolic witness to the church is evident here in this book, and his spiritual

function of prophecy is going to be fueled by what he has taken in.

He's not given this commission until after he has taken in the word, and it becomes clear to him what he needs to do. And for him, in chapter 11, he is told to go and measure the temple of God. There's only one city where the temple of God has ever been, and that's Jerusalem.

So we know as soon as it is the temple of God, this is going to be in Jerusalem, and we're going to see that confirmed a bit later. But where is the temple of God today? If we look at John and say, well, you know, revelation, prophecy, light your hair on fire, watch the signs of the times, keep up with the news, what's happening in Turkey and the Middle East. And by the way, there is a lot going on, and you can easily get deflected into sitting on the edge of your seat as more and more conditions align with what we know of the time of the end.

But if like John, we are going to respond to the call to measure the temple of God, where is the temple of God? We are the temple of God, right? And we are to be a dwelling place. And so we need to take the measure. And what this really means is when he says, take the measuring rod and measure, arise, awaken.

Egyro also means get up from sleep. Awake, oh sleeper, and Christ will give you light. I want to read one of the Psalms here in this context, because when John goes to Jerusalem and takes the measure of the temple and the altar, this is the altar outside.

We've seen the altar of incense on the inside that was stationed in the holy place. This is the outside altar. This is the altar of sacrifice.

This is where the Ola was offered. If you review Leviticus chapter one, this is what this entire sacrificial and festal system begins with in Leviticus is the whole burnt offering. It's voluntary.

There's no prescribed time when it is to be offered. It says, if someone wants to bring the whole burnt offering, which is a reflection of putting your all on the altar, this is how you do it. This is the altar that is measured.

So to what extent am I the temple of God, a place where the Holy Spirit can not just exist, but fulfill his function of leading us into all truth, of sealing us and filling us and enlightening us as to truth and helping us to function within our ministry to fellow believers, our spiritual gift and so on. That's the temple. The glory of God that dwells in our temple is initially the Holy Spirit.

If we have his words and keep them, Jesus said, he and the father will come and dwell there. And so we are a dwelling place. Take its measure.

The reed is authority because it's also a rod. It's like a rod. This is authoritative measure.

This is the kind of measure that you take and you can then take action on the measurements. If I measure something and it's too small, I need to make it bigger. If it's crooked, I need to make it straight.

If it's out of level, I need to get myself a level and a plumb line and square the thing up. Rise and measure the temple of God. Rise in the metaphorical sense here, the vision.

Evidently, the little scroll was bitter enough that it sent John to his knees. He's got to arise, stand up, go and take the measure of these three things. We see what the altar means to us.

Am I sanctified? Am I qualified to approach God and offer a sacrifice of praise to present myself a living sacrifice? Romans 12, holy and acceptable to God. Take the measure of the temple of God, of the altar, and of those who worship there. Do I know who genuinely worships there despite opposition and friction and the derision that comes from the world and those who think that it's silly? Do I worship there anyway? Who assembles? Who are my fellow worshipers? Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.

And that's what you all do. Every time we meet and there is a wonderful group of us here who support each other and encourage each other and bless each other with interest and intercessory prayer and the kind of fellowship that enhances what we learn from the Word of God. So essential, so important.

If you're going to take the measure of those who worship there, this is contact. And that's what we do as often as we can. as John has told, don't worry about the world outside the temple and the altar and those who worship there.

Don't try to take its measure. Don't spend your time trying to figure out where it's crooked, where it's short, where it's off base. Leave that out.

It's been given to the Gentiles and they certainly in their minds and often in reality are going to trample not just the temple and not just the altar and not just the people who worship there, but the Holy City. All of that which is dedicated to God, even outside the temple, the capital city, the hope of God's people, they trample it underfoot. They care nothing about it and you can't stand in the way or you will be trampled with it.

This is in harmony with don't cast your pearls before the swine. So I've elaborated this a little bit because I think it is important for us to realize that the traditional view of the book of Revelation is things to come. Let's read Nostradamus and find out if we can predict world events and the progress and the rise and fall of nations and peoples and so on.

That's certainly there and it can be fun to do, but the reason the Lord Jesus gave it to us isn't so that we have a roadmap of the future. It is so that we have spiritual truth that we can put into practice in our life. This is a classic example.

It is so interesting to look at John and look at the two witnesses and look at these mysterious visions and angels and scrolls and activities and try to solve the puzzle. But the real puzzle to solve is what does it mean to me now that I have been exposed to this message from the Lord? What do I do with it? So we follow John's example. Take in the Word of God.

We have the effect personally. There are parts of it that are sweet and uplifting and it consoles us. It encourages us.

It strengthens us in so many ways. There are also some hard sides and some bitter sides. Sometimes when we want a resolution, we want a quick answer.

We want a deliverance and it doesn't come immediately. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but we recognize it as from the Lord and we move on to take the measure first of all. Take in the Word of God and this becomes our reed that is like a rod.

We now have the means to evaluate and properly understand what it is to worship God and how well that is being accomplished in our own life. First and foremost, is God the God that conditions, sustains, and guides all of our thoughts and intents and our speech and our actions, goals and values, our priorities that we set? Are we in fact the temple of God? The altar, this is where dedication is reflected, where persistence, recognition of sin, confession, avail ourselves of atonement, the blood sacrifice. The altar is all about blood, sacrifice, and fellow believers, those who come to that same altar and that same temple.

We need to be aware and take the measure. There's some fellowship that is more fruitful, meaningful, and helpful than others. Take the measure.

Knowing that there is going to be future prophecy by John as given in verse 11, you must prophesy again. And there are many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings that are going to be exposed to your prophetic witness. That's on the outside.

The only ones that count are the ones who are going to respond and be worshipers of God. So when you look at John, he is told, there's a part of this that isn't your target. And that's the Gentiles who trample holy things underfoot.

They care nothing for the spiritual truth that God presents. And they're going to be allowed to do so for a space of time. Don't waste your time trying to stop the trampling.

Focus on what counts. And immediately this leads into the two witnesses for reasons that seem obvious to me. I will give to my two witnesses and they will prophesy 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth.

Sackcloth is the clothing of mourning. It doesn't say they will prophesy with a staff in their hand. Uh, they are going to be clothed in sackcloth.

When you look at them, this isn't a happy task. This, their heads are not anointed with oil. They're not wearing white robes of celebration.

They're dressed in sackcloth. This, this is a message of sorrow and of impending problems. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

We covered this last time. Uh, as the angel has one foot on the sea and one foot on the land,

you can think of these two witnesses as olive trees in the sense of a relationship to Israel and lampstands related to the church. And in some sense, that's what these witnesses represent.

And I think the sons of Zebedee certainly fulfill that among many other, uh, biblical descriptions. If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. Once again, I don't think these guys are literal human flamethrowers.

As we saw with the demon locusts, what proceeds from their mouth is what they say. And when they are opposed, when they are attacked like the Lord Jesus, they cannot be refuted. They cannot be dismissed.

They cannot be, uh, proved false the enemies that oppose them. And this would be verbal opposition because they can't be touched. The verbal opposition is consumed by fire from the Lord.

Fire proceeds out of their mouths and devours their enemies. In the metaphorical sense, this completely cancels out their argument, their opposition, their hostility. They are shown to be foolish and incompetent and unable to refute what these witnesses say.

It is true to the point that it can't be opposed. And what comes forth from their mouth destroys all arguments. This is the goal of many people who are on a war path and have an agenda and want to convince the world that some particular thing is true.

They would like nothing better than for what comes out of their mouths to consume their enemies. You can't oppose my arguments. They're ironclad.

They're invincible. But as you know, very famous quote from somebody, you have not converted a man because you have silenced him. And even though their enemies are devoured in this sense, they are completely set aside and made non-functional.

They don't repent. If anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner, fire issuing from the mouth. And killed here, I think this could include, you know, physical removal from the earth.

But this is a metaphor. Someone would have to get within range of the mouth if this was a physical fire that was coming out and roasting people, there would be piles of dead bodies singed and smelling terrible. I think that being killed in this manner, being consumed and being devoured is eliminated and neutralized completely.

Arguments to the contrary are just obliterated. They have power to shed heavens so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. This is an Elijah function and the pattern of Elijah.

They have power over waters to turn them to blood. This is a Moses function. These things immediately bring to mind the two individuals seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, whom by the way, John himself saw.

One of only three individuals to see the Lord Jesus with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration is our author. Strike the earth with plagues. This is a Moses function.

Blood and plagues. There's your Moses, the lawgiver, the civil leader, the governmental authority for the budding people and nation of Israel. As often as they desire, when they finish their testimony, notice not before, God knows when their testimony is complete and it has a span of time.

You and I have a testimony and a span of time. What is the Moses and Elijah pattern as it pertains to us? Moses was the one who spoke the law, who brought it down from Sinai, who communicated it to the people of God, who reflected the Word of God and the truth of God. His face shone with exposure to God.

Elijah convicted those who had fallen away. Elijah is a prophet to the Northern Kingdom. What a wonderful ministry he had.

And it is to the worst of the worst. Jezebel and Ahab are queen and king, respectively, when Elijah has his witness and his ministry. And this is our function as well, not only to shine the light of the Word of God in our life, in our conversation, but also to engage with fellow believers that are well off the path and to be ready to speak up and call out false doctrine, wolves in sheep's clothing, those who are in the fire and need pulling out, hating the garment spotted by the flesh, and so on.

So as with the previous picture, where John is at the temple and the altar and ignoring the Gentiles outside, these two witnesses fulfill a testimony function. You think of Luke 16 and the quote-unquote parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Remember when the rich man who is in torments, speaking to Abraham, says, send Lazarus.

If he can't come with a drop of water on his finger to cool my tongue, send him to my brothers. I've got five brothers. Let Lazarus go and testify to them so that they will not come to this place.

And what does Abraham reply? They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. Moses and Elijah, Moses and the prophets.

That is the testimony that exists. That is the testimony that these two witnesses represent in metaphorical terms. The law, here's what God says.

The prophets, here's how you need to be applying it. Here is where it ought to be reflected in your actions and where you are failing to do so. Rebuke, correction, instruction in righteousness is the prophets.

And they have a set time of testimony. 1,260 days. The time of your life and my life is set.

We can't extend it. We can't shorten it. Our lifespan, the chronological place and time that we occupy is set by God.

And during that time, we can have complete confidence when we are faithful and obedient. And notice this isn't true of everyone. This is true of John, who has taken in the word of God in response to the call, who has experienced it personally and has then gone and applied it in the vicinity of the temple and the altar, ignoring the Gentiles, now is serving as a prophetic witness to those people.

He doesn't take their measure. He takes the measure of the people who are worshiping. And we discern and are careful about figuring out who is in my one another circle, who is in my neighbor circle of love, who is in my those who are outside circle, and who is in the enemies category, who are still objects of love.

But there are different kinds, categories, and expressions of love depending on where people are. But when they finish their testimony, now they are going to die. When your testimony is finished, you will die and not before.

When my testimony and my function is finished, I will be done. And the death of these witnesses means you have done all that God has called you to do. Your service, your function is complete.

Time to go. And this is going to be seen as a victory by those who are in opposition. So, they are overcome by the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit, who makes war against them, overcomes them, and kills them.

Notice three aspects of this apparent defeat. First of all, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit. A lot of commentaries and commentators say, well, this is the Antichrist.

He's going to find a way to kill these guys. The Antichrist, quote-unquote, is the beast that comes out of the sea. This is out of the bottomless pit.

And that's a different animal. This is satanic opposition. And he's going to do three things.

First, make war. And this is an attempt to undermine and neutralize their finished testimony, what they have already said, to continue to try to discredit it and set it aside. So, he makes war.

He's going to overcome. This is nika'o. This is the same word used for overcomers, to him that overcomes, nika'o.

Well, they are going to be overcome in this earthly context. They don't look overcome from heaven. Their testimony is complete.

They are 100% successful in what they do. But to the world's eye, they have been opposed. They have been overcome and slain.

And remember that death and sin are the victories that Satan introduced to the world and to the human race. He is emblematic of him that had the power of death, who was overcome by the work of the Lord Jesus. But this is permitted.

And so, they are warred against, they are overcome, and they are killed. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt. It's amazing.

We often just have a metaphor, but here we are told. This is the word derived from *pneuma*, the spirit. They are spiritually in this town called Sodom and Egypt.

Why is it given this threefold description? Sodom, Egypt, and where our Lord was crucified. And this is the realm of rejection. There was testimony from Lot.

Sodom rejected it. There was testimony from the seed of Jacob that was in Egypt for decade upon decade upon decade. And Egypt rejected it.

There were some individuals who came out in the mixed multitude, but Egypt as a nation rejected a witness and a testimony. Sodom rejects the witness of Lot, and by extension, Abraham. Egypt rejects the witness and the testimony of the children of Israel, culminating with Moses and Aaron, and acts of God himself, supernatural plagues, water turning to blood, and so on.

They reject it. This is what is harked back to here. Where also our Lord was crucified, the ultimate witness, the ultimate testimony, the fullness of deity in bodily form, rejected in Jerusalem.

There will be those who, no matter what we say or how we live, are never going to come to faith, will reject God and reject us in the process. And that's what we see pictured here. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back in verse 9, this is going to launch us into the second half of the chapter, and there's a great deal to see. But how applicable are these future revelations to us as witnesses to God in the day, in the time, and in the circumstance and relationships in which we live? It's very powerful. Let's pause here and take our break.