

THE WITNESSES

Scripture Lesson: Revelation 11:1-14

Text: Revelation 11:1ff

Songs: F18; PH424 1,5; R428 4

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus Our Lord,

What we have heard this morning is wonderful. How we rejoice with the Holy Spirit in the profession of faith of Kellie Van Wyk and Kelsie Van Kooten! Pray their journey with Jesus will be long and wonderful.

Revelation 11 is an excellent chapter to focus on their profession of faith—and ours. The theme of the chapter is how we can enrich our walk with God and then how that message challenges our world. It is too much for one sermon, so tonight we get the second half in “The Seventh Trumpet.” This morning we are between the sixth and seventh trumpet. There is an interlude of a chapter and half that heightens the suspense before the seventh trumpet sounds. In this interlude John is asked to measure the temple and count the worshippers.

V. 1,2. These verses are not easy to understand. This is the part of Revelation where many people get derailed. They think they understand the seven letters, they get through the seven seals, but they get bogged down when John is asked to measure and count, and then when he is told not to measure the Gentile part of the court. They mutter to themselves, “What does all this mean?” Not knowing, it is just easier to skip a few chapters and get to the battle of Armageddon. Not taking time to delve into these verses compromises and distorts a Christian’s understanding of Revelation. That is why it is good to make the commitment we have made to reflect on every verse. Only then do we get a handle on the whole book, not just selected sections that we like to hear. So what do these first two verses of the chapter mean?

In past chapters we have seen how the earthly temple is a shadow of the heavenly one. We saw how the twelve tribes pitched their tents in a pattern around the tabernacle matching the constellations in the sky. The earthly ritual commanded by God is a mirror image of heavenly events John will see. That means John’s measurement has both a heavenly and earthly dimension.

Taking measurements is always a way of judging. If you measure a room you judge its size. If you measure distance or volume you are judging how far or how much it is. When we measure anything, it is a judgment. John is asked to measure those who are in the kingdom and those who are out. He is also to count those who are in. Jesus had warned that unbelieving Israel will be excluded from the kingdom and Gentiles will stream in. Jesus speaks of that in Matthew 8 and Luke 13. Listen to Luke 13:28,29, “Luke 13:28,29.”

The New Testament begins with forty-two generations to the birth of Jesus Christ. In these verses we discover that for the final judgment we do not wait forty-two generations but only 42 months. Remember that the theme of chapter 10 was, “There will be no more delay.” The events of the final judgment are dawning near.

V. 3. Now we come to the two witnesses. They are really the subject of the rest of this section of Scripture up to “The Seventh Trumpet.” They speak for 1,260 days, which is 42 months. They wear the clothes of Elijah and John the Baptizer. They stand in the tradition of the prophets. They represent the witness of the church. They stand for all those who profess Jesus Christ as Friend, Savior, and Lord as Kelsie and Kelli did today

4. Olive trees go back to Zechariah’s prophecy so they are linked to another prophet. In the Old Testament in Zechariah, Jeremiah and Psalm 52 the trees are linked to an unceasing supply of olive oil. Zechariah refers to the two witnesses as “sons of oil,” that is, they are anointed by the Holy Spirit. This is anointing oil for service.

Notice this is also the last clause in the questions we asked this morning of Kelli and Kelsie.

V. 5. John links them to two memorable men of the Old Testament era: Moses and Elijah. Both Moses and Elijah commanded fire from heaven to destroy their enemies. The comparison with the great people of the Old Testament goes on. We read these Revelation events in the light of God's history with His people. We connect the dots as much as we are able between the Old and New Testaments. Revelation is a piece of the whole Bible.

V. 6. They shut up the sky for the same length of time as the drought Elijah's prayer began and ended. Of course we see the imagery of Moses' power in the plagues of Egypt. Both these great Old Testament figures are types of Christ. Their lives pointed to the Messiah God would send—and in whom we have our hope.

V. 7. This is the first reference in Revelation to the Beast. He seems to win. Satan always *seems* to win.

V. 8. Unburied bodies are illegal in our country. In John's day it was even worse. It was flagrant violation of decency. The Holy Spirit through John blends the Old Testament into the New. Sodom and Egypt were the Old Testament figures for sin and captive slavery to sin. Now it is Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified. The good news is that what the Jews rejected God now gives to the Gentiles—the privilege of being His people.

V. 9. This ties us back to the Psalms. Psalm 79 begins this way, "Psalm 79:1-3."

V. 10. The forces of evil rejoice. How happy they are that Messiah has been destroyed. Sin always gloats. Yet their joy is short lived: Just three and half days, half of the perfect number 7. In their sinful imperfection, their joy can never mount real opposition to the perfection of Christ. That is plain in the next paragraph.

V. 11. Of course the evil ones and the Evil One tremble! Think of how Satan trembled when Christ arose. We know how the Roman guards trembled, and how the government leaders tried to foist a lie on the people because they also feared Christ's resurrection. If the religious leaders had not had a deep-down fear of Christ rising, they would have never posted a guard at the tomb in the first place. Pagans rightly live in perpetual fear.

V. 12. This is a key verse. Notice that the language here is the same as for John's ascension to heaven to view this vision in chapter 4. That chapter began, "Revelation 4:1." The two witnesses are the church. The church may at times appear to be conquered, but Satan trembles when he sees the church. Satan is scampering from Sully today at the testimony of two teens who took a stand for Jesus Christ. Kellie and Kelsie are the victors! Satan will be back, but today as you shake their hands at the door Satan is shaking with fear. Like Martin Luther wrote, "For lo, his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him." The little words "I do" spoken by two young women this morning have added to Satan's doom—and he trembles. God snatches them from Satan's clutches and makes Kellie and Kelsie's place in heaven secure. Satan can only shake his head in frustration.

V. 13. Immediately there are catastrophic results for sinners. When God exerts his Lordship, all power on earth is unleashed—and there is more to come. Notice three things that happen in this verse. First, the earthquake collapsed a tenth of the city, that sinful Jerusalem that killed Christ. Second, many people were killed so they immediately stood before God's measuring judgment. Third, the survivors were terrified so they glorified God.

What do these three things that are the capstone of this section of Scripture say about Kellie and Kelsie's profession of faith—and yours whether you made it long ago or would like to yet this year? What does this say to us Christians who live in contemporary America with the tide seemingly running against Christ and His church? First, God is in total control. As with Jacob who wrestled with God at the Jabbok, God can seem to let a sinner prevail, but as He humbled Jacob with a tiny touch on his thigh that made him limp for life, with a tiny

touch of His majesty God can assert His control and power at will. And He shall here in America! Kellie and Kelsie are on God's side and God shall prevail. Second, there is not one of us who can guarantee our life. We always must be ready to meet Jesus face to face. What a joy for Kelsie and Kellie and you and I to know exactly where they stand with Jesus on judgment day! Third, some will turn to religion briefly out of fear, but

because they lack faith their religiosity does not last. That is why after 9 11 there was a few week resurgence in church attendance. People were afraid. But it was not long and people returned to their old ways because they had no faith. Today we heard from two young women who know about faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They will stand strong no matter how sinful and secular our society becomes. We have that confidence in this third truth because of the first truth that God always ultimately wins. And He shall in Kellie and Kelsie's spiritual journey!

V. 14. The seventh trumpet will announce the third woe. It is five powerful verses of praise. Tonight.

