

The Last Days According to Revelation 11

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I invite you to turn this morning to the last book of the Bible, Revelation, the very last book, if you're a visitor, working through this book, this series, and this is the fourth week, yeah, three or four weeks, we're coming back to Revelation and this morning, we're considering chapter 11. Revelation 11, this is the word of the Lord.

1 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. 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.

There ends the reading this morning of God's word.

Well, one of the things that I don't think we have been clear enough is the purpose, maybe in explaining or making clear to people is the purpose for which Christ left us here. Of course, Jesus prayed about this. Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer, "I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one." That was a wonderful prayer that we get to read and provides for us an assurance of preservation in this world and in the things that we will face until he comes again, but it's not so much an explanation of purpose, is it? And if we don't understand the purpose, if we don't appreciate the purpose, we will most certainly fall into the trap of thinking that this life is all about eating and drinking and being merry. Eating, drinking, and being merry, the very thing that Jesus cautioned about in the days of Noah that they were doing before the flood came and took them all away. That is Satan's will for you, of course. It's his will for your life to eat, drink, and be merry. It's what he wants for you. It was the heart of his temptation to Jesus. That's why it's called temptation. The heart of the temptation to Jesus was, "You can have it all now and you can avoid the hardship of the cross. You can get off the path right now. I will give you right now the kingdoms of the world. Have it now. Best life now." You can most certainly live a quasi-Christian life that looks nothing like the life of Jesus.

So what is this? What are we talking about? There is a course he has called us to. There's a path that he has put us on. Jesus, if I could summarize the message of Revelation, I would summarize it beginning with what we're going to start next week in the book of Acts as we begin a series there of what Jesus said right out of the first chapter of Acts, "You are my witnesses to the ends of the earth." You. What we have in Revelation 11 with those thoughts in mind, is a picture capturing the churches, God's people's struggle holding fast to that witness in this present time that we live, holding fast and testifying of what is right and what is wrong as it brings forth, the church brings forth and we seek to bring forth as Revelation calls it, the everlasting gospel. It has, Revelation 11 has the specific intention of challenging the church, of painting a challenging but beautiful picture for us to hold onto of what our mission is, encouraging the church to boldly hold fast to the calling and the commission that we have been left with, one of suffering and

then of glory, one of death and then resurrection as we seek to bear witness to the truth as it is in Jesus.

The church, of course, and this is why this is such an important passage in Revelation for us to consider in our time, the church has not always accepted that, still doesn't and struggles to accept that. The consequences are catastrophic when the church forgets its purpose and its mission, when it gets distracted with everything that it shouldn't be and is doing everything that it shouldn't be. Revelation 11 is motivating us and helping us understand because the distraction or the departure from the commission happens in the hardship. Revelation 11 is saying it's appointed for you. This is what it's about. And so what it does in chapter 11 of Revelation is it's casting the church's struggle in the story of Scripture, the story of the life of Jesus. That's what Revelation 11 is doing. It's casting our story in his story so that we understand that when we go around talking about we're made into the image of Jesus, but that his church itself is made into that image in the earth, and therefore, what Revelation is doing then is telling us that we have a specific mission, that we are called to a certain kind of death with a promise of a certain resurrection and the glory that is to come and that's really the heart of Revelation chapter 11.

What we come to this morning is the third cycle, the end of the third cycle of this book. Remember, Revelation is given in seven cycles. It's not a book where you say, "Well finally I get to Revelation 21 and we're getting to the end when Jesus will come." It's showing us in these cycles, snapshots and pictures of history to capture this for us, help us understand that, so that what we have in Revelation 11 is the end of the third cycle and a description of the end of the world. All these different cycles are capturing this for us in a different kind of way. And this, you'll notice, is right between, as we come today, the section here is between the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet. You'll notice that the seventh trumpet, beginning at verse 15, is a description of the end of the world. You have all these cycles describing the course of history for us.

Well, just like the second cycle, remember you had the sixth seal and the seventh seal, there were these interludes right between the sixth and the seventh. You have the same pattern again here. You have an interlude and these interludes are really meant to pause and calm us down and to help us understand and encourage us in the struggle as we patiently wait for the Second Coming. That's really the heart of this and the intention of this. They're interludes that give us perspective. They're interludes that pause and give us help, descriptions to help us understand that the victory is won for us in Christ but there are certain things that we have to undergo and we have to face, and so that's the struggle that's being captured here in chapter 11 as we wait for the end, patience and endurance in whatever we have to go through.

Well, that's where we ended up last time, sort of in the middle of this interlude, where John was given a little book and he was told to eat the little book, to digest the little book. And the angel said to John, "It's gonna be sweet in your mouth, but it's gonna be bitter in your stomach." We explored a little bit of that, of what that means, that John was then told to go out and preach. He was then told to take that little book and preach that little book. That is a picture for us of the responsibility of God's people in the earth, John

representing the church. We have a sweet message, don't we? We've got something really sweet we get to go do. We get to go out and we get to preach a Savior in the midst of all this mess, who promises us life, who gives us life, who forgives all of our sins, who cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We get to herald and preach of someone who died to satisfy the wrath of God so that when we die we can be absolutely sure we get to go to be in glory with him. It's wonderful. It's wonderful. That's sweet to the mouth. But you know that the response is often very bitter to this message. You know the struggle is very bitter. You're seeing the struggle unfold in the earth, and it's bitter. It's hard to take. Well, Revelation 11 is challenging us and motivating us to faithfulness with that book, the word. Be faithful with it. The extent to which we are faithful will also determine the opposition that we face in this life and that is further explained for us now as we come to the second part of this little interlude explaining for us our purpose as we wait for the Second Coming.

So let's look at it. Look at verse 1. Then I was given a reed, like a measuring rod, and the angels stood saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there." As I've been showing so far, all of this is borrowed from the Old Testament, and this is particularly an image that is taken from Ezekiel chapter 40, where Ezekiel was taken up on a very high mountain, and he saw an angel measuring the temple. And you remember all the temple measurements that come out of Ezekiel. It's cumbersome somewhat to read, isn't it? Well, notice here in Revelation 11, no dimensions are given. Revelation here, John is told to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who are worshiping. Measure the space and place, and the people. Really interesting, how do you measure people?

It's a fascinating thing to begin chapter 11 with, which you ask, what in the world is the message here, and what is he doing? Well, you have to remember that just like with the interlude of previous, where all the servants of God were marked on the forehead, symbolically they're all marked, they're all known, they're all God's people, not one of them was lost. We have the same kind of comfort that is being announced right before he gets to a description of the struggle of the mission. What's he measuring? I thought of something that might help, and I think this does. We'll try it out. The true story goes of the 1954 Milan basketball team in Indiana that won the state championship. A little tiny farm school is what the movie "Hoosiers" was based on. And if you read the accounts of what happened with that, it was a remarkable victory that this little team won out in Indiana. And they went into Butler Fieldhouse. It was a massive arena at the time. And the team walked in, as the story goes, and they looked out at all the seats. They had been in a little farm gym their whole life, playing ball and they looked at all these seats, thousands of seats, and the vastness of Butler Fieldhouse. The sheer size of the gymnasium scared them to death. The coach grabbed a measuring stick, took them right to the center of the court and he measured from the top of the rim to the court. Made him say what it was. And as the saying goes, and went, "It's still 10 feet." It's still 10 feet. And that immediately alleviated and brought great comfort to that team because just like their country gym, it provided them perspective that nothing had changed. Nothing had changed.

That's a similar kind of thing that is happening right at the beginning of Revelation chapter 11. He is measuring the inheritance of God's people. Just like they were all elected and marked, as was described in the first interlude, now he's measuring the inheritance, the part, and guess what? They're all marked. Do you see? All of them are marked. The people, not one of them is missing. Not one of them is lost. Now do you understand the effect of that? We've been trying to capture that, that this is how Revelation is motivating the mission of the church in its struggle. It's setting the hope that is before us. It's driving us in hope. We often look back to what Christ has accomplished and the Scriptures are constantly telling us to keep our eyes fixed on him, but it's a complete victory that points us forward. It's really important. Look forward.

Language of measuring is borrowed throughout things like the book of Isaiah. Think of this, "Search for the book of the Lord and read, not one of these shall fail. Read, not one of these will lack her mate, for my mouth has commanded it, and his Spirit has gathered them, and he has cast the lot for them, and his hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever." This is exactly what's going on here. He's measuring, and that measurement is meant to say, "It's yours. Nothing's changed. Nothing's changed. See all the seats around you? See all what's going on around you? Nothing's changed. Nothing's changed. Nothing's changed." That's the effect. Driving us in hope. To God's people, every last one of them, "You'll be there. You've already, no man can number is there."

But then in the next breath, John was told, "Don't measure the court." Now you should appreciate this as we've studied Exodus and studied the whole structure now of the outside court. He was using the structure of the temple to give you a certain kind of imagery to hold on there. There are those gathered around the throne who when they gather in worship, they are sharing already in that heavenly inheritance because they're seated with Christ. It's theirs. So gathering is really important. I wish I could do like Elisha and say, "Lord, open their eyes so that they may see," and you would see right now heavenly courts and myriads of angels and they're all praising and worshiping God. If you could see, it's happening. Revelation 11 will end with giving you that sight.

But notice what he's doing here, he's providing a series of contrasts. There are those who gather and then there are those on the outside. The contrast here is coming by way of two cities. Did you notice it? There is the great city, which is Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified, and you say, that's Jerusalem. That's outside. And then there is the holy city, the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all. That's where you belong. That's where you are. There is Babylon, as Revelation will call it, and there is the heavenly Jerusalem. Two cities are contrasted here, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdoms of this earth. There's a heavenly Jerusalem and there is a Babylon summarizing all the cities of the earth in their collective stance against the Lord. So the imagery here that's being provided for us is you have the true people of God gathering, worshiping, marked, numbered, sealed, measured, protected, belonging to the Jerusalem which is above and then those on the outside who belong to Babylon.

Now this is what the vision is meant to capture, the saints are under his care but the struggle comes down to the mission. The struggle comes down to the mission. Notice verse 3, "I have given this authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth." And then verse 4 identifies these witnesses as the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. Now here's where interpretations generally go wacky, everyone trying to play pin-the-tail-on-the-witnesses. Nobody is told who they are so we have a whole history of interpretation trying to figure out who the two witnesses are. So we look for in the future two future men to come down to fit the bill and to do all of what is described here. I hope I'm making some progress in how to interpret Revelation here and look at this all symbolically. Generally, people will say, "Well, this must be Moses and Elijah that are coming in the future." But step back and look at the imagery again. Look at the picture. It's not hard. Lampstands have already been defined for you, haven't they? The lampstands, Revelation 1, are the churches. Me and you are "my witnesses." What has Scripture always told us about how truth is established? What has it always told us all the way back from the Old Testament? "I will establish my truth," it was established on the testimony of two witnesses. That's always been the principle. So what you have here then, is a description of our witness in this present age until the Lord Jesus Christ comes.

You'll notice that the time that is captured here for you, it is a specific time that is given, 1,260 days, three and a half years. This is why I stopped the reading of the law and said notice the time reference of Elisha's ministry. It's playing off of it. There are echoes from the past here. It was three and a half years that Elijah shut up the rain from the earth. Daniel 7 talks about the 1,260 days, three and a half years. But most of all, it's the span of Jesus' ministry. It's the span of Jesus' ministry. The whole message here, simply put, is that Christ has commissioned witnesses to go out and to speak his truth for a specific time and then the end will come. That's the imagery and that's the way the whole New Testament describes the mission of the church.

"And I give authority." Does that stand out to you? It should. Matthew 28, "I have been given all authority. Go therefore and preach. Go preach gospel." So the imagery here is, what we have here is the whole story is given, captured in this one swath of a vision to help us understand our story and struggle in the present. Now here's the application. Here's where it all hopefully begins to come together. What is the first thing that John receives to encourage the witness of the church? Notice here, that the first thing that's being captured here is how powerful the witness is. He is really having us think about how powerful it is what we do.

Look at verse 5, if anyone wants to kill them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to kill them, he must be killed in this manner. These have the power to shut up heaven so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. They have the power over the waters to turn them to blood and to strike the earth with plagues as often as they desire. Where's all that borrowed from? You know. Who went out and spoke and shut up the rains? Elijah. Who went out and turned waters to blood? Moses. It's saying your witness is just as powerful as that. That's what he's doing. So I've never seen that. Remember Revelation 8? When you pray, he's throwing fire back to the earth.

That was Revelation 8. When their prayers go up like bowls of incense, and they're interceded and they're mixed, and they come up into the presence of God, then he takes fire and he hurls it back on the earth in answer to your prayers. He's already described this.

So this is meant to encourage us and have us think about the truth of what we're doing. Listen to Jeremiah 5, "Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts: 'Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall consume them.'" I think we've had a lot of words this week used talking about fire and fury, haven't we? Really a remarkable week to preach this. I've heard more words this week of boasting about fire and judgment. I've heard a lot of language in Babylon this week. It's been pretty ferocious, hasn't it? "I will bring down fire and fury on North Korea like this earth has never seen before." Huh. Look at the war over words happening right now in this country. Look at what happened yesterday. It's a war over words. What has produced it? Well, it has produced in people mass discouragement and mass fear. Everyone's set on edge right now all over words. I mean, this is what everyone's worried about, a nuke. Racial divide. War. Where's this going? All by words this week. All by words.

What speech does the world really need? What speech should it fear? We're all backward, and we're all wrong. I know this, there's another speech that is far more powerful than anything you heard this week. It actually accomplishes what it says it's going to do. What is it? The greatest weapon, the greatest weapon of the church is the word of God. You know what's happening right now? The word is considered to be a hammer in Scripture that breaks rocks into bits. It's called a word that is sharper than any two-edged sword. It divides into hearts and it's division of joint and marrow and is a discerner of the intents and thoughts of the heart. It's happening right now as I'm speaking. It's working effectively. It's conquering to conquer. You know that the word of God right now has the power to open and close the kingdom of heaven. You tell me how powerful that is. You think about that for a minute, that we proclaim when someone believes and we announce it, the kingdom of heaven is opened to them and angels rejoice. But if anyone rejects it, the kingdom is closed to them, and hell awaits. Tell me what's more powerful, because it actually accomplishes that.

Now, this is exactly what Revelation 11 is telling us. What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. What you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. The word is so powerful, believe it or not, it actually has the ability to tear down the walls that racial tensions put up. The world will not accomplish this, by the way. It will not. The gospel can. That's how powerful this word is. It's what Christ has done.

Why do I think John is receiving this vision? Why do I think we need this vision? If someone asked me today, "What is the greatest danger to the church?" I would say, "It is an absolute loss of confidence in the word spoken." Absolute loss of confidence in it. What do you think would be the greatest temptation upon us? Well, we'd want to make it about everything else, right? Music, everything else. We're living in fear the word will not work. That's my challenge, that's your challenge, we have major problems right now.

You've seen all the multi-faceted assaults on the truth. We've come through a time of what we call postmodernism that all said, "You can have your truth, I can have my truth, you just can't tell me your truth is right for me, you can believe your truth, but hey, just don't press your truth on me." I guess Christianity could somewhat survive in that environment but that's not today. That's not the time anymore in which we live. It's already shifted, that we are absolutely being forced to accept whatever cultural norm is pushed upon us contrary to whatever God has established at creation. We're forced to accept it, and if you don't, watch out. That's where we are now. We're no longer in that postmodern ideal and if you don't, you're called all sorts of things, a misogynist, a bigot, a racial hater. And they'll legislate. You can have everything thrown at you today. That's where it's gone. That's where we are. You're still holding Jesus is the only way in the midst of that. How do you preach that? "You're still doing that? You're still telling me you guys believe in traditional marriage, a man and a woman for life? Where are you living?" Fear. I get a lot of fear with regard to how to do this and what to say and you know what happens, it just slowly silences. You don't even want to talk about this stuff anymore. When's the last time you ever heard a sermon on hell? Ever? You think the church is doing it at all? I'm not even sure it's believed by many evangelical Christians anymore.

And the way the church has coped in this environment is wanting to be viewed positively. I want to be viewed positively like the next guy. I really do. I don't want to be a jerk. I want to do it in love as best as I can but I don't want to be associated with hate. That's the last thing I want to be associated with. I do not want to be known as a hater. I don't want to be called a bigot. So we do everything we can to take the message and remove the sting of offense with it. It's all nice. It's all nice. And nicely leading people to hell. That's why messages are predominantly moral lessons that anyone could agree with. Anyone could agree with. Who could disagree with the moral lesson that we got today? I still marvel that our Christian communities that were once strong are totally tolerating and accepting of a witness that no one could disagree with, that no one would ever take offense with, and thought they did a good thing by sitting under them. And now we couch it that this is gospel. Now we say that we're preaching gospel, and I want to say today, in light of Revelation 11, we'll never be effective apart from the law, preaching the law and the gospel.

Revelation is saying to us, the witness of the church is a fire. Is a fire. The very purpose of the Holy Spirit is to do what? Convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. I don't want to tamper with his purpose. He is bearing witness in doing that to the work of the Son so the people would turn to him. Now remember, the purpose of the passage is to say our message is to look a lot like Jesus. That's what we're being created into. Well, what happened to him? Well, you could ask us, how did the world respond to Jesus? Well, he told us, "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, if you were a Babylon, the world would love you as its own. But because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, consequence, the world hates you." That's your plot. That's your plight in life. "Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his Master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." And then Jesus explained the purpose why the world hated him.

What did he say? He said this, "The world hates me because I testify of its works that they are evil." Who wants to be going around doing that? "You want to know," he said right in John 7, "if someone's truly from God. You want to have a test if what you're sitting under is from God? Here it goes, here it goes, you will know by the testimony." If someone speaks on their own authority, you know what the effect will be? The world will love them. Babylon will love it. But if they're seeking and speaking from God, he speaks his word and you know what happened in John 7, right, when he said that? He looked at the Jews and he said, "All of you are breakers of the law of Moses and that's why you want to kill me, because that's my testimony."

If the world loves our message, we are the greatest compromisers of all. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. You can never take the offense away. Jesus was called a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. That's what you are. Even if you do it in perfect, absolute love, you will be all the more offensive and that's why I think the next chapter is given in Revelation to unmask the architect of this. Who's the architect of all this? You get introduced to Satan, who from the beginning started this great problem when he went into the Garden of Eden and the first thing he challenged was what? "Did God say?" And he overthrew marriage as God had given it. First thing he did, he's back to it again. If you look at every last day described in the Scripture, and the struggle before the Lord came and exercised the final judgment, it was always a struggle. Enoch, Lot, Abraham, it was always a struggle over the truth. If he did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a herald, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, and if he rescued righteous Lot greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, that is how you know you belong. You're greatly distressed by all this because it's against God's law.

The struggle is to silence the witness. That's what we live with. Because we bear witness and testimony of ourselves and our hearts are evil, we don't hide it in ourselves, we say we're just as bad and we say that all people in the heart are desperately wicked and a love of the practice of darkness and remaining in darkness will undoubtedly lead you to hell forever. But that's not our end game in saying that. Our end game is we would love for you to know the wonderful forgiveness and peace of Christ. We would love for you to be justified by his grace. We would love for you to hear this good news that he is announcing and I understand I'm an offense to you, but I have to be so that he becomes sweet to you.

So the vision, then, is meant to tell the church, "Be faithful to your calling." There's real power in what we're doing. You don't see it right now but there's real power in what we're doing. As the church testifies both to the law and the gospel, heavens are shut up from rain. That's why we can't read providence and don't always understand it, but what it's saying to us is God is working through our witness. God is working. He's defending. He's helping. You have all sorts of interventions of God's providence and working as the church gathers, as the church is faithful, as the church preaches. As you go home and

pray, he is working. But know the heart of the conflict. Understand the heart of the conflict. And Revelation says, if you're going to be a child of God, you can't run from it. You just can't. You can't hide your lamp under a bowl. If everyone just says of us, we're just a bunch of nice people, nice guys, who everyone can get along with, I want you to know you look nothing like Jesus. Nothing. The church has the privilege of following his path.

After the testimony is completed, what happens? The two witnesses die. When our testimony is finished, there will be a beast, we'll come back to that, who rises out of the bottomless pit, who makes war, overcomes and kills, and the bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street of the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, and those from the people's tribes and tongues and nations are going to enjoy this. They're going to laugh. They're going to exchange gifts. They're not going to let us be buried. Those who dwell on the earth are going to make merry and the two, because these prophets, their witness was a torment to people on the earth, Revelation captures this struggle, that it will seem like we've lost. There may come a time where it seems that God's word has been totally defeated. Can't you somewhat feel that, at least in our time? I fully envision a time where this will be deemed an unlawful assembly. I could see it where the righteous are persecuted, and it seems that we lost, and God's truth was squelched out, and it seemed that Satan had won, and in the midst of that, the inspiration of the struggle is to say, "I know that story. That's not my story. That's Jesus' story. Mine is cast in his." When he went to the cross, he silenced his mouth, and they laughed at him, and they ridiculed him, and they said, "Get off the cross if you have this much power." And guess what? He died and in three days he got up. He got up. He was raised from the dead. And guess what this is telling you? That's exactly our plight. We follow that story.

"Come up here." That's the day of your resurrection after all this struggle. That's the day of the call of you to get out of the grave. That's the day of 1 Thessalonians 4. The voice of the archangel shouts and the trumpet of God sounds and says, "Come up." And we're up. And guess what happens? This is your rapture at the end when you get to go to be with the Lord forever. And it captures it here. The second woe is past. The third woe comes quickly. Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices and here's the last woe for the world. This is the woe. "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.' And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, 'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 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.' Then," here it is, "God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake." You know what just happened? Everything that you have longed to see and that you've struggled in living by faith in this time, all of a sudden feeling powerless, feeling conquered, you will have realized in a moment everything you've been doing was real and right, and it is seen. Your faith turns to sight.

What a vindication. I love what the Belgic says. I can't get over it, we'll close with this thought. "The faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honor." Listen to this. "The Son of God will profess their names before God his Father and the holy and elect angels. All tears will be wiped from their eyes and their cause," now think of this, this is so good, "at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil officers, will be acknowledged as the cause of the Son of God and as a gracious reward, the Lord will make them possess a glory such as the human heart could never imagine." That's the end of this. Revelation 11 gives you the whole story, but as it did it says you need to understand who you represent, a Savior you confess who died for you for the truth and who rose again victorious. You have to understand how it's going to go in this present age. But there are two cities. Where do you belong? Are you of Babylon? Or do you, by the Spirit in the heart, sealed, born again, belong to the holy city? "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod, and the angel said, 'Measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.'" Are you there? Do you believe? Well, I think you can answer that by asking, what place has the word of God in you? Are you willing to stand on it? Willing to die for that truth? For worship itself today is a gathering around the word. Do you love gathering around the word? That's what's sitting here. The book that we eat and digest, do you love it? I think that's the question we have to ask where we gather around a word of another kingdom where true peace and true righteousness dwells and that's what's held out for us. Let that motivate us then as we are his people holding fast to his word.

Heavenly Father, thank you for challenging us with a very powerful section of Scripture, understanding our mission, understanding the struggle and the various forms and ways that it comes all ultimately from the beginning as an assault on your word that Satan did in the garden, the grand architect, a murderer and a liar from the beginning. But we trust your word, for it is like a hammer that breaks in pieces. It is a fire that consumes. And our prayer, O Lord, is that we would remain faithful to that word for the great end that through it, the kingdom of heaven would be opened and people would be saved and enjoy true unity, true fellowship with God and with man, true love for neighbor, no matter the racial background for we are one in Christ, and that's how that bond is bridged and made. So make us faithful, bold, confident, and accepting that we're going to be called things, that we're going to be in offense, but we're willing to go through that for the sake of the elect, we're willing to face that so that that kingdom that will be shown on that day, there will be a multitude that no man can number. What a worthy cause to be a part of the gospel of the kingdom. Thank you, Father, for hearing us today, and thank you for blessing us with the time to hear your word. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.