

Worship Guide - Lake Mary

WORSHIP SERVICE -

11.28.2021

THE TWO WITNESSES - Part 2

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: The Church's mission to bear witness for Christ will be accompanied by the Spirit's power guaranteeing missional success.

Revelation 11:1-6

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.

- **Two Metaphors — Four Scenes**
- The **First Metaphor** is that of the **Temple of God** and the **Holy City**
- The **Second Metaphor** is that of the **Two Witnesses**.
- **Scene 1** - The **Spiritual Protection** of the Church (1-2)
- **Scene 2** - The **Invincible Proclamation** of the Church (3-6)
- **Scene 3** - The **Satanic Persecution** of the Church (7-10)
- **Scene 4** - The **Inestimable Prize** of the Church (11-13)

We will look at Scene 2 today.

II. THE INVINCIBLE PROCLAMATION OF THE CHURCH

FOUR MAIN QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL THE IDENTITY AND TASK OF THE TWO WITNESSES

1. WHAT IS THEIR MISSION?

V3 And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

- “*And I will grant authority*” - who is speaking here? It is the God / the Lamb
- This is a divine commissioning with a divine mandate from a divine source
- “*My two witnesses*” - it is clear that these witnesses are agents of the Lord, they are his.
- This is not the first time we encounter the word witness in Revelation.
- It is why John found himself exiled on Patmos.
- Rev. 1:1-2 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.
- In Rev. 1:5 John calls Jesus the Faithful Witness.
- Church of Pergamum, one of the martyrs named Antipas is called by Jesus, “my faithful witness.” (Rev. 2:13)
- The 5th seal--“*Those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.*” (Rev. 6:9)
- What is a witness? It is a legal term. It is one who sees an event and reports what they have seen.
- It is similar to another word, testimony or testify—which means to bear witness to something.
- It is a term that Jesus chose for his followers and it was what they were to do. (Luke 21:13)
- That is who and what we are—witnesses for Christ. We bear testimony to Christ.
- Why two witnesses? It is the minimum number required to establish a transgression of the law. Especially one in which the penalty was death. One witness was not sufficient to present evidence (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15)
- Jesus reaffirms this principle: “*That every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.*” (Matt. 18:16)
- Paul tells Timothy that a charge cannot be brought against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (1Tim. 5:19)
- Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs, two by two, to testify. (Luke 10:1)
- Luke records that two angels were sent to testify of the truth that Jesus rose from the dead. (Luke 24:4-5)
- Two angels testified when Christ ascended that he would return again. (Acts 1:10-11)
- What is their mission? They have been granted authority to prophecy.
- What does that mean? If the term witnesses in Revelation has to do with bearing witness for Christ, of testifying of Christ, then their mission to prophecy has to do with the preaching and proclamation of the gospel!
- The content of the prophecy is the gospel.
- John is using apocalyptic language to characterize the great commission task of preaching the gospel.
- What is the content of the gospel?
- The Gospel means “good news.”
- Good news about what? That the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ accomplishes redemption and restoration for all who believe!
- In his life, Jesus fulfilled the law and accomplished all righteousness on behalf of sinners who have broken God's law at every point.
- In his death, Jesus atones for our sins, satisfying the wrath of God and obtaining forgiveness for all who believe.
- In his resurrection, Jesus' victory over sin and death is the guarantee of our victory over sin and death in and through him.
- This is the gospel, God redeems fallen sinners by his grace.

- Proclaiming the good news means we also tell of the bad news, that this world is under judgment and there will be a final judgment where those who have rejected Christ will give account and face eternal punishment.
 - A faithful witness, faithfully proclaiming the gospel, bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the only, exclusive way to eternal life—there is no salvation found in any other name but the name of Jesus.
 - This is why the gospel offends. This is why the preaching of the gospel arouses the hostility of the world.
 - If your goal in life as a Christian is to avoid offense at all costs, then rest assured, the gospel that you make known to others is NOT the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- How long will they be on this mission? The duration of their mission is 1,260 days.
 - We've looked at this number already as 42 months / time, times, and half a time.
 - Rev. 11:2 "*and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months*".
 - It is the time that God's people, the Church, are in the temple and are spiritually protected throughout the tribulation.
 - The length of time that these two witnesses are divinely commissioned to prophecy is the same length of the time that the Church will live with relentless persecution and martyrdom.
 - It is the same length of time we will see in ch. 12 of how long the woman who flees the dragon is in the wilderness and where God takes care of her for 1,260 days. (Rev. 12:6)
 - These two witnesses are on mission for the entirety of the church age, where God's people will also be opposed, trampled, persecuted and killed.
- "Clothed in sackcloth"
 - It is a picture of the OT prophets who were bringing a message of impending judgment.
 - It is the wardrobe of lamentation and repentance.
 - It means that the nature of their message contains bad news.

2. WHO ARE THE TWO WITNESSES?

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

- The two witnesses are to be taken symbolically.
- And John has already told us who these witnesses are.
- Where have we seen lamp stands already?
- Chapters 1—3 they symbolize the seven churches, seven meaning the whole church of Jesus Christ.
- Rev. 1 - John sees a vision of seven golden lamp stands, and in the midst of the lamp stands he sees Christ. This is Jesus among and with his Church. Jesus himself reveals the meaning of the symbol. He says they are the seven churches.
- But why now only two lamp stands?
- Two lampstands represent the church in its role of witness.
- This is us engaged in the Great Commission.

3. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS?

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

- The second symbol that John says is representative of the two witnesses are the two olive trees.

- These symbols of lamp stands and olive trees come from the prophet Zechariah. (Zech. 4:1-14)
 - In his vision, the lampstand represents Israel. Zechariah asks what these two olive trees represent and he is told they represent the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.
 - The two olive trees represent Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the king and their work of rebuilding the temple.
 - How would they accomplish the monumental feat of rebuilding God's house? "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*" (Zech. 4:6)
 - Through the power of God's Spirit working through the people of God and the kingly and priestly offices, the temple will be brought to completion.
- John takes these OT symbols and reinterprets them to characterize the mission of the church to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.
 - God's people are now kings and priests; Rev. 5 speaks of those ransomed by the blood of the Lamb, "*and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.*" (Rev. 5:10)
 - Just like in Zechariah, where the mission to rebuild would be supplied with the power of the Holy Spirit... the church will accomplish her mission because God will supply His Spirit as the source of power that will determine the effectiveness of the church's witness.
 - It's the very thing Jesus promised his disciples.
 - **John 15:26-27** "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.
 - The Spirit will bear witness, and we also will bear witness.
 - As we testify of Christ, he is testifying of Christ through us—that is the source of the effectiveness of the church's gospel proclamation.
 - After the resurrection, Jesus tells his that the power needed for the effectiveness of their witness was coming.
 - Acts 1 he tells them, "*wait for the promise of the Father. You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in just a few days.*"
 - On the day of ascension, Jesus says to them, the source of your effectiveness is coming, the power for witness is coming...
 - **Acts 1:8** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
 - Here's the divine commission—be my witnesses
 - Here's the divine effectiveness for the mission—the gift and power of the Holy Spirit
 - This is our mission, this is our gospel mandate, this is the task we have been divinely commissioned for!
 - And God supplies the necessary effectiveness to match our task—the Holy Spirit.

4. WHAT IS THE GUARANTEE OF MISSIONAL SUCCESS?

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.

- What guarantee is there that the Church will accomplish her mission in the world to witness for Christ?
- V7 tells us that these two witnesses complete their assignment, "*And when they have finished their testimony...*"

- Mission accomplished! The Church is invincible in her proclamation— she cannot be stopped!
- The two witnesses which are the Church, are modeled after Elijah and Moses; v5-6 alludes to these OT saints.
- *“Power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying...”,* that happened during Elijah’s time. (1Kings 17)
- *“Power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague...”* that is what Moses did with the plagues. (Exodus 7-12)
- The Church’s time of prophesying, of being witnesses, will be in the spirit and power of Elijah and Moses.
- The OT ends with these words, *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.”* (Mal. 4:5)
- This doesn't mean that Elijah will come back, it prophesied John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah. (Luke 1:13-17; Matthew 11:11-14; 17:10-13)
- Together, Moses and Elijah are shorthand for the Law and the Prophets. Both testify of the Lord.
- Both of these men testified of the Lord to a world that was under the judgment of God.

THE CHURCH IS INVINCIBLE

- The language is figurative of the church’s invincibility in gospel witness until she is done.
- Those who seek to harm her will be met with the judgment of God.
- *“Those who seek her harm, fire comes out of their mouth to consume their foes.”*
- Those who oppose the witness of the Church, those who try to silence her witness, God will destroy in judgment.
- Take note that it is the two witnesses that have the power to bring about the judgment of God. The fire pours from their mouths, they have the power to shut up the rain, and call down plagues.
- What does that mean?
- The plagues affect the threefold aspect of the created world. (Sky, water, land)
- Where have we seen that before? The trumpet judgments. They affect the same aspects of creation.
- These judgments are inaugurated as God’s people are persecuted for the gospel they are proclaiming to the world.
- What this means is that as the church goes about its mission of faithful gospel witness, she bears the authority to administer these judgments.
- How do we do that? We do that by preaching the gospel!
- The same message of the gospel that leads some to life, if it is opposed will bring lethal judgment.
- 1 Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
- 2 Cor. 2:14-16 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
- Do you see the immense power we possess in the gospel?
- As you make known the gospel, and it is rejected, judgment is being administered.
- When Jesus sent out his disciples to preach, he told them that if those who hear them do not receive the message, they are to perform a prophetic sign, *“shake off the dust from your feet as testimony against them.”* (Mark 6:11; Matthew 10:14)
- This anticipates the final judgment.

- John 12:48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.
- The Church is invincible in her faithful proclamation of the gospel.

III. CONCLUDING EXHORTATION

SPIRIT DEPENDENCY

- We must depend on the Holy Spirit's power to enable us for the mission.
- **1 Cor. 2:1-5** And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
- Paul came in the power of the Spirit.
- This chapter is like a manual for evangelism.
- Know that you are spiritually protected from harm.
- Know that you will be opposed and suffer loss of some kind.
- But you are on a divine mission that will be divinely supplied with divine power.
- Be a faithful witness, preach a robust gospel, those appointed to eternal life will be saved, those who oppose and reject the message will face judgment.
- We need to repent of our lack of urgency in bearing witness for Christ and our lack of Spirit-dependency in our evangelistic efforts.

Romans 10:14-15a How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

- Don't underestimate the foolishness of preaching.
- It's how people hear the good news, believe the good news, and call upon the Lord to save them.
- Recognize that you and I have been sent!
- Everyday on mission!
- Jesus said that the gospel of his kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)
- The church's witness is invincible!