

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 15, Revelation 10-11, Trumpets and the Interlude

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 15, Revelation chapters 10 and 11, the Trumpets and the Interlude.

In the final plague, trumpet plague, which would be the sixth one mentioned in chapter 9, we've been introduced to four angels who may be the four angels holding the winds back at the beginning of chapter 7. Now, they are finally released and allowed to release their destructive judgment and wreak havoc on the earth.

And they do so in the form of a multitude or a large group of riders on their horses. And the four angels could be perceived here as the leaders of those riders on the horses. That's not clear, but that is possible.

Certainly, they're the ones responsible for releasing them. The number of the riders on the horses or the number of this cavalry is described in at least the English translation here in the New International Version that I'm reading from as 200 million. Literally, it is two times 10,000 times 10,000, which is kind of where we get 200 million.

But probably in the Greek text, it's meant to symbolize something like, it's meant to indicate a number that was beyond comprehension. A modern-day equivalent might be for someone to say there were at least a gazillion. That's not a number anyone can count.

It's just a way of saying there are so many you can't count it. So it's been common in the past to attempt to ask, where do we find a nation or a country that could have 200 million people in an army? And there's even been some suggestions as to who has that many or who could. But that's beyond John's point because he's not interested in 200 million literal members of a cavalry.

He's using a number that suggests, as I said, similar to our gazillion. It's so many you can't count it. So we miss the point when we try to look around and find a nation or country that could conceivably have a military of 200 million.

John isn't thinking in terms of 200 million. He's thinking in terms of a number beyond their comprehension. The description of this army or this cavalry actually overlaps very closely with the locus from the previous trumpet plague.

Notice they're described as having lion's teeth. They have animal and reptile features. They're associated with smoke and sulfur as well.

So clearly, this is to be understood not as a physical earthly army, but once again, using the symbolism of a mount of troops, using it symbolically to refer to a demonic onslaught, to refer to demonic supernatural beings, not a literal earthly army belonging to any nation. But unlike the locust, they go beyond just harming, and this may be the point of having a separate group. They go beyond just harming humanity.

Now, they are actually to put at least a third of humanity to death, one-third being an image of limitation. So this is not the final judgment, but in some way, they're allowed and permitted to put one-third of humanity to death. So, it intensifies beyond the fifth trumpet.

The question once again, is raised is how do we conceive of this? Is this to be understood as physical, literal death? Is this spiritual death? Is it a combination of the two? I have to admit that I am uncertain exactly what that is. It could be physical death. If it is, how is that accomplished? Certainly, spiritual death would fit.

You do find, at the very end of Revelation, people suffering both physical death, but also the second death, which is the lake of fire and complete separation from God. Is it possible that their ability to put people physically to death here is symbolic of complete spiritual death and complete separation from God? That is certainly possible. Uncertain.

These beings are responsible for, at the end of the day, deceiving humanity, which is the very thing that Satan does in chapter 12, the very thing the beast does in chapter 13. So perhaps you have this image of deception, these demonic beings deceiving all of humanity into idolatry and idol worship accompanied by their spiritual death, perhaps their physical death also. Though again, it's not clear how this would take place.

John is more interested in exploring the theological meaning and significance of God's judgment and not telling us, at least in the 21st century reading this, not being certain exactly what this might look like were we to witness it. Verses 20 and 21 play a significant role at the end of all this. And that is, the plagues primarily seem to be for judgment.

So, adding these all together, we might say that these plagues are poured out upon the idolatry, verse 20, the idolatry of humanity, those who would worship idols, by demonstrating the futility, the despair, the spiritual darkness, and ultimately the spiritual death, perhaps physical death, that results from that. To demonstrate that behind the idols they worship, behind the idolatry and the idolatrous system, lies this demonic onslaught that means to do them harm. And so, especially if you think about some of the readers in chapters 2 and 3 in the Churches in Revelation, their temptation to want to compromise with idolatrous Rome, this now allows them to

see the temptation to compromise and be involved in the idolatrous practice of Rome is not neutral, it's not harmless.

Instead, behind it lies the insidious attempt of Satan and his demons to destroy and harm God's people and, indeed, the entire earth. So primarily, these are plagues of judgment as they were in the days of Egypt. These are to be understood as plagues upon wicked, evil humanity in the world.

But there's also a slight suggestion that one of the intentions was to bring about repentance. Because verse 20 says that the rest of mankind that was not killed by these plagues still did not repent. So, in one sense, these plagues were designed to bring about repentance, yet instead, they further hardened humanity in judgment, much like they did in the days of Egypt.

So this verse is a repetition of the theme of the hardening of the Pharaoh. In response to the plagues, Pharaoh continued to harden his heart. And so now we find the same effect of the plagues on humanity.

Though one of their functions could be to bring about repentance, instead, they brought about judgment, and they further brought hardness to humanity so that they refused to repent. One important implication of this, I think, is that we said these plagues in chapters 8 and 9 anticipate; they're a harbinger of anticipation and almost a warning of the final judgment that is yet to come. And that's perhaps one of the reasons why that's only one-third.

This is a limited judgment and anticipates a final judgment, a limited judgment that should have brought humanity to repent, yet they refuse to. But this is to be seen as an indication of or anticipation of a warning of the future final judgment that is to come in chapters 19 and 20. But what is significant about that is when we conceive of the ungodly nations and the evil, wicked nations in chapters 19 and 20 as going into judgment and being thrown into the lake of the fire, we'll look at those images when we get there.

I think we should see that. Sometimes, I think we conjure up the idea that they get thrown there unfairly and are taken away unwillingly. So that is when people see and envision their final judgment, they are dragged kicking and screaming and they didn't realize things were going to be so bad, etc., etc.

I think a text like chapter 9 helps us put the language and, images and understanding of the theology of final judgment in perspective. That is, what's going on in chapter 9 is even though humanity suffers from judgment, they still refuse to repent. So, I take it that at the final judgment, humanity would still refuse to repent.

They would still rather choose judgment, however awful and horrible that would be than choose life and God's presence. They would rather face judgment than repent and acknowledge God's lordship. So I think chapter 9 helps us to see the final judgment is not one where you have people facing judgment and not wanting to and wanting to get out, but instead, you have people choosing judgment and eternally choosing judgment and refusing to repent because they would rather face an eternity of judgment in chapters 19 and 20 than repent and give God glory and acknowledge his sovereignty and lordship.

Now we said the seventh trumpet in the sequence in chapter 9 is delayed until chapter 11 and verses 15 through 19, which also then will apparently be the third woe. But before the seventh trumpet arrives, or the third woe arrives later on in chapter 11, we find another brief interlude, we might call it, in chapters ten and the first part of chapter 11. What this interlude does, as we suggested with the other interlude back in chapter 7, is that we should not understand this as a digression or an insertion of irrelevant material or an unrelated visionary piece of the sequence.

But instead, this interlude plays a crucial role in interpreting the meaning and the function of what has happened in chapters 8 and 9. So, chapters 10 and 11 explore the basis for the trumpet judgments in chapters 8 and 9 further. In other words, I think chapters 10 and 11 are further going to unpack what's going on in chapters 8 and 9, why they are, and also raise the question, what role do God's people play in this? What are God's people doing during this time? What is the situation in relation to God's people? The situation in chapters 8 and 9. This means that Revelation chapters 10 and 11 do not narrate separate events or a different time period from chapters 8 and 9. It further interprets the events. It further illuminates the events of chapters 8 and 9 by bringing in God's people and demonstrating their relationship to it. Now, in chapter 10 of Revelation, we find intriguingly a recommission of John to prophesy.

We already see that in chapter 1, John prophesies about the churches. In chapters 2 and 3, John is commissioned in chapter 1 by the risen Christ to prophesy to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3, and he brings them the prophetic message. But now John is recommissioned in chapter 10 to prophesy about the faithful witness of the church in chapter 11 and to prophesy about the fate of the nations and people from every tribe and tongue and language, as chapter 10 will tell us.

Also this section, chapter 10, is about the judgment that will fall on those who persecute the faithful witnesses in chapter 11. So you kind of see what's happening. The judgments of chapters 8 and 9 are precisely to be understood in light of God's judgment upon wicked humanity who persecute the two faithful witnesses in Revelation chapter 11.

So in Revelation chapter 11, we'll read the story of these two faithful witnesses who accomplish their witness, but at the end, they are put to death, and the whole world gloats over their death. In other words, the author is again explaining and interpreting chapters 8 and 9. The basis for God's judgment on wicked humanity, including the Roman Empire, is their rejection and persecution and even murdering of his faithful witnesses in Revelation chapter 11. Chapter 10 then introduces that.

Chapter 10 functions as an introduction, a commissioning of John to prophesy about that and now to interpret the nature of God's judgment and the function of the church as his faithful witness in chapter 11. Now, in chapter 10, the first two verses, what I want to do is just work through chapter 10 briefly and highlight a number of intriguing and, I think, significant important features in chapter 10. Chapter 10, verses 1 and 2. Let me read that first, and then we'll slow down and look at a handful of details in the text.

John says, Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head. His face was like the sun.

His legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll which lay upon his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion.

When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven say, seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write them down. Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven, and he swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it.

And he said there will be no more delay, or some translations might say, and time will be no more. But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished or fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants, the prophets. Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more, go take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.

So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth, it will be as sweet as honey.

I took the little scroll from the angel's hand, and I ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my stomach, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told you must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.

And there's that fourfold description that we find seven times throughout Revelation. Now, chapter 10 begins, again, this recommissioning scene. Now, John is going to be recommissioned to prophesy anew regarding the situation of the church and the relationship to judgment and to prophesy about the role of all the nations, tribes, language, and people from different tribes and tongues.

Chapter 10 begins this commissioning with John's vision of another angel. So, apocalypses are full of angelic beings. This angel now comes down from heaven.

So John still seems to be from chapters 8 and 9; John still seems to be seeing things from an earthly perspective. As we've seen, Revelation keeps shifting back and forth from heaven to earth. Now, John sees things from an earthly perspective as a mighty angel coming down out of heaven and, apparently, to earth.

In fact, he's described as standing on the earth and the sea, one foot in the sea, one foot on the land, suggesting probably his sovereignty over all things, his sovereignty over all of creation. But how this angel is described is rather unique. You really don't find any other angel in Revelation described in the way or to the extent that the angel here in Revelation 10 is described.

Most likely, when it comes to the identity of this, we should probably understand this angel as Jesus Christ himself. Notice a number of things about him. For example, the fact that he is clothed, he was robed in a cloud, perhaps recalling Christ coming on the clouds, especially from Daniel chapter 7, the son of man imagery from chapter 1 or Revelation 1 that John picks up on.

The fact that a rainbow is above his head recalls the rainbow back in Revelation chapter 4 and the throne room scene in connection with God. His legs are fiery pillars, recalling his feet as pillars of bronze back in Chapter 1, the description of Christ. Also, the fact that he now holds a scroll open in his hands.

I'll talk about that in a moment, but putting this all together, this angelic being that John sees is probably unlike any other angelic being in Revelation. That is because we are probably to understand this mighty angel as none other than the person of Jesus Christ who is clothed in the cloud, has a rainbow above his head, feet like pillars, and now comes holding a scroll. The significance of this scroll is, I think, well, first of all, to back up, the question that arises because we've seen a number of books or scrolls where we were referred, we found that Revelation 2 and 3 mentioned the book of life.

We were introduced to a scroll back in chapter 5 of Revelation, the scroll that was in the right hand of God that contained his plan of inaugurating his kingdom and establishing his kingdom on earth, bringing salvation and judgment. Now, we're

introduced to another scroll. It's called a little scroll because the Greek word here is actually what is called a diminutive.

So it's often, in other words, it has an ending on it that suggests the translation, a small or a little scroll. Although later on, it's simply called a scroll. Later on in chapter 10, it's only called a scroll, using the exact same word John used back in chapter 5 to refer to the scroll.

But the question is, what is this one? What is this scroll John sees now? I would suggest two features that point to the identity of the scroll. One of them is the fact that if it's true that this is the angel, that we're to identify the angel with Christ, then it is Christ who is holding the scroll in chapter 10. Furthermore, it's interesting that this scroll is described as opened using a word in a similar grammatical form as the word used back in chapter 5 of the scroll as sealed.

Now, we find Christ holding an opened scroll. So, adding these two up, since Jesus, if this angel is Jesus Christ, is holding the scroll, and since he now holds it open, we should probably identify the scroll with the same one from Chapter 5. The scroll in chapter 5 that was sealed and that got unsealed through chapter 6 and the seventh seal in chapter 8, now finally in chapter 10, the lamb who took the scroll, the slain lamb in chapter 5 who took the scroll from the right hand of God on the throne, now as a mighty angel holds the scroll, but now it stands opened, no longer sealed like it was chapter 5, now it stands opened. The other significant feature that would suggest the identity is behind the scroll in chapter 5, and the scroll in chapter 10 has the same Old Testament background as Ezekiel's chapter 2. Ezekiel chapter 2 provides a sort of the model or the intertext for the scroll in both chapter 5 and here in chapter 10.

Therefore, again, we should see this scroll in chapter 10 that the mighty angel who is Christ now holds open as the same scroll that as the slain lamb he was worthy to take, the sealed scroll he was worthy to take in chapter 5, now it has been unsealed, now it remains open and now he will give this scroll to John himself. This probably then suggests too that the seals and trumpets are, as I think the rest of Revelation will bear out, the seals and the trumpets are probably to be seen as preliminary judgments that are preliminary judgments of more judgments to come, especially of the final judgment to come in the future. Now, having said this, what are we to make of this chapter? Richard Bauckham, we've referred to him several times, and he understands chapter 10 like this.

He says and chapter 11 together, chapter 10 sort of provides an introduction to 11. In light of chapters 6 through 9, chapters 6 through 9 have basically been characterized by plagues, by judgment plagues upon the earth, and chapter 9 ends with the statement that those who did not die from the plague still refuse to repent.

And Baucom understands 10 as sort of a new strategy for establishing God's kingdom and reclaiming the world.

That is, so far, judgment hasn't done it. God has, and Baucom is not suggesting God tried something that didn't work, but now he's trying something else. It's more he's demonstrating that judgment is not enough.

It's not judgment in the form of the seals and the trumpet plagues that bring about repentance. People don't repent at the end of 9. But what will lead the nations to repentance? Baucom says chapters 10 and 11 are the answer. It's now John is going to prophesy.

Here's a fresh prophecy, a new strategy. Now, it's through the suffering faithful witness of the two witnesses in chapter 11 that God will win the world and that the world will be brought to repentance and become part of God's rule. Now, there may be some truth to that.

However, it seems to me that even in the 10 and 11, the dominant emphasis in that section is still one of judgment. And so I think that as opposed to seeing a shift in strategy, now here's the way that the nations will be one to repentance, although repentance does take place at the end of chapter 11 after the witness of the faithful, the two faithful witnesses, although we'll talk about that when we get there. At the same time, it appears that judgment is still the dominant theme, so chapters 10 and 11 are not a new strategy now for bringing the nations to repentance, but instead demonstrate why the judgment of the world comes and how God's judgment upon the world comes.

It comes as a result of his faithful witness. It comes as a result of the faithful witness whom the world rejects and whom the world persecutes and eventually puts to death. So that's how I understand chapters 10 and 11.

John is recommissioned to prophesy, but now he's going to explain in more detail the nature of God's judgment, how God's kingdom is going to be established in terms of his judgment on the world, and that is because the world, as a result of the faithful witness of his two witnesses in chapter 11, the world rejects and persecutes and puts to death, and that becomes the basis of his judgment upon them, which ends up happening in trumpet number seven that occurs later on in chapter 11. Now, in verses 3 and 4, and then in chapter 10, another interesting feature is that we find a voice in verses 3 and 4. Actually, we find seven thunders at the end of verse 3. He gave a loud shout, and when he shouted, the voices of seven thunders spoke. So now we're introduced to the sound of the voices of seven thunders, and what is intriguing is that it doesn't seem to tell us much right there, but the next verse suggests apparently these voices said something that John understood and could have written down, yet he is told not to.

Instead, he's told to seal them up. The rest of the book of Revelation is unsealed. At the very end of the book, a text we looked at already, John is told not to seal the contents because sealing was meant to hide and cover, that is to suggest something is not going to take place or this is not for the present time.

So John is told not to seal his book, but in this one place, he is told to seal up these seven thunders. And the question is, what might these seven thunders have been, and why is John told to seal them up? A couple of possible explanations, and by the way, note the number seven again, suggesting not just seven literal thunders but seven being the image of a symbol of perfection, fullness, and completion. One possibility that some have suggested is that John is not allowed to divulge the content of these seven thunders; whatever they may be, we don't know because he sealed them up.

The fact that John is not allowed to divulge the content suggests that God has not revealed everything, suggests that God's plans at some level still remain hidden, that the way God's going to fulfill his purposes still remains a mystery to some degree, and that we don't know everything. That's one possibility. Another possibility that's been suggested is, and this is true of the next two, I'll just look at three, but the next two, and that is the number seven in relationship to thunders, places this within the context of the seven seals and the seven trumpets.

So the seven thunders would be seven further judgments. So you would have the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and then seven thunders as well. And the second view suggests that by sealing them, that is, not allowing them to take place, God is graciously cutting short his judgment.

So, there are more judgments that could have taken place, but out of his grace and mercy, God has cut short his judgment on humanity. A third approach to this is that, like the second one, the third approach says this is another series of plagues, like the seven seals, seven trumpets, and now seven thunder plagues. This is another series of plagues that God could send, but he won't do so as he did with the trumpets and bowls.

God will not send them. Instead, John is told to seal them up so that they won't take place because humanity has refused to repent. And that's how chapter nine ends. So God is not going to send any more preliminary judgments like the trumpets and bowls.

Instead, things are going to march right ahead to the final judgment. God is going to pour out his wrath and his judgment, and there will be no more preliminary judgments like the seals and the trumpets. Now, the seven thunders, which could be

representative of further judgment, plague judgments, are going to be sealed up or suspended.

They will not take place because God is no longer going to simply deal with humanity through preliminary judgments, but that now he will consummate his purposes for history, including the final judgment. There also may be some truth to chapter number one, that maybe one of the effects, if not the primary intention, one of the effects of doing this is to suggest that there is some information we don't know. God has not divulged his full plan.

And so that's further warning against anyone who would, with too much confidence or even arrogance, claim to know exactly how Revelation is going to be fulfilled in the future. But in five through seven, we find the angel's words now. The angel being identified, most likely, with the person of Jesus Christ, the slain lamb.

Now, we have a different image. Jesus, on the one hand, was seen as the exalted son of man in chapter one. He was also the lion from the tribe of Judah.

Then, he was the slaughtered lamb. Now he appears as a mighty angel. Again, the author working with apocalyptic imagery, seeing Christ from different perspectives.

Now he is the sovereign Lord who stands over all of creation, one foot on the land, one foot on the sea, which is emphasized a couple of times. And in verses five and seven, this is what he says. Then, the angel that I had seen standing on the sea, first of all, raises his hand to heaven and swears an oath.

And then he says this: there will be no more delay, or literally, time will be no longer. But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished just as he announced to his servants, the prophets. Again, John linking his vision back with the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic text.

He stands at the climax, the fulfillment of the prophetic tradition. Now, I want to look a little bit at this language of, in five through seven, this language of, and time will be no more, or there will be no more delay. Before we do that, one important thing to realize is much of what is going on here with this angel, and the speech takes us back to the Old Testament again, to the book of Daniel.

And this time, Daniel chapter 12 and verse seven, particularly. Actually, I'm going to start with verse; I'll start with verse one of chapter 12, the very last chapter of Daniel, which then apparently is one of the prophetic texts that John now is clearly indicating will find its fulfillment. The final fulfillment and consummation of the promises of his servants, the prophets, including Daniel, are now finally realized.

So Daniel 12 ends, at that time, Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress, such as not happening from the beginning of nations until the end. But at that time, your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered.

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise and who will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.

Many will go here and there to increase knowledge. Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them asked the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters on the river, how long would it be before these astonishing things were fulfilled? And the man, verse seven, the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand, which is alluded to in chapter 10, the angel lifting his hand to heaven, lifted his right hand and his left hand towards heaven.

And I heard him swear by him, the same thing that the angel does in Revelation 10, by him who lives forever saying, it will be for a time, times and half a time. Now, it's interesting that Daniel uses that language, it will be for a time, times and half a time. John says, no, time will be no more.

Why? Because what Daniel and the other prophets are anticipating now will finally find fulfillment. So there's no more need of a historical sequence. There's no more need for a time in which God will inaugurate these things.

But now the consummation will finally come. What the prophets promised will now finally come, and there will be no more delay. So when John says time will be no more, he's not saying time ceases to exist, and we're just in some odd temporal existence.

He's saying instead that God's progress of history will finally reach its culmination and its consummation. The end will finally come, and there will be no more need for God to work in history to bring about his purposes, but the consummation will come. The way to understand this, too, is to bring this all into this broader context.

I think this, again, is partially a response back to chapter six, verse seven, where the souls of those under the altar are told, they wonder how long, oh Lord, and they're told to wait a little while longer until their number gets accomplished. Literally, they're told to wait a little time or a short time. Now, in chapter 10, verses 6 through seven, we find that time is no more.

It has now reached its culmination. It has now reached its fulfillment. So that when the seventh trumpet, as the angel goes on and says, when the seventh trumpet is sounded, the complete judgment and the complete defeat of the kingdom of this world will result in the emergence and the complete consummation and the arrival of God's kingdom.

Which, again, takes place in chapters 11, 15 through 20. So, putting this together, then Revelation 6.10 asks, how long, oh Lord? And God tells them, wait a little while longer, a short time, a little time, until the number of your persecuted is accomplished and completed. Now, in response to that cry, the angel finally comes and says, time will be no more.

That is, the consummation is now about to arrive. No more thunders, no more judgment. Now, the final culmination, the final answer to the saint's cry, is about to take place.

The delay is now over. And so then, in chapter 11, the author makes clear that this will actually take place through the suffering witness of the church. So how, again, it's as if the author backs up a little bit.

How will this eventually arrive? How will this final judgment and answer to the saint's cry arrive? It will come about by the faithful witness of the church. God's kingdom is being established, ironically, through his kings and priests who suffer even death, persecution, and death because of their faithful witness. And that is what will bring about the end time kingdom.

That is what will bring about the final judgment. Now, the angel looks forward to that and says the time is up. There's no more delay.

The cry of the saints is about to be answered. God is about to judge in response to the faithful witness of his church. In chapter 11, this will issue in God's judgment of his people and the final vindication of his saints.

The promises and messages of the Old Testament prophets are now about to reach their final culmination. And time will no longer be necessary. Historical process of bringing that about will reach its end and its culmination.

As a result of that, then in verses 8 through 11, or actually starting with verse 8, then the voice I heard from heaven spoke to me once more. And the voice tells him to go take the scroll. This scroll is open in the hands of the mighty angel, who is probably Jesus Christ; now John is told to go take that scroll.

So, notice the chain. If this is the same scroll from chapter 5, notice the chain. The scroll is in God's hands.

Then Christ takes it as the one who is worthy to open the scroll. Now that he has opened it, now Jesus gives the scroll to John. The first thing John is told to do is to take the scroll from the hand of the angel, and then he is told to eat it.

It is an interesting feature but something we certainly would expect in an apocalyptic-type text. This imagery of eating the scroll and the fact that John goes on and says when you eat it, it will turn bitter in your stomach, though in your mouth it is sweet. So when John begins to eat it, clearly an apocalyptic image, it is actually sweet while he is eating it.

But when it gets into his stomach, and he begins to digest it, it becomes bitter and it becomes sour. This language comes, once again, out of the book of Ezekiel. Chapter 22, a book that we said, forms the basis for the scroll back in chapter 5 as well.

Now, we find it playing a role in the description of the scroll and John's relationship to the scroll in 2. And notice what happens. In chapter 2 of Ezekiel, I'll start with verse 3, he said, addressing Ezekiel, Son of Man, I am sending you to the Israelites to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me. They and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day.

The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, this is what the Sovereign Lord says. And whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are a rebellious house, they will know that a prophet has been among them.

And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid.

You must speak words to them. Verse 8: but you, son of man, listen to what I say. Do not rebel like that rebellious house.

Open your mouth and eat what I give you. And then here's what happens next. Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me.

In it was a scroll that John drew on chapter 2 back in Revelation 5. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and words of mourning. Then, in chapter 3 of Ezekiel, he said to me, Son of Man, addressing Ezekiel, eat what is before you, eat the scroll, then go and speak to the house of Israel.

So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he says, son of man, eat the scroll I'm giving you and fill your stomach with it. So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

This is the language John draws on in the scenario of him taking the scroll from the one who, this mighty angel, holds the open scroll, much like John took an open scroll out of his hand in Ezekiel chapter 2. And then John eats it in an apocalyptic fashion modeled after Ezekiel 2 and 3. John eats it, and it becomes sweet in his mouth, but it becomes bitter in his stomach. This language of sweetness and bitterness is probably understood in terms of the character of John's message. That is, it's interesting that he begins with bitterness; it's sour in his stomach.

You'd think he'd go the opposite direction, starting with it's sweet in his mouth, but then it's bitter in his stomach. He begins with the sourness. I wonder because, number one, it appears to me that the sourness, the sweetness, and the sourness probably symbolize a message of salvation, but also a message, the sourness, a message of judgment.

And putting the sourness first, perhaps, is a way of emphasizing the message of judgment that now John is to begin to speak. So sweet and sour, sweet and bitter, are meant to describe probably not the effects of actually eating a scroll, though that certainly would give one a stomachache, symbolically describing the message that John is about to proclaim. It is a message of both salvation but primarily it will be a message of judgment.

Now chapter 10 then, this re-commissioning scene in chapter 10 provides the setting and provides the backdrop for chapter 11. Chapter 11 can then probably be seen as the main part of the scroll's content. There's a lot of speculation as far as what is the precise content of the scroll.

If the seals and the trumpets are sort of preliminary judgments, now, in chapter 10, John is re-commissioned to prophesy primarily a message of judgment. Where do we find the contents of that scroll that John gets and John eats in chapter 10? At the very least, it encompasses chapter 11. Some have suggested it may go all the way through chapter 19, which still is a judgment scene.

Others have suggested that it may go all the way through the end of chapter 22. And we'll return to that a little bit later. But at the very least, chapter 11 seems to be at the heart of John's message or the message of the scroll that John now eats.

But at the same time, I'm not sure we can limit it just to that. I think you can make a compelling case that maybe the rest of the book, all the way to chapters 21 and 22, would comprise the content or the message of the scroll that John eats. A message consisting of both judgment and salvation as well.

Now, in chapter 11, following John's commission in chapter 10, this is the message, or at least the beginning of the message, that John is to deliver. And the question it

answers and raises is, how is God going to bring about his purposes for establishing his kingdom? Particularly his purpose, which we find in the seals and the plagues, for example, his purpose of judging humanity as a response to the cries of his people. How is it that God will consummate his purposes in the world? Chapter 11 answers that by introducing us to the two faithful witnesses that God has established God has appointed to be his witnesses.

And it is through his witnesses that God will consummate his purposes for establishing his kingdom. It's through his witnesses who are rejected and who are persecuted and even put to death that God is going to bring about his judgment on the entire world, which then culminates in the seventh trumpet of chapter 11. So again, chapter 11 is playing a crucial role.

It's forming the basis. What role does the church play in the context of all these judgments? On what basis is God pouring out his judgments? How will that lead to God establishing his kingdom and judging wickedness and answering the cry of the saints to avenge them? It's through the suffering witness of his people who are rejected and treated with hostility and eventually put to death in Revelation chapter 11. Now, Revelation chapter 11 introduces us to two images that, once again, we have to deal with.

We've seen John do this quite a bit, introduce us to different images, sometimes referring to the same thing, sometimes referring to other things. But here in chapter 11, we are introduced to two different images. One of them is of a temple that gets measured.

Chapter 11 begins with John being given a reed and told to measure a temple. The second image is one of two witnesses, starting in verse three, where God then gives his power and authority to his two witnesses to go out and prophesy. Now, one of the questions we obviously need to answer again, as we have in many chapters, is who in the world or what are these two images? What is their background and meaning? What might they refer to? Who are the two witnesses? What or who is this temple that gets measured? How do these images relate to each other? What do they signify? How do they relate to what's going on in this broader section with chapter 10 and chapter 11? But before we go on then, let me read the section.

I will simply read the section up until verse 14, where, starting with 15, we're introduced to the trumpet. I will read that section later, but I'll stop at verse 13, and we'll simply go that far. Chapter 11, verse 1. I was given a reed like a measuring rod and I was told, go and measure the temple of God and the altar and count the worshippers there, but exclude the outer court.

Do not measure it because it has been given over to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months, and I will give power to my witnesses, and they will

prophecy for 1260 days in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the Earth.

If anyone tries to harm them, fire will come from their mouths and devour their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have the power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time that they are prophesying, and they have the power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth and every kind of plague as often as they want.

Now, when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days, men from every person, tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial.

The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate by sending each other gifts because these two prophets tormented those who live on the earth. But after these three and a half days, a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, come up here, and they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies looked on.

At that very hour, there was a severe earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified, and they gave glory to the God of heaven. Now, in this section, we're introduced to a description of these two features.

John is told to measure a temple, and he's given a rod to do so. Intriguingly, he only measures part of it, and the rest of it is thrown out to the Gentiles. How do we understand that? How do we understand this period of 42 months that the part of the temple is thrown out to the Gentiles to be trampled? And then, who are these two witnesses? How do we understand that during this period of 1260 days, they're allowed to prophesy? How are we to understand their ministry of being able to devour their enemies from the fire that comes out of their mouths and shut the sky so it doesn't rain? How are we to understand that this beast is coming out of the abyss and putting them to death and lying in the street so all the world can see for three and a half days, and finally, they are raised at the very end of this before the whole watching world? So there are a number of issues that we need to wrestle with in figuring out what is going on in chapter 11 and, what is the relationship between these two images, and what they are saying about this message that John is to proclaim. So, in the next section, we'll take up the question of the identity of these two images and some of the other issues that we need to deal with in order to make sense of Revelation chapter 11.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session number 15, Revelation chapters 10 and 11, the Trumpets and the Interlude.