

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 15,

Revelation 10-11: Trumpets and Interlude

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Hey everyone, welcome to another Deep Dive. This time we're going to be taking a look at Revelation chapters 10 and 11. It's going to be intense but really insightful, and our source material is a lecture from Dr. Dave Mathewson.

He's such a great resource when it comes to unpacking Revelation. He really is, and these chapters are just full of symbolism and deep theological meaning, so I'm excited to dive in. Yeah, me too.

Let's get right into it. Okay, so Dr. Mathewson starts off by talking about the sixth trumpet and how it unleashes this massive demonic army. It's described as being 200 million strong.

200 million! That's a lot of demons, even if it's just a metaphor. That's a terrifying thought. Yeah, that number is pretty intense, but Dr. Mathewson actually says that we shouldn't take that number literally.

It's more like saying a gazillion, you know, just to emphasize how overwhelming this demonic force really is. Okay, so it's not so much about a specific number of demons but more about the overwhelming nature of evil in the world. Exactly.

It's about conveying the sheer scale of this spiritual battle that's taking place, and when you look closer at the description of this army, you see some really fascinating details, like the locusts from the fifth trumpet. They have lion's teeth and other animalistic or reptilian characteristics. All very classic demonic imagery.

It's almost like John, the author of Revelation, is painting this picture of pure, unadulterated evil. You know, you can almost see it in your mind. Absolutely.

He's using these really vivid descriptions to help us grasp the reality of the spiritual forces that are at work here, and unlike the locusts, which primarily just tormented people, this army has the power to actually kill one-third of humanity. Whoa, one-third of humanity. That's heavy stuff.

It really is, and it raises some serious questions about the nature of God's judgment. What kind of death is being described here? Is it physical death, spiritual death, or both? Or maybe even like a complete separation from God. Right.

Dr. Mathewson suggests it could be any of those things. That's a sobering thought, which brings us to this bigger question about the purpose of the plagues. Are they purely about punishment, or is there something more to it? That's a great question, and Dr. Mathewson argues that the plagues aren't just about punishment.

They're actually meant to reveal the destructive forces behind idol worship. You know, they show the ultimate consequences of choosing these false gods over the one true God. So it's not just about God striking people down randomly.

It's a consequence of their choices, a consequence of turning away from him. Precisely, and it's not like God doesn't give people a chance to repent. Dr. Mathewson points out how even after experiencing these plagues, many people still refuse to turn back to God.

So they're doubling down on their bad choices. It's harder and harder. Yes, exactly.

It's a powerful reminder that some people will choose judgment over repentance no matter what. And it leads to Dr. Mathewson's point that those who ultimately face God's wrath in the end will do so willingly. They will have consistently rejected his grace.

Wow, that's a tough pill to swallow, but it makes you think. Okay, so now we get to chapters 10 and 11, which feel like a bit of a pause before the seventh trumpet. I'll admit I was a little lost here.

What's the purpose of these chapters? Yeah, these chapters can seem a little out of place at first, but Dr. Mathewson clarifies that they're not just some random side story. They actually give us some really critical context for understanding everything that came before, especially the trumpet judgments. Okay, that makes more sense.

So what's the key to unlocking these chapters? Well, the recommissioning of John in chapter 10 is really central. His task now is to prophesy specifically about the faithful witness of the church and the judgment that's coming to those who persecute them. So these chapters are directly connecting the trumpet judgments to what happens to God's people.

Exactly. And it sets the stage for the intense imagery and events that follow. Speaking of intense imagery, we can't ignore that mighty angel in chapter 10.

He's described in such a powerful, awe-inspiring way. He really is. Clothed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head, legs like fiery pillars.

Yeah. It's pretty striking imagery. So who is this angel? Dr. Mathewson believes that this angel is probably Jesus himself.

That makes sense given the descriptions of Christ elsewhere in Revelation and how apocalyptic literature often uses symbolism to portray him. Exactly. It's all about understanding the layers of meaning within these symbolic descriptions.

And what about that open scroll the angel is holding? I remember there was a sealed scroll mentioned earlier in Revelation. You've got a good memory. Dr. Mathewson suggests that it's actually the same scroll from chapter 5, which represents God's plan for his kingdom.

Now it's open, meaning God's plan is being put into action. So what was once hidden is now being revealed, and things are starting to move towards their ultimate fulfillment. Precisely.

And Dr. Mathewson even connects this scroll back to the book of Ezekiel. He highlights the shared imagery and how these events are rooted in Old Testament prophecy. It's all connected.

That's fascinating. But then we have this super mysterious element in chapter 10 of Seven Thunders. John hears them, but he's told not to write down what they say.

What's the deal with that? Ah, yes. The sealed thunders. One possibility Dr. Mathewson puts forward is that it's a reminder that we don't get to know everything about God's plan.

Some things remain hidden. That's kind of frustrating. It is.

But I guess it's also kind of humbling, right? Yeah, I guess so. It reminds us that God is ultimately in control, even when we don't understand everything. Exactly.

And another interpretation is that the sealed thunders represent God holding back his full judgment out of mercy. So there could have been even more plagues, more suffering, but God chose to restrain himself. Precisely.

It's a glimpse of God's grace even amidst judgment. That is reassuring. Is there another interpretation that Dr. Mathewson mentions? The third option he presents is that the sealed thunders signify a direct move toward the final judgment.

No more warnings, just the ultimate culmination of God's plan. Okay, so things are about to get serious. It really makes you consider the weightiness of what's unfolding here.

It definitely does. And then to add to the drama, the angel declares, "Time will be no more. Whoa, wait a minute.

Does that mean time literally ends? No need to panic. Okay. Dr. Mathewson explains that in the context of Revelation, this phrase signifies the culmination of God's plan, the fulfillment of his promises.

So not the end of time itself, but the end of the waiting period. Exactly. It's the arrival of final judgment and the vindication of his people.

Remember the martyrs in chapter six crying out, "How long, O Lord, and being told to wait. Well, this is the end of that waiting. The time for action has arrived.

Exactly. And then we have this scene where John eats the scroll, and it's sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his stomach. What's the symbolism there? Once again, Dr. Mathewson explains that this imagery is drawn from Ezekiel and represents the dual nature of John's message.

It's both salvation and judgment. Sweet because it offers hope and redemption; bitter because it announces God's wrath against wickedness. Exactly.

It's like two sides of the same coin. God's justice and mercy are intertwined. That's deep.

So Dr. Mathewson believes that chapter 11 reveals the core content of that, detailing how God will establish his kingdom. Right. And in chapter 11, we encounter those two central images, the measured temple and the two witnesses.

Yes. Those are the two things I really wanted to unpack today. I'm definitely curious to learn more about them.

Okay. Let's start with the measured temple. Dr. Mathewson points out that John is told to measure the temple, but to leave out the outer court because it's been given over to the Gentiles.

Right. So what does that mean? Well, measuring something signifies claiming possession and authority. So this act of measuring the temple symbolizes God's ultimate ownership, even though parts of it have been defiled.

So even though the Gentiles are trampling the holy city for those symbolic 42 months, God is still in control. Exactly. Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that this timeframe of 42 months or 1260 days represents a period of intense persecution and oppression for God's people.

And it's during that exact timeframe that the two witnesses are given their power to prophesy. It's like they're a beacon of light shining in the darkness. Precisely.

Their ministry is a powerful contrast to the forces of evil that are trying to dominate the world. And their supernatural abilities are pretty hard to miss. What's the significance of those? Dr. Mathewson explains that those abilities- the fire, the plagues, the control over the weather- all point back to God's power and his judgment against those who oppose him.

So it's like they're mirroring the plagues that were sent as judgment earlier in Revelation. But this time it's God's people who are wielding that power. Exactly.

And remember how Dr. Mathewson connected those powers to the Old Testament prophets like Elijah and Moses? Yes. It's like those two witnesses are carrying on that prophetic legacy, confronting the world's wickedness and proclaiming God's truth. Right.

Which makes their ultimate fate even more tragic. Remember, they're killed by the beast from the abyss. Oh, right.

I'd almost forgotten about that. It's easy to get distracted by all the amazing things they can do, but their faithfulness comes at a cost. Yes, it does.

Dr. Mathewson highlights that their martyrdom emphasizes how following Christ often involves suffering. He reminds us that faithfulness doesn't guarantee an easy life, and sometimes it even leads to death. It's a difficult truth to accept, but it's a reality for many Christians throughout history and even today.

What about the significance of the beast killing them? Well, it reminds us that this beast represents the ultimate enemy, the embodiment of evil and rebellion against God. So by killing the witnesses, the beast is essentially declaring war on God's people and on God himself. That's terrifying.

But if God is truly in control, as we've been talking about, how can he let something like that happen? That's a question that has troubled believers for centuries. But I think it's important to remember that God's ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. We may not always understand why he allows suffering, but we can trust that he has a purpose for everything, even in the midst of tragedy.

That's a good reminder. So what happens next? Does God just let the beast win? Absolutely not. This is where we see the incredible power of God's love and justice on full display.

Remember how their bodies were left lying there in the street for three and a half days? Well, after that time, they are resurrected. Oh, wow. So they come back to life.

That is, I mean, pretty wild. It really is. So even though the beasts seem to have triumphed, you know, with their deaths, God still had the final say.

Exactly. Their resurrection isn't just some random event. It's this powerful symbol of God's ultimate victory over evil and the vindication of his faithful servants.

OK, so it's like a mini resurrection, like echoing Christ's victory over death. Exactly. Dr. Mathewson points out that parallel, too.

And pointing towards the ultimate resurrection of all believers. Right. That's incredible.

So they come back to life. And then what? What do they do? Well, they ascend to heaven. No way.

Right in front of their enemies. So they don't like to stick around to, you know, get revenge or anything. Nope.

Wow. That's quite the exit. It really is.

Dr. Mathewson points out that this ascension emphasizes their ultimate vindication and their entrance into God's presence. OK, so it's like a triumphant return home after this long and difficult battle. That's really beautiful.

Even though they suffered and died, they ultimately end up in a much better place. Their story reminds us that earthly suffering is temporary, while eternal reward awaits those who remain faithful. That is a very encouraging thought.

OK, so this dramatic story of the two witnesses, it's not just a random episode, right? Like, how does it fit into the larger narrative of Revelation? You're exactly right. Their ascension happens right before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Whoa.

So their witness, even their death and resurrection, acts as a catalyst for this final judgment. That's what Dr. Mathewson suggests. The seventh trumpet signals the end of the age, the complete and utter defeat of evil, and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

Wow. It's the climax of the entire book of Revelation. OK, so let's rewind for a second here.

We started with the plagues as a warning. Then we saw the demonic army representing the growing power of evil. And then these two witnesses represent the faithful resistance of God's people, which leads to their vindication.

And ultimately, the seventh trumpet announces the final judgment. You got it. There's a clear narrative arc here highlighting the spiritual battle that plays out throughout history.

It's like a symphony building towards this powerful crescendo. That's a great way to put it. So how does Dr. Mathewson connect all of this to the lives of everyday Christians? What's the takeaway for us? He emphasizes that chapters 10 and 11 offer incredible insight into the nature of faithfulness.

Yeah. Especially in a world that can be hostile to Christianity. Right.

The experience of the two witnesses, their suffering, their death, their resurrection, mirrors the challenges the church has faced throughout history and continues to face today. So it's not just a story about two random guys from a long time ago. It's like a reflection of what it means to follow Christ in a world that doesn't always welcome him.

Exactly. And it's a powerful call to perseverance and unwavering commitment to Christ, even when it costs us everything. Yeah.

I mean, it's a challenging message for sure. But I think it's also encouraging in a way. You know, it means that those who suffer for their faith aren't alone.

They're part of this long line of faithful witnesses who have gone before them. And they have this promise of ultimate vindication and reward. That's a beautiful way to put it.

And Dr. Mathewson says it's a reminder that God sees our struggles and that ultimate victory is his. But he also challenges us to examine our own hearts. Are we willing to stand firm in our faith, even when it's hard? Are we willing to be witnesses for Christ, even in the face of opposition and persecution? Those are tough questions to ask ourselves, you know.

It's easy to get caught up in the dramatic events of Revelation and all the symbolism. But I think the real challenge is applying these truths to our everyday lives. You're exactly right.

Revelation isn't just about predicting the future. It's about understanding the spiritual realities we're living in right now. Yeah, it's about living out our faith in a world that can often feel very dark and chaotic.

We live in a world where evil still seems to have a lot of power. But we also have the hope of Christ's ultimate victory. And that hope should give us the courage to live boldly for him, to be witnesses for Christ in a world that desperately needs his love and truth.

Absolutely. It all circles back to those core themes we talked about at the beginning. God's judgment, the role of the church, and the fulfillment of his kingdom.

Chapters 10 and 11 have shown us how those themes are beautifully intertwined. They really have. It's like a tapestry with all these different threads weaving together to create this complex but ultimately hopeful picture.

That's a great analogy. Dr. Mathewson has done a fantastic job of guiding us through these challenging narratives. He really has.

And I'm sure you're starting to see how relevant they are for your life, too. Definitely. They're resurrected.

After three and a half days. No way! So even though it seemed like the beast had won, you know, God still had the final say. Exactly.

And it's not just some random event- their resurrection. It's a powerful symbol of God's ultimate victory over evil and the vindication of his faithful servants. Okay.

So, like, a mini resurrection. Right. Echoing Christ's victory over death and pointing towards the ultimate resurrection of all believers.

Exactly. Yeah. Dr. Mathewson points out that parallel, too.

That's incredible. So they come back to life and then what? What happens? They ascend to heaven. Wow.

Right there in front of their enemies. Wow. That's quite the exit.

It really is. Dr. Mathewson points out that this ascension emphasizes their ultimate vindication, you know, and their entrance into God's presence. So even though they suffered and died, they ultimately end up in a much better place.

Exactly. Their story, you know, reminds us that earthly suffering is temporary. While eternal reward awaits those who remain faithful.

That is a very encouraging thought. Okay. So this whole dramatic story with the two witnesses, it's not just a random episode, right? Right.

It's all connected to the larger narrative. Exactly. Immediately after the witnesses ascend, we get the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

Whoa. Okay. So their win is even in their death and resurrection.

It acts as a catalyst for this final judgment. That's what Dr. Mathewson suggests. Wow.

The seventh trumpet signals the end of the age, the complete and utter defeat of evil and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. Okay. So let's rewind for a sec.

We started with the plagues as a warning. Then we saw the demonic army representing the growing power of evil. And then these two witnesses, you know, representing the faithful resistance of God's people, which leads to their vindication.

And ultimately the seventh trumpet announcing the final judgment. It's like a symphony. Building towards this powerful crescendo.

That's a great way to put it. Dr. Mathewson highlights that there's a deliberate narrative arc here. And it's not just about telling a story.

It's about showing us the reality of the spiritual battle that plays out throughout history and continues to this day. Right. So how does he connect all of this to the lives of everyday Christians? What's the takeaway for us? He emphasizes that chapters 10 and 11 offer profound insights into the nature of faithfulness, especially in a world that can be hostile to Christianity.

The experience of the two witnesses: their suffering, their death, their resurrection. It mirrors the challenges that the church has faced throughout history and continues to face today. So it's not just a story about two random guys from a long time ago.

It's a reflection of what it means to follow Christ in a world that doesn't always welcome him. Exactly. And it's a powerful call to perseverance, unwavering commitment to Christ, even when it costs us everything.

Yeah, it's a challenging message for sure. But I think it's also encouraging. It means that those who suffer for their faith, they aren't alone.

You know, they're part of this long line of faithful witnesses who've gone before, and they have this promise of ultimate vindication and reward. That's a beautiful way to put it. And Dr. Mathewson reminds us that God sees our struggles, that ultimate victory is his.

But he also challenges us, you know, to examine our own hearts. Are we willing to stand firm in our faith, even when it's hard? Are we willing to be witnesses for Christ, even when we face opposition, even persecution? Those are tough questions to ask ourselves. It's easy to get caught up in the dramatic events of Revelation, all the symbolism.

But I think the real challenge is applying these truths to our everyday lives. You're exactly right. Revelation isn't just about predicting the future.

It's about understanding the spiritual realities that we're living in right now. Right. It's about living out our faith in a world that can often feel very dark and chaotic.

We live in a world where evil still seems to have a lot of power. But we also have the hope of Christ's ultimate victory. And that hope should give us the courage to live boldly for him, to be witnesses for Christ in a world that desperately needs his love and truth.

Absolutely. It all circles back to those core themes we talked about at the beginning. God's judgment, the role of the church, and the fulfillment of his kingdom.

Chapters 10 and 11 have shown us how those themes are beautifully intertwined. They really have. It's like a tapestry with all these different threads weaving together to create this complex, but ultimately hopeful picture.

That's a great analogy. Dr. Mathewson did a fantastic job of guiding us through these challenging narratives. He really did.

So for our listeners out there who wanted to understand more about Revelation chapters 10 and 11 through Dr. Mathewson's lecture, we hope this deep dive has been helpful. We covered a lot of ground today. Yeah.

But as always, there's always more to explore. We encourage you to keep digging deeper into God's word and to always keep asking questions. And remember, even amidst the challenging and sometimes terrifying imagery of Revelation, there's a message of hope and ultimate victory for those who trust in Christ.

Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. We'll be back soon with another exploration of a topic that you're eager to learn more about.