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Revelation 11 - Zac Poonen - posted by StarofG0D (), on: 2011/5/23 23:09

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The book of Revelation is NOT written in chronological sequence. We are given a bird's eye-view of the future in chapter 6, and then the details are filled out gradually. What we see in the first part of Chap.11 actually takes place in the last 3½ years before Christ returns.

V.1: And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it.'

Solomon built the temple of the Lord over the rock on which Abraham had offered up Isaac (2 Chron. 3:1). That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. But it was rebuilt by the Jews and later improved by Herod. But this was destroyed by the Roman armies in 70 A.D. Six centuries later, in 691 A.D., when the Arabs ruled Palestine, one of the Caliphs built a mosque on the site of that temple, and called it the 'Dome of the Rock'.

If this mosque had not been there, the Jews would have built their temple there long ago.

Why don't the Jews build their temple in some other part of Jerusalem? Because the Lord has said "I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city shall be rebuilt on its ruins, and the palace (the temple) shall stand on its rightful place" (Jer. 30:18). And the rightful place is occupied by a mosque at present.

That teaches us that part of Jerusalem is still being "trodden down by the Gentiles" (non-Jews). So the times of the Gentiles are not yet complete, because Jesus said in Lk. 21:24, "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". Most of Jerusalem is no longer trodden by the Gentiles in the sense that the Jews have got control of it. Yet the most sacred part of it (for the Jews) is still being trodden by the Gentiles. The Jews cannot even go there. This is an amazing situation that God in His great wisdom, has permitted.

John was told to measure the temple of God ("the inner sanctuary" - margin)- the most holy place - and the altar and those who worship in there. The Old Testament temple had three parts - the outer court, the holy place and the most holy place. The most holy place was blocked off by a veil, which was rent when Jesus died on the cross. This was the inner sanctuary.

V.2: And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty two months.

The holy city will continue to be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles. In Matt. 23:37,38, Jesus went outside Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I wanted to gather your children together, but you were unwilling. Now your house is being left to you desolate".

Notice that He referred to the temple as their house. Just a few days earlier, He had gone into the temple and called it "My house" (Matt. 21:13). The Lord wanted that temple to be His house, but the Jews would not receive Him. And then it says, "Jesus came out from the temple." (Matt. 24:1). He never went there again. The withdrawal of Jesus from the temple at this point is very significant. As far as God was concerned, He had nothing more to do with that temple.

But a day is coming in the future when the Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews and "he will take his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as God" (2 Thess.2:4).

The Jews did not receive the Son of God when He came. So He left the temple, saying, "From now on this is your house. I am leaving it. Your house is left desolate" (Matt. 23:38). But when the Antichrist comes into the temple, they will receive him. Jesus told the Jews, "I have come in My Father's Name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him" (John 5:43).

Many Old Testament prophecies are yet to be literally fulfilled in the nation of Israel. But we can apply them spiritually to our own lives even today. What is the significance of the inner sanctuary alone being measured and not the outer court? It shows that God is not counting all those who claim to be "believers", but only those who come into the most holy place through the rent veil. This is the spiritual application of these verses for us.

The word used in Rev.11:2. is very strong. It says, "Throw out the court". The church in Laodicea was in danger of being thrown out, because it was lukewarm (Rev.3:17).

John was told to measure only the worshippers in the inner sanctuary. The ones in the most holy place are those who have gone through the veil, who have judged themselves, and come into God's presence. They are the overcomers.

The time period mentioned in verses 2 and 3 of 42 months (1260 days) occurs a number of times in Revelation. Jerusalem is in the hands of Israel now. But there is a time coming in the future when Jerusalem will be ruled by the Antichrist for a period of 42 months, immediately before the second coming of Christ. For the last 3½ years before Christ returns in glory, there will be this "treading under foot of the holy city" again.

In Daniel 9, we read of a time when Daniel was praying about the restoration of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The prophecy here looks beyond the restoration of Jerusalem, to the future also. "Seventy weeks (or 'units of seven' - margin) have been decreed for your people" (Dan.9:24-27). The word here means 'seventy sevens', or 490. This refers to 490 years that had been decreed by God for the Jews, and for Jerusalem, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness".

We know that it was at Calvary's cross that atonement was made for iniquity. But "bringing in everlasting righteousness" is still in the future. 2000 years of the church age have come in between the two. Daniel was told that the counting of the years would commence from "the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Dan.9:25)- not the temple, but the city of Jerusalem.

We read in Nehemiah 2 that the order for the rebuilding of Jerusalem was given "in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, in the month Nisan" (Neh. 2:1)- which was around 446 B.C. Daniel was told that from the date that the order was given to rebuild Jerusalem upto "Messiah the Prince" would be exactly '7 sevens and 62 sevens' (v. 25)- 483 prophetic years of 360 days each, or 173,880 days. When converted to solar years, this becomes 476 years, which brings us to the year when Jesus was crucified. This Old Testament prophecy was very exact. So if someone in Israel had studied Dan. 9:24,25, when Jesus was on earth, he would have clearly seen that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah.

The period of 69 sevens was split into two parts - one of 7 sevens and another of 62 sevens. During the first 49 (7 x 7) years Jerusalem would be rebuilt - "the city will be built again with plaza and moat even in times of distress" (v. 25). After another 62 sevens (434 years), "the Messiah will be cut off" (v.26)- that is, He will be crucified. It goes on in the same verse to say that the Messiah would "have no one" (Literal). That means He would be completely forsaken - by man and even by His Father - on the cross. The prophecy was very exact.

We read further in verse 26, that after the crucifixion, "the people of the prince who is to come will come and destroy the city and the temple". The prince who is to come in the future is obviously the world-ruler, the Antichrist. "The people" of that prince would refer to the world rulers of the first century, which was the Roman empire. That was fulfilled, as we have seen, in 70 A.D.

This still leaves a 7-year period out of the 490 years mentioned originally. That is spoken of in Dan.9:27: "He (the Antichrist) will make a firm covenant with the many (referring to the Jews) for seven (years)." That is the final 7 year period. The Antichrist will present himself to the Jews as their Messiah and the Jews will accept him.

Dan. 9:27. goes on to say, "In the middle of the week, he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wings of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

At the middle of this 7-year period (after 42 months), the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews. During the remaining 42-months (1260 days) the Antichrist will reign (see Rev.11:2,3). It is significant that the reign of the Antichrist is going to be for exactly the same duration as the public ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ which was also for 3½ years. The Antichrist is going to imitate Christ in every possible way.

The abomination of desolation mentioned here is what Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:15, and is a reference to the Antichrist sitting in the temple as God. At the end of that period, it says here that the Antichrist will be "destroyed completely".

V.3,4: And I will grant authority to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands that stand before the Lord of the whole earth.

During that entire period of 1260 days, God is going to have two witnesses in Jerusalem, who will prophesy. They will be clothed in sackcloth - signifying their humility and simple life-style and also their grief at the ungodliness of the Jews.

These prophets are referred to as olive trees. In Zech.4:11-14, also we are told of these two olive trees who are "the two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth".

V.5,6: And, if any one desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone desires to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with plague, as often as they desire.

In the Old Testament, we read of only two prophets who destroyed their enemies by fire - Moses and Elijah (Num.16:35; 2 Kings 1:10). Elijah was also the one who shut up the sky so that it did not rain for 42 months. (Jas.5:17). And Moses was the one who turned the water into blood and smote Egypt with plagues.

Notice also what Moses and Elijah stood for.

When Moses came down from the mountain the whole nation of Israel had gone astray worshipping idols and committing adultery. And Moses told them, "Whoever is on the Lord's side, come to me" (Exod.32:26). That was the spirit of Moses.

Elijah too lived at a time when the entire nation of Israel worshipped idols. One day he gathered the Israelites on top of Mount Carmel and told them almost exactly what Moses had said, "How long are you going to sit on the fence? If the Lord is God, follow Him. If your idol Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Elijah lived when Israel was being ruled by the most wicked king and queen that the nation ever had. King Ahab had sol

d himself to Satan to do evil. (1 Kings 21:25), He is a type of the Antichrist. And his wife Jezebel is a type of Babylon the harlot, the false church. We saw the Lord calling a false prophetess by the name Jezebel, in Chap.2:20.

Moses too prophesied to Pharaoh (another type of the Antichrist) and opposed and resisted him and his magicians.

The last two prophets mentioned in the Old Testament are Moses and Elijah. (Mal.4:4,5).

The two last-day prophets will prophesy in the fiery, uncompromising spirit of Moses and Elijah, for 42 months.

Today, as Christians, we do not call fire down on our enemies. When Jesus came to Samaria and the Samaritans did not receive Him, James and John (being good Bible scholars and knowing that Samaria was where Elijah had called down fire on his enemies), said, "Lord, shall we call down fire from heaven to consume them as Elijah did?" (Lk. 9:54 margin). The Lord replied, "You don't know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of man has not come to destroy men's lives but to save them". Here lies the difference between the new covenant and the old covenant. Disciples of Jesus do not call down fire to destroy their enemies, but rather follow in the footsteps of Jesus Who said, "Father, forgive them", and of Stephen who said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge".

But although we don't call down fire from heaven, or shut the heavens or call down plagues on the earth, we are to stand in the spirit of Moses and Elijah, in this sense that we challenge people saying, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come out to me."

We do not go into the midst of dead denominations to try and change them, because they cannot be changed. We stand outside of them (like Moses and Elijah) and say, "Come out of Babylon and stand with me if you are on the Lord's side. Choose this day what you will follow - the Word of God or the traditions of men?"

That is how it is going to be in the last days even before the rise of the Antichrist. There is going to be a Moses-cum-Elijah ministry in the church during the last days.

V.7: And when these two prophets have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss (bottomless pit) will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

This beast is the Antichrist - a man possessed and ruled by Satan - about whom we will read more in Chapter 13. But notice here that he can kill these prophets ONLY. when they "have finished their testimony". God had ordained that these prophets should prophesy for 1260 days - and so they will NOT die one day before that. That is true of prophets in the church today too.

In Ps.139:13-16, David says, "Thou didst form my inward parts. Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb...My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret and in Thy book they were all written the days that were ordained for me when as yet there was not one of them"

Before a Christian starts his first day on earth, God has already determined the number of days planned for him. That does not mean however that every Christian will live his full term on earth. Some will die before their time because they live for the world, and live in sin. But those who live to do the will of God alone will live their full term.

The Antichrist may try to kill these two prophets before their time is over, but he won't succeed. They will fulfil their appointed 1260 days of prophesying!! Only after they have finished their testimony, will the beast be able to make "war with them, overcome them and kill them."

It is a wonderful thing to be faithful in serving God. You will then be immortal until your life's work is done. There is no life on earth more secure than this. And you don't have to be a full-time worker in order to be a servant of God. Paul was not a full-time worker. He had a secular job (as a tentmaker) through which he earned his living. Every believer can be a servant of God, whatever his earthly profession may be.

Jesus too had a public ministry of 1260 days. In Jn. 7:30, it says that the enemies of Jesus tried to seize Him. But they could not catch Him. Why? Was it because Jesus was smarter than them or just lucky to escape their clutches. No. The reason given there is simply: "His hour had not come". The number of days written in the book concerning Him had not yet run out. In Jn. 8:20, we read that Jesus spoke strong words in the temple, but again no-one could capture Him, even though they wanted to - for the same reason: "His hour had not yet come."

How wonderful to be able to live like this on the earth - moving around fearlessly, knowing that no one can touch us, if God's time has not yet come. But this promise is only for the wholehearted disciple, and not for compromising, wishy-washy, money-loving "believers". The promise is for those who live before the face of God and who are not interested in the honour or approval of man. If you are like that, it can be written about you too, "His enemies could not kill him because his hour had not yet come. The devil tried to kill him, but couldn't do it - because his hour had not yet come."

When God's hour finally came for Jesus, He said to the soldiers in Gethsemane, "Here I am". And when God's hour comes for these two last-day prophets, they too are ready to go. And when God's hour comes for you and me, I hope we won't want the doctors and surgeons to prolong our life on earth. We should be ready to go, saying, "Thank You, Lord. I have finished my testimony."

It is written about David that "when he had finished serving his own generation by the will of God, he slept" (Acts 13:36). How wonderful it would be if these words could be said about all of us, that we finished serving our generation in the will of God, before we left the earth!

V.8: And their dead bodies will lie in the streets of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

These two prophets will not be buried after they are killed. They will be put to public shame. Their bodies will lie in the streets of the city. The city is the one where our Lord was crucified - that identifies it as Jerusalem. But it is called Sodom and Egypt here, because it had become like Sodom - full of spiritual harlotry and spiritual adultery. It is called "the great city" because it has become like Babylon "the great city" (Rev.18:2).

It is possible for a Christian testimony to start off as Jerusalem - a place where God manifests Himself - and for it to end as Babylon. Much of what starts off with God's anointing and power in Christendom has ended up after some years in spiritual harlotry, becoming great in the eyes of men, but not holy in the eyes of God.

V.9,10: And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three days and a half and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

People in all the nations of the world will see the two dead bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem through satellite television! This will be prime-time news! And everyone will be delighted to see these two prophets publicly humiliated in their death. The whole world would have hated the two prophets because they tormented the "earth-dwellers" by their constant preaching against their love of money, their love of earthly things and their idolatry.

Even today, a really God-fearing prophet is a torment to worldly people, to worldly believers and to religious Pharisees. What a lot of lessons we can learn from the spirit of these two prophets - their simplicity, their humility, their faithfulness, their courage, and the fact that they completed their ministry. We too should be able to say at the end of our earthly lives, "Father, I have finished the work You gave me to do. I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I have finished my course" (Jn.17:4; 2 Tim.4:7).

V.11,12: And after the three days and a half, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud and their enemies beheld them.

The two prophets will be raised from the dead right there on the street in Jerusalem. And in the twinkling of an eye, they will be taken up into the presence of the Lord. And their enemies will watch it. That teaches us that God will normally vindicate His servants only at the final resurrection, and not before that. If we have been faithful to God, and we have been humiliated on the earth in various ways, if people have abused us and said that our messages were hard and tormenting, and if they hated us and spoke evil about us and we have forgiven them and we have borne with them, God may not vindicate us here and now during our earthly life. But at the resurrection, the whole world will know that we were true and faithful servants of God. Are you willing to wait patiently until that time? Or do you want to be vindicated and accepted by the world and the church right now? Even our Lord has not been vindicated as yet. Why should He be vindicated before Him?

V.13: And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Even though these people gave glory to God out of fear, they still had no desire to change their lives.

V.14,15: The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

This is the time when our Lord will set up His 1000-year reign on earth. Satan had once shown Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world" and said, "All these will I give you if You fall down and worship me" (Matt.4:8,9). Jesus rebuked Satan and rejected Satan's offer. Instead He went to the cross and died to win back the world the painful way - the Father's way. Finally, after 2000 years, He receives the kingdom of the world from the Father Himself. Notice that what Satan had showed Jesus were the kingdoms (plural) of the world. That is what the world has been and is at present - thousands of kingdoms. But in the final day it will be one kingdom (singular) of the world that Jesus receives from the Father.

Jesus once told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting" (Jn. 18:36). We say the same thing too: "Our kingdom is not of the world. We don't want anything from the devil. We don't want the glory of the world which the devil offers us, when he urges us to compromise our convictions just a little bit. We choose the way of the cross, and one day we too will get the kingdom from our Father."

Jesus told His disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32). Then why do we want it from the devil? Why do we want the honour of this world which the devil offers?

V.16-18: And the twenty four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou has taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

Here we have one more picture of worship and praise in heaven. The 24 elders who sit on their thrones before God fall on their faces and worship God. We find these elders again and again leading the hosts of heaven in worshipping God for His almighty power that has accomplished all things. We find frequent mention of the almighty power of God in Revel

ation. All heaven praises God knowing that He is sovereign and rules over all things everywhere and that He is in complete control of everything at all times - and that is why heaven is a place of such perfect peace. That is how it can be in our lives too - if we also recognise Him as almighty.

Their praise continues for God's judgment on the nations. All nations of the world have turned in rebellion against God, and God has been long-suffering with them for many thousands of years. But finally His wrath has come. There is a limit to God's patience. There is a limited time that He has given people to come to repentance. A time will finally come when this word will be fulfilled: "Thy wrath has come". It hasn't come yet. We are in the age of grace now. But one of these days the acceptable year of the Lord will be over.

The time now comes that Jesus had spoken of in Jn. 5:28,29, when all the dead hear His voice and "those who did the good (rise) to the resurrection of life and those who committed evil to a resurrection of judgment."

As Jesus said, there are going to be TWO resurrections - one to life and one to judgment. The two resurrections however will be separated by a thousand years. But the two are brought together here in the praise of the elders: "The time has come for the dead to be judged" and "the time has also come to give rewards to Thy bond-servants".

Notice that rewards are for God's bond-servants- for those who have been faithful in their earthly lives. In Mal.3:16- 18, we read, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another and the Lord gave attention and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. 'And they will be Mine', says the Lord of Hosts, 'on the day I prepare My own possession. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.'"

Today it is very difficult to distinguish between one who is really serving God and one who is not serving Him. It is almost impossible to do this because we can only see the externals. And we do not know with what motive a person serves God. Today, we cannot say whether a man is seeking the glory of God or seeking his own honour. We do not know whether mixed up with all a person's zeal for God is also a desire for his own honour, or for money, or for something else. But a day is coming when God will shine His heavenly searchlight on everybody's heart and in that day, the hidden motives and attitudes of every heart will be exposed. Only then will we be able to see clearly as to who really served God and who served their own interests.

And in that day it will be seen, as Jesus said, "Many who are first now will be last then". Many whom we considered to be wonderful servants of God will be shown to have been quite corrupt inside - when God exposes their inner lives and their motives. Many believers whom we thought of highly will then be seen to be hypocrites and last of all. At the same time, some others whom we did not think much of will be first among those who receive rewards, because of their sincerity and righteousness of heart before God.

Consider the matter of our speech. Jesus said that "every careless word that we speak we will have to give an account for on the day of judgment" (Matt.12:36). Malachi reminds us that in God's "book of remembrance", He lists the names of those who fear Him in the way they speak to one another. I have met very, very few believers in my entire life who fear God in their private conversation and in their private correspondence - probably less than 1% of all the born again believers that I have met. So this "book of remembrance" must be a very thin one!! But those listed in it are the ones whom the Lord calls His special jewels.

Consider another matter: Jesus said in Lk. 14:12, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours lest they also invite you in return and repayment comes to you. But when you give a reception, invite the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous". Here is another command of Jesus which I think less than 1% of believers even bother to obey. "The point is not that we go looking for the lame and the blind, but that we help and bless those who cannot repay us in any way. When you do not get repaid thus, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

So this is the time when God is going to repay those who did good to others on earth without seeking any gain for themselves - of money or honour. And in this matter too, we will find that many who are first today will be last in that day. and many who are last will be first.

We read further that the time has also now come to destroy those who corrupt the earth. In Rev. 19:2, we read that the great harlot Babylon - harlot Christianity, that claims to be engaged to Christ but lives after its own lusts - corrupted the earth with her immorality. Spiritual immorality is what corrupts the earth.

1 Cor. 3:17, states, "If anyone corrupts the temple of God, God will destroy him". The church is the temple of God. If a man corrupts the church in any way, one day the Lord will destroy him. Ananias and Sapphira brought corruption into God's house and God destroyed them immediately (Acts 5). Such immediate judgment has not happened too often in the past 2000 years. But that does not mean that those who were corrupt have gotten away with it. No. A day will soon come when God will destroy them.

In Eph.4:22, we are told that, "the old man is corrupt in accordance with the lusts of deceit". All the corruption in the world is due to lust. (2 Pet.1:4). Now God destroys those who have lived after their lusts and corrupted the earth.

V.19: And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and t

here were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm. We read in Rev. 21:22, "The city does not need any temple, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple". So what is mentioned here is obviously symbolic language. The temple here symbolises the presence of God. The ark symbolises God's faithfulness to His covenant. And the thunder and earthquake etc., symbolise God's power.

From the book The Final Triumph by Zac Poonen
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Re: Revelation 11 - Zac Poonen - posted by Lysa (), on: 2011/5/24 6:03

Quote:
-----The book of Revelation is NOT written in chronological sequence.

Amen! Amen! Amen!

God bless you for sharing this with us!
Lisa