

April 25, 2021

The Sunday View

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus." — *John 12:21*

Next Sunday, May 2nd, we will be meeting in one service @ 10:30 AM

Welcome Visitors!

You are our honored guests and we are pleased that you have chosen to visit us today. Our goal is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. This is a church of Christ; we are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church and we have no earthly "headquarters." The six elders oversee this work and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily aimed at our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate at the entrance. Thank You

Schedule

The Lord's Day Assemblies

Two assembly opportunities,
inside the building:

9:00 AM / 10:30 AM

Livestream at 10:30 at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLEmwy2lYxrL7ZUGtiZTVqA>

Speaking today: David Posey

A Bittersweet Victory
Revelation 10-11

Young People's Classes Today

High School & Up: 5 PM

Contact David Posey for information at
(530) 558-5057

Middle School: 5 PM

Contact Dan Stegall for information
(818) 209-9810

Weekly Classes

Tuesday 10 AM

"Conformed to Christ"
At the Building

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

The Attributes of God
Various Speakers

For an online class on the **Sermon on the Mount**, check
with Jack Horak @ jshorak98@gmail.com

Saturday Men's Breakfast

7 AM, second Saturday of the month
Contact Tyler Wade @ tyler@ppldev.com

Additional Classes

There are some smaller classes in progress.
If you are interested in participating in any of them, please
contact David Posey

Information

Website & Online Presence

Visit our website at www.folsomchurch.com for updates and material on current and past classes, and recorded sermons and classes. You will also find a directory of churches on page one. If you are a member of the church here at Folsom, see one of the deacons or elders to inquire about access to the password -protected members section. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/folsomchurch>

Classes & Home Studies

We have classes for children from 18 months and up on Wednesday night at 7 PM. Please see the map in the hallway or ask any of the members which room is appropriate for you and/or your child. There are several Bible studies in progress on Sunday afternoon and evening. Check with David Posey if you have questions.

Restrooms

There are two sets of restrooms: one off the first hallway to the right of the lobby and another at the end of the first hallway to the left. Ask anyone and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

For Small Children

There is a special room for nursing mothers and a separate "cry room" at the rear of the auditorium. You enter them from the first hallway to the right, across from the restrooms.

View & Junior View *(Let us know if you don't get a copy)*

Be sure to pick up a copy of the View and Junior View; both are sent out weekly to our member list and hard copies are printed on Sundays and available in the foyer.

Prayer Requests & News Items

Send to David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text at 530-558-5057

Notes on Revelation 11

“This chapter is extraordinarily difficult to interpret and the most diverse solutions have been proposed...”

—Leon Morris, *Revelation*, Tyndale NT Commentaries

The difficulty in this chapter, as most chapters in Revelation, turns on the understanding of the symbols the Holy Spirit uses to communicate. Remember that the figures had meaning to those who were reading it in the first century. The source of their understanding did not come from commentaries or random speculation. It came first from a thorough reading of the document itself to discover whether the meaning of the figure is given there, and then from a strong background in the Old Testament. We too can utilize the same means in our attempt to arrive at an understanding of the Revelation, and particularly, this chapter.

The Figures

I don't need to tell you that Revelation is primarily a figurative book. In most books of the Bible, we assume a literal meaning of words, phrases and sentences, unless there are strong reasons to do otherwise. Here, it is just the opposite. With the exception of chapters 2 and 3, we assume a figurative meaning, unless context or some other compelling reasons leads us to a literal interpretation. There seem to be more symbols per line of type in chapter 11 than in most sections of Revelation so we need to be especially careful in our interpretation. There are a couple of rules we need to follow to get it right.

Rule #1 is to let the writer interpret his own figures. Therefore, if John uses a figure in a certain way (generally) then we ought to interpret it that way as well, unless the context demands another approach. Rule #2 is to remember the major theme or purpose of the book. The whole book must fit its historical context or it will make no sense. That's why those who differ on the dating of the book see things differently. The symbolic language will be interpreted differently if you decide the book was written in AD 68 instead of AD 90. We are taking the approach that late date fits best with the language and purpose of the book and that John's specific scope is to help the Christians overcome persecution of the church by Rome. So, any conclusions we draw must have that scope as the basis. We cannot just “plug in” different objectives of John; he had one major purpose and sought to drive the point home. With all that in mind, let's examine the figures.

Temple: The Greek word is *naos*. In the OT, the temple was the place where God came to meet the people. The Greek word can apply either to the innermost sanctuary (the Holy of Holies) or the temple proper. It is also a common figure for the church in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21). Significantly, in Revelation, the temple often refers to God's dwelling in heaven itself (11:19). I believe this points to the close connection between the church and heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20; Heb 12:23, etc.) The term “measuring” (cf. Ezekiel 40:3ff)

is used figuratively throughout scripture to describe either destruction or preservation. The latter is clearly the meaning here. Note that he is to measure the temple *and* the altar (place of worship) *and* those who worship. That's the “inner court,” God's people, the church. They enjoy the protection of God. The court outside the temple is not to be measured (protected). It and the holy city are to be trodden underfoot by the “nations” (some translations read “Gentiles”) for 42 months (see below on the number). “Nations” generally refers to those who are hostile to God. Since they are going to trample the outer temple and the holy city, the latter terms must be something opposed to the Gentiles and hence on the side of God. Since the temple refers to the church and the outer court is connected to the temple and exists in the “holy city,” it likely refers to an aspect of the church. John is telling his readers that the spiritual life and relationship of the Christian to God can never be harmed but the “Gentiles” may well harm the physical body and disturb the peace of the individual Christian (and, therefore, the church as a whole).

It is possible, though unlikely, that John means that the inner court refers to those in the church who are truly faithful while marginal members or those who are sinning (e.g., those in the seven churches who come under condemnation). I prefer the interpretation above.

Forty-Two Months: This is the same as “1,260 days” (v. 2) and “time, times and half a time” (Revelation 12:14; Daniel 7:25; 12:7), probably symbolizing 3½ years, half of seven. This is the “time” when the Gentiles will have power to trample the holy city (church) and it is the “time” that the witnesses (see below) will prophesy. Yet it probably has nothing to do with time, but with the *extent* of the persecution. That is, it will be less than complete. The message is that while the individual Christian will be persecuted, the inner person, the soul, cannot be killed. The persecution will not be complete; it will not succeed in wiping out the church; the church will overcome! “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” (Matthew 16:18).

Two Witness: Witnesses “bear testimony” That is, they tell the story, preach the gospel, evangelize. There are “two,” because the Old Testament required two in order to establish testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6; cf. Matthew 18:16). The witnesses represent either the total witnessing (preaching) power of the church or they represent specific individuals charged with the preaching mission. In any case, they symbolize the preaching of the gospel, the unfolding of God's plan. They will prophesy without fear of harm and with power to protect themselves for the same period that the Gentiles have power to trod the “holy city” (42 months). In other words, while the persecution is going on, the preaching will continue, even thrive (see Colossians 1:23).

Continued on page 3

This fits very well with what we read in Acts, where persecution, in that case mainly by the Jews, actually was a cause of the spread of the gospel (see Acts 8:1). The witnesses are described under the figure of two olive trees and two lampstands. Perhaps the “oil” from the olive trees supply the power for the lampstands and hence, “light” — the light of the word — shines continually.

In Revelation, lampstands have also been used as a figure for the churches (see chapters 2 & 3). There is also an analogy drawn between these two witnesses and Moses and Elijah, two prophets present at the transfiguration of Christ (for whom Peter wanted to build a tabernacle (or “temple”). While we wouldn’t want to make too much of it, it is hard not to see a reference to these two when reading 11:5-6.

Beast: This is the first mention of the beast, but there is no doubt that it refers to Rome or, more generally, governmental authority (see Revelation 13:1-4, etc.). This beast will gain a temporary victory over the witnesses (and, by extension, the church). The dead bodies of the witnesses will lie in the street of the “holy city” (see below) for 3 1/2 days; that is, “less than complete.” Those from the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations motivated by the “beast” will not give them the dignity of a burial. They are the same unregenerate humans as “*those who dwell on the earth*” and they rejoice and throw a party (11:10) because they mistakenly suppose that they have won a great victory.

The Holy City: Three cities are mentioned — Sodom, Egypt and, by implication, Jerusalem. If you believe John saw a literal city, then your interpretation will be colored by your conclusions regarding the dating of the book and other factors. As far as where their Lord is crucified is concerned, the analogy could apply equally well to Jerusalem or Rome. In any case, the figure seems to point to a cosmopolitan city; or, perhaps, no particular city is meant, the figures standing for the sum of unbelieving mankind. Regardless of how you interpret the actual identity of the city, the point is the same: those who dwell on the earth, those who are opposed to God will seek to destroy and inhibit the spread of His word and they will rejoice whenever they feel they have gained the upper hand and gotten rid of the “troublers.”

Breath of life: After the 3½ days, the witnesses arise to ascend into heaven at the special invitation of one who speaks from heaven. Great fear fell on those who mocked them and rejoiced over their dead bodies. This reminds us of Ezekiel 37:5ff, where God showed Ezekiel a vision of dry bones springing to life, symbolizing the rebirth of the people of God, with renewed hope and strength. Likewise, after the short period of persecution, the church will emerge stronger and continue to grow, overcoming even her own enemies. A tenth of the city will fall and 7,000 men will be killed. Note that there still is a “remnant” of the enemy and they will again persist in persecuting the church, though, perhaps to a much

smaller degree (Satan is bound, yet not completely helpless).

The Seventh Trumpet

When the seventh trumpet blows, loud voices in heaven declare victory:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (11:15)

The twenty four elders go on to say,
“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.
The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

Revelation 11:17-18

As we have pointed out several times, Revelation isn’t as much about vengeance on the ungodly as it is comfort to saints, especially those who are suffering for their faith. No matter how dire the circumstances, victory is the end result. *Read Psalm 2.*

A word on angels

John saw a “mighty angel” on occasion (Revelation 5:2; 10:1; 18:21) and angels are mentioned over 70 times in Revelation. I have, on occasion, been asked to teach a class on angels and I generally “observe the passover” on that one, as “older” preachers like to say. While it’s an interesting study, even intriguing, it’s really hard to pin down exactly what they are doing in our lives, in our time, so I’m not sure about the takeaway. Not only that, but the word for “angel” simply means “messenger” or “delegate.” So an angel can simply be human messengers and sometimes it’s hard to distinguish between human and a heavenly beings.

While it’s difficult to say exactly what they do today, we should not minimize their role. Matthew 13:49 says they will be active in judgment, separating the evil from the righteous. Hebrews 1:14 tells us they are “ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” And Hebrews 13:2 says that “some have entertained angels unawares.” And most interesting all, Matthew 18:10 says, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.” What does that mean? Couldn’t tell you but it sounds really good!