

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: The Testimony of the Elders (Rev. 11:15-19)

Something to Think About

A shipwrecked sailor who had spent three years on a deserted island was overjoyed one day to see a ship drop anchor in the bay. A small boat came ashore, and an officer handed the sailor a bunch of newspapers.

"The captain suggests," he told the sailor, "that you read what is going on in the world and then let us know if you want to be rescued."

We have been waiting since Revelation 8:13 for His third "woe" to arrive and now it is here. When the seventh angel blew the trumpet, three dramatic events occurred.

An announcement of victory (v. 15). These "great voices" were probably the choirs of heaven. The great announcement is that the kingdom (John uses the singular because "the beast" now has the world under his control) of this world belongs to Jesus Christ. Of course, Christ does not claim His royal rights until He returns; but the victory has already been won. Satan offered Him the world's kingdoms, but He refused the offer (Matthew 4:8-9). Instead, He died on the cross, arose, and returned victoriously to heaven; and there the Father gave Him His inheritance (Psalms 2:4-9).

However, we must not incorrectly assume that our Lord is not reigning today, because He is. According to Hebrews 7:1-2, Jesus Christ is "King of righteousness" and "King of peace." He is enthroned with the Father (Revelation 3:21), and He will reign until He defeats all His foes (1 Corinthians 15:25). Today, He rules over a spiritual kingdom; but in that future day, He will reign over the nations of the world and rule with a rod of iron.

No matter how difficult the circumstances might be, or how defeated God's people may think they are, Jesus Christ is still King of kings and Lord of lords, and He is in control. One day, we shall triumph!

An acclamation of praise (vv. 16-18). The elders left their own thrones and prostrated themselves in worship before God's throne. They gave thanks for three special blessings: that Christ reigns supremely (Revelation 11:17), that He judges righteously (Revelation 11:18), and that He rewards graciously (Revelation 11:18).

In Revelation 4:10-11, the elders praised the Creator; and in Revelation 5:9-14, they worshiped the Redeemer. Here the emphasis is on the Conqueror and the King. Keep in mind that in John's day the church on earth looked as though it were defeated, for Rome was the conqueror and king. John was reminding the saints that they were "a kingdom of priests" reigning with the Saviour (Revelation 1:5-6). It may seem at times that the throne of heaven is empty, but it is not. Jesus Christ has both power and authority - in fact, all authority (Matthew 28:18, where the word power means "authority"). "Thou ... hast begun to reign" is a good translation.

Christ not only reigns supremely, but He judges righteously (Revelation 11:18). The Lamb is also the Lion! In Revelation 11:18, we have a "table of contents" for the remainder of the Book of Revelation. These events did not take place the instant the angel blew his trumpet; he simply signaled the beginning of the process, and now these events would take place as planned.

"The nations were angry." What do the nations have to be angry about? Certainly the Lord has been good and gracious to them. He has provided their needs (Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31), assigned their territories, and graciously postponed His judgment to give men opportunity to be saved. Even more, He sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Today, God offers forgiveness to the nations! What more could He do for them?

Then, why are the nations angry? Because they want to have their own way. "Why do the heathen [the nations] rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed [Christ], saying, 'Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us'" (Psalms 2:1-3). They want to worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator (Romans 1:25). Like adolescent children, the nations want to cast off all restraint; and God will permit them to do so. The result will be another "Babylon" (Revelation 17-18), man's last attempt to build His Utopia, a "heaven on earth. "

Note the change in attitude shown by the nations of the world. In Revelation 11:2, the nations ruthlessly take over Jerusalem. In Revelation 11:9, they rejoice at the death of the two witnesses. But now they are angry; their arrogance and joy did not last very long. This belligerent attitude finally will cause the nations to unite to fight God at the great battle of Armageddon.

"And Thy wrath is come." The word translated "angry" in Revelation 11:18 is the verb form of the word translated "wrath." But man's wrath can never equal the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16-17).

Even Satan's wrath, as cruel as it is, is no match for God's wrath (Revelation 12:17). There was intense suffering in the first half of the Tribulation, but only the last half will reveal the wrath of God (Revelation 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15). There are two Greek words for anger: thumos, which means "rage, passionate anger," and orge, used here, which means "indignation, a settled attitude of wrath." God's anger is not an outburst of temper; it is holy indignation against sin. Both of these Greek words are used in Revelation to describe God's anger: orge is used only four times; thumos, seven (Revelation 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15). God's anger is not dispassionate, for He hates sin and loves righteousness and justice; but neither is it temperamental and unpredictable.

"And the time of the dead, that they should be judged" takes us to the very end of God's prophetic program. In one sense, every day is a "day of the Lord" because God is always judging righteously. God is long-suffering toward lost sinners and often postpones judgment, but there will be a final judgment of sinners and none will escape. This judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15.

There will also be a judgment of God's children, known as "the Judgment Seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:9-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11). God will reward His faithful servants (Matthew 25:21) and the sufferings they experienced on earth will be forgotten in the glory of His presence. Though

God's children will not be judged for their sins (that judgment took place on the cross), they will be judged for their works and rewarded generously by the Master.

The Judgment Seat of Christ will take place in heaven after Christ has called His people home. When He returns to earth to establish His kingdom, the saints will be ready to reign with Him, with every blemish of the church removed (Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8). Today, we groan as we serve God, because we know only too well our handicaps and blemishes; but one day, we shall serve Him perfectly!

"Them that destroy the earth" refers to the rebellious earth-dwellers who will not submit to God. How ironic that these people live for the earth and its pleasures, yet at the same time are destroying the very earth that they worship! When man forgets that God is the Creator and he is the creature, he begins to exploit his God-given resources, and this brings destruction. Man is a steward of creation, not the owner.

As mentioned before, Revelation 11:18 is a summary statement of events yet to come. It is heaven's song of praise for the Lord's faithfulness to accomplish His purposes in the world. Again, it appears strange to us that heavenly beings can sing about judgment. Perhaps if we had more of the throne's perspective, we would be able to join their praises.

An assurance of God's faithfulness (v. 19). This chapter opened with a temple on earth, but now we see the temple in heaven. The focus of attention is on the ark of God, the symbol of God's presence with His people.