

Israel's Failure is Not Final - Part 3

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 11:11-24

Preached on: Sunday, July 8, 2012

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bibles and turning again to Romans chapter 11. This is the third and final in a series on the topic of Israel's failure, that it is not final. Israel's failure is not final.

We will be focusing this morning on verses 23 and 24. Let me read them to you. Actually I am going to get a running start beginning in verse 22 of Romans 11.

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?¹

Before we examine this text more closely, I think it is fitting that we have a prophetic overview to help you understand much more of the context of what the Lord is up to. First of all, I might say that any student of Bible prophecy will agree that these are amazing days in which we live. As we look at our world, we see that it is in a moral free fall, which has led to a social free fall, which will inevitably lead to an economic free fall and we are seeing that as well and, of course, a political free fall. And this will always be the progression of an idolatrous people.

Today in the United States we are witnessing the collapse of the dollar, our debt and commitments far exceed our ability to pay. There is an utter disregard for our constitution. We see the dismantling of Capitalism and the freedoms our country has enjoyed. And we watch basically an oligarchy of elites take over the government and impose, frankly, Marxist ideologies upon our country.

But all this is consistent with what God has promised. This shouldn't surprise us, because the Bible teaches that the world is ultimately being prepared for a one world ruler, the antichrist along with his general, the false prophet who the Lord calls the beast out of the earth. The false prophet will be the quintessential false teacher that will serve the satanically controlled antichrist. In fact, there will be an unholy trinity. Satan always tries to counterfeit what God has done. As we look at Bible prophecy we will see that there will be Satan who is called the dragon, there will be the antichrist who is called the beast and the false prophet who is also called the beast. And as we look at the diabolical nature of the demon possessed antichrist that will one day come on the scene, we can understand from the epithets used to describe him in Scripture who this man is going to be and what kind of world we will be living in, even though I believe that the Church will be snatched away before the tribulation wrath is poured out upon the world.

¹ Romans 11:22-24.

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But with respect to the antichrist in Daniel he is called the little horn, the insolent king, the prince who is to come, the one who makes desolate, the despicable person and the strong willed king. In Zachariah he is called the worthless shepherd. And Paul calls him in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 the man of lawlessness and the son of destruction. And in verse eight he is called the lawless one. And in Revelation he is called the beast.

In Daniel 7:23-24 there is a description of a coming one world government which will eventually splinter into a 10 nation European confederacy that will drive until the middle of the tribulation under the leader of the antichrist. So as we compare the constellation of signs in the Bible and the events set forth in Scripture with the events and the direction that we see in our world today, there can be no doubt that the prophetic stage is being set for the second coming of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many signs that Jesus gave us when he was here and that others have given us in the sacred Scriptures. For example, Jesus says that when he comes it will be as in the days of Noah. In other words, there will be granite indifference regarding impending judgment. We see that already today. We even see that in the ostensibly Christian Church.

You go to most Christians and say, "Do you realize that God is going to soon judge the earth, judge the world, judge the nations?" And they kind of, yeah, well, I don't know about that. Granite indifference.

Jesus predicted that before he comes the world would be marked by the persecution against Christians, by apostasy, unbelief as in the days of Noah.

In Luke 18 verse eight Jesus asked:

"...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"²

And the implied answer is: Not a lot, not much true faith. It will be very rare. Very few people today enter in through the narrow gate of brokenness and repentance, concepts that are rejected in today's neo evangelical gospel. There will be a Laodicean lukewarmness amongst Christians, a condition marked by a superficial love for Christ, doctrinal ignorance, doctrinal indifference, moral compromise. And if you look at the Church today, it bears very little resemblance to the New Testament Church.

The current accommodation to the Spirit of the age is nothing short of appalling. There will be the sign of lawlessness that will increase. There will be an utter disregard for God's law, a descent into wickedness.

2 Timothy three Paul says:

² Luke 18:8.

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“...in the last days difficult times will come.”³

Difficult times literally means savage times, perilous times. We are seeing that already today. He goes on to say:

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.⁴

There will be evil imposters, men who are imposters, women who are imposters. Things will go from bad to worse.

Today, frankly, my friends, we are witnessing the nightmare of human idolatry. We are rapidly moving toward the culmination of human history. Many has sown the wind of rebellion against God and he is about to reap the whirlwind. Our world is now experiencing the beginning of the end.

There will also be the sign, the prophets tell us, of enemies that will see to destroy Israel, that they will surround her. We see that every day and it is only going to get worse. According to Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39, there will be an alliance of nations that will descend upon Israel under the leadership of Gog and Magog and be supernaturally defeated on the mountains of Israel. And all of the nations that are described in that text are either Islamic nations, including six of the former Soviet Republics to the north of Israel or they are nations with a Muslim majority. And all have various military and economic alliances with Russia who supplies them with arms like Iran. All of them have a violent hatred for Israel.

There will be signs pertaining to Israel. For example in Ezekiel chapter 20 beginning in verse 33 the context there is God promising to restore Israel to her land. There God tells us through his prophet:

"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. And I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face."⁵

³ 2 Timothy 3:1.

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:2-5.

⁵ Ezekiel 20:33-35.

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As you go on to read in that chapter we understand that God will separate the godly from the wicked amongst the remnant of Israel. This will be an exclusive judgment on Israel that will take place during the time of Jacob's trouble towards the very end of the tribulation, just before the second coming of Christ. But before this happens he is going to bring his people back to the land. And all we have to do is look at history even within our life times, out of the ash heap of the holocaust we witness the miracle of Israel becoming a state in 1948. And they continue to come. In fact, from 1948 to 2012 3.1 million Jews have emigrated to Israel from all over the world.

Isaiah tells us in chapter 11 beginning in verse 11:

“Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain.”⁶

He goes on in verse 12.

“And He will lift up a standard for the nations, And will assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.”⁷

Very fascinating phrase. The Lord will again recover the second time with his hand the remnant. Since the context of this passage is eschatological, it speaks of the end times, we would understand that the second time is going to be the last time. This regathering is characterized by the end of hostilities with Israel's enemies. There will be no more dispersions.

So we could ask the question: Well, when was the first regathering? Well, it can't be their return from Egypt or from Babylon as some would argue, because neither of those returns would satisfy the specific geographic or temporal conditions that exist in this text. They didn't come from the four corners of the earth when they came back from Egypt or from Babylon. Plus, both of those historic regatherings were followed by subsequent exiles after they returned. So it can't refer to that. Moreover, according to Matthew 24 verses 30 through 31 the Lord speaks of the last regathering or, as Isaiah puts it, the second time of regathering. And it will be a time of national repentance when he returns. And likewise here in Isaiah the second time indicates that this regathering will be a time of national repentance, but with Israel already in her land, a regathering that will forever end Israel's exiles and be followed by the establishment of the millennial kingdom and the judgment of the nation as we read even in Matthew chapter 25.

So what does this mean? When was the first regathering? Well, beloved the first regathering must be one in which they return to their land in unbelief which would be

⁶ Isaiah 11:11.

⁷ Isaiah 11:12.

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consistent with the modern regathering that we are seeing today. And since there will be no more exiles between the first and second regathering, the modern state of Israel will never again be forced from her land. I don't believe they have anything to fear, necessarily from Iran and all of these other nations, because when they do make their attack, as God will make sure they will do, God has promised in Ezekiel 38 and 39 that he will destroy them himself on the mountains of Israel that the people of the world and the nation of Israel will know that he is the Lord, the God of Israel.

The second time regathering merely describes the rest of modern Jewry that currently exists in all of the nations of the world who will remain there until the very end of the tribulation when they finally recognize their Messiah. And so Isaiah tells us in verse 12.

“And He will lift up a standard for the nations, And will assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.”⁸

As a footnote, only the most server form of theological bias could possibly see this as speaking of the New Testament Church. Beloved, God will never forsake his Abrahamic covenant, never violate his unconditional promises to them, despite their rebellion and unbelief. We can go all the way back to Leviticus chapter 26 and verse 44 and there we read:

‘Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.’⁹

Likewise the prophet Jeremiah reiterates the promise, this very promise in Jeremiah 31 beginning with verse 35.

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Leviticus 26:44-45.

¹⁰ Jeremiah 31:35-37.

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Who would have imagined that the most persecuted people on the planet would even still exist, much less be a world power?

So with this background, we return to Romans 11. The apostle Paul has made it clear in Romans 11 that God is not finished with his beloved enemy Israel. Israel's failure is not final. He has proven this by explaining, number one, as we have studied in the past, the two fold purpose of Israel's failure. And that two fold purpose is very simple. Number one, to bring salvation to the Gentile and, number two, to use we Gentiles to make Jews jealous of God's blessing that they, too, might come to saving faith in the Messiah. And then, secondly, he has rebuked arrogant Gentiles concerning Israel's failure in verses 16 through 22.

Since we as Gentiles are the ones who were grafted into the rich root of patriarchal blessing, we owe our spiritual existence to them. We have no reason to feel superior.

And then, thirdly—and this is what we will focus on this morning—the apostle Paul is going to speak to us concerning the glorious prospect reversing Israel's failure in verses 23 and 24. And this, my friends, is a glorious prospect, indeed.

Notice verse 23, referring to the Jewish remnant of Israel:

“And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.”¹¹

Obviously the key here is that they can't continue in their unbelief. Now, I would ask you. By what means does any man stop continuing in his unbelief? Said differently, by what means does any man believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, it is by means of the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. Jesus said in John 16:8 that he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. And you will remember that regeneration is that instantaneous supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead. That is why in John eight Jesus said that we are born of the Spirit. In Titus three verse five we are told that he saved us:

“...by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”¹²

The concept of being born again by the power of the Spirit. And, likewise, God will cause Israel one day to believe so that they can be grafted in to that rich root of covenantal blessing.

¹¹ Romans 11:23.

¹² Titus 3:5.

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In Zechariah 12 verse 10 we read of this time. There the prophet tells us what the Lord says. Quote:

“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.”¹³

Beloved, what a magnificent promise. After all of their idolatry, after all of their rebellion, after all of their unbelief, God still retains a distinctive, loving interest for Jewish people. That is why Paul would say in verse 28 of Romans 11:

“From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.”¹⁴

God in his infinite grace will remain faithful to his covenant. He will one day graft a believing remnant back into the tree. But notice what Paul adds in verse 24.

“For if you...”¹⁵

By the way, there he is speaking emphatically to believing Gentiles.

“For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree...”¹⁶

In other words, if you, Gentiles, were made partakers of God’s grace with the remnant of believing Jews to share with them the blessings of the rich root of Israel’s covenant, of her promises, of her hope of salvation in Messiah, if this has happened to you, he goes on to say:

“...how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?”¹⁷

You see, here we are reminded that one day the natural descendants of Abraham will become his spiritual descendants. They will become believers in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, once again, they will be made recipients of all of the covenant blessings as the Lord’s chosen people.

¹³ Zechariah 12:10.

¹⁴ Romans 11:28.

¹⁵ Romans 11:24.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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Now I find it interesting—and this is important for you to understand—in terms of salvation believing Jews and Gentiles all compose the one people of God, but this does not mean that the Church has replaced Israel or doesn't mean that somehow this has ruled out a future role for ethnic national Israel. God promised them through Abraham that he would make them a great nation, that a great nation would come from him. He also promised him that Gentiles would participate in the blessings of the covenant. He says that all of the peoples on earth will be blessed through you, Genesis 12:3. And ultimately this is going to be fulfilled completely in the millennial kingdom.

So it would be contrary to reason to assume that Gentile participating in the Abrahamic covenant would mean that national Israel is no longer related to the Abrahamic covenant. It just makes no sense to me. And certainly this has been Paul's argument all along in Romans 11.

Now, to better grasp the prophetic implications of Israel's future restoration when she will be grafted back into her own olive tree, I want you to join me by going back to the future, which means turning to the book of Revelation. We want to examine what Jesus said in his revelation of himself.

Turn to Revelation chapter 11 and while you are turning there remember that here in the book of Revelation the Lord reveals the pre kingdom judgments consistent with his purposes for his covenant people Israel. These events detail the original prophecy that Daniel received from the angelic messenger in Daniel 9:24. And there we read:

“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.”¹⁸

...which is a reference to the millennial temple.

Now remember, although today God has hardened the hearts of Jewish people because of their unbelief as we have studied in Romans 11, all through the apocalypse we see the nation of Israel having a unique position of divine favor as God sets into motion the pre kingdom judgments.

Now in Revelation 11 the Lord will introduce two faithful witnesses who will warn the world of the final outpouring of God's wrath and the horrors of hell that will ultimately be the destiny of all who refuse to repent and place their faith in Christ. But before those two witnesses are introduced, John does something interesting. He continues to participate in a remarkable drama that begins in chapter 10 and actually extends through

¹⁸ Daniel 9:24.

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chapter 14 of Revelation 11 and he speaks about the measuring of the temple. Well, this is very important. Let me give you some further context.

According to Daniel 9:24-27 we read that the antichrist will allow the Jews to construct another temple and renew the sacrificial system during the time of the tribulation. And if you look at what is going on in Israel today, you know that they have got the plans drawn. In fact, you can go on the internet and do an actual walk through of what this will look like. This will happen on the site that is currently occupied by the Islamic dome of the rock.

Now in Revelation 11, in the first four verses, John is asked to measure this temple. Now this would have been an act that would have been deeply encouraging to John in light of the utter devastation of the third temple that Herod had built at the hands of the Romans in AD 70. This would have been the temple that John would have known so intimately.

And, again, this is going to be helpful in our understand of Israel's future restoration when she will be grafted back into her own olive tree.

So as we look at Revelation 11 verse one we first are introduced to an inner measurement.

“ 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.’”¹⁹

And will you notice that there is no mention of actual physical dimensions. There is a clear distinction between defining the parameters of what exists within the temple, versus the outer court of the temple. And there is also a command to measure the worshippers. Now that is interesting. So in light of these three things, it is safe to assume that God is symbolically establishing his ownership of what he possesses. And we see this in other areas of Scripture where he does measuring in similar ways. And it is also safe to assume that he is establishing his ownership of certain worshippers. There are some... he is assessing here the purity and the fidelity of the worshippers. And so God is claiming ownership of the temple and the altar and measuring the worshippers, his covenant people Israel, establishing the fact that their worship does not measure up.

Nevertheless, he marks them out as a special object of his divine favor to be protected through the final three and a half years of his wrath and ultimately to be reconciled unto himself in saving faith, unlike the Gentiles who are on the outer court who oppose him and who oppose Israel and who make a mockery of his temple, the holy city.

It is important to note that this scene is similar to one that is depicted in Zechariah chapter two, the first five verses. There God measures Jerusalem to symbolize his divine

¹⁹ Revelation 11:1.

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protection of Israel as they return from Babylonian exile which was also a picture, a foretaste of future messianic blessing, blessing in the kingdom during the rule of Messiah. That is indicated in verse five of Zechariah two. He says:

‘For I,’ declares the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’²⁰

And it goes on to speak of those truths.

Now back to Revelation 11 and verse two. There is also something interesting going on here. There is an outer abandonment that we see. He says:

"And leave out the court which is outside the temple."²¹

Now this would be a court that was for the Gentiles, the court of the Gentiles. It would have been the outer precinct of the temple that was separated from the inner courtyard. The Gentiles were historically forbidden to enter beyond that point because it would defile the temple. And the Romans even allowed the Jews to execute any Gentile violators of that prohibition.

So here we see a clear distinction between a godly remnant within and an ungodly Gentile people without. He says:

“And leave out...”²²

εκβαλλω (ek-bal’-lo) εξωθεν (ex’-o-then) in the original language. It means cast aside, abandon, abandon the court which is outside the temple. Do not measure it.

In the New Testament, εκβαλλω (ek-bal’-lo), which means I cast out, speaks of rejection or removal of divine favor. So to be unmeasured is to be forsaken, to be abandoned, the opposite of being measured as part of God’s possession.

And then also there is a time of defilement that is mentioned here in verse two. It says:

“...and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.”²³

That is three and a half years, that is the second half of the tribulation. Verse three tells us that this will be the same period of time as the ministry of the two witnesses who he says will prophecy for 1260 days, the same period of time.

²⁰ Zechariah 2:5.

²¹ Revelation 11:2.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

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Revelation 13:5 reveals to us that God will also allow the blasphemous antichrist to rule for this same period of time, for 42 months.

So this will be the time of protection for the Jews as they endure the defilement and domination of the Gentiles and this will continue through the last half of the tribulation when Christ returns.

Verse three.

“And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”²⁴

It is fitting that upon measuring the temple and the Jewish worshippers in verse one for God to offset the false signs of the antichrist and the false prophet, so God the Father grants two men to be his witnesses. And this has been the case all through Scripture. Every testimony must be validated by two witnesses. And he says:

“...and they will prophesy...”²⁵

It means to preach, to proclaim, to speak forth. New Testament prophecy is always much more forth telling than it is foretelling. So these two witnesses will proclaim the gospel of grace. They will warn of the impending judgment upon the earth. And they will do this for 1260 days which is the final three and a half years of Daniel’s 70th week.

Verse four.

“These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”²⁶

Now, folks, here is where it really gets exciting, so stick with me. John would have known precisely the background of this statement, because he would have understand the prophecy of Zechariah, almost 600 years earlier when 50,000 Jews returned to their homeland from Babylon. And since I am sure most of you are preoccupied with far more important things than thinking through the marvelous awesome prophecy of Zechariah that speaks of our glorious internal, eternal inheritance, that speaks of the glory of the kingdom, since you have many things that are far more important than studying that type of stuff, let me spend just a few minutes and give you the context of what Zechariah was talking about.

²⁴ Revelation 11:3.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Revelation 11:4.

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Zechariah two God promises to restore Jerusalem in that day, which will be a foretaste of millennial restoration. In verse 10 he says:

“‘Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ declares the LORD.”²⁷

Folks, I don’t know about you, but I get excited about this. And in Zechariah three God reiterates his promise of salvation if the covenant people will obey the conditions. And what he does there is he cleanses the high priest, Joshua, who was the symbol of the nation of Israel and the representative of the people before God. And this pictured God’s willingness to forgive and restore his people in that day after the exile. But it also pointed to the full and final restoration in the future millennial kingdom. That is why he says at the end of verse nine:

“...and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”²⁸

Then, in Zechariah four he predicted the rebuilding of the Jewish temple after the long exile and that was going to be led by two men, by Joshua the high priest and by Zerubbabel—that would be a good one to name your son—who was the governor in that day. And it is interesting that there in Zechariah we read of the very same symbols here in Revelation 11. That shouldn’t surprise us. It was written by the same Holy Spirit, the symbols of the two olive trees and two lamp stands.

Now the two olive trees in Zechariah four symbolize the two men that the Holy Spirit would use to restore Israel in that day, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor in that day. And the golden lamp stand in Zechariah four was the seven branched kind used in the tabernacle with an additional bow on the top in order for it to maintain an abundant supply of oil that would go to the various lamps, the seven lamps and keep it burning. So it was a picture there of this abundant supply.

So the golden lamp stand in Zechariah four was symbolic of the Holy Spirit’s power that would perpetually fuel the lamps of divine truth pertaining to saving grace. That is why he says in that text in verse six:

“‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”²⁹

But, as is typically the case in Bible prophecy, there was always a near and a far component of what the prophet was predicting. The near being a foretaste of the far, of the future.

²⁷ Zechariah 2:10.

²⁸ Zechariah 3:9.

²⁹ Zechariah 4:6.

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In Zechariah four verse 14 Joshua and Zerubbabel of those days are described as the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth. And this pointed ultimately to the future fulfillment as we see here in Revelation 11 verse four. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands that stand before the Lord of the earth. It is almost an exact quote of Zechariah 4:14.

So the near future prophecy was that the two witnesses would be raised up to be lamp stands for God, shining forth the light of saving truth, that they would be empowered by the Spirit of God to bring spiritual revival to Israel and build the post exilic temple as we know happened historically.

But what does that say about the far future as we look at the rest of the text? It tells us that two witnesses will once again be raised up as lamp stands for God shining forth the light of saving truth, men that will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, not by human ability. They will not be empowered by demons, but men who will bring spiritual revival to Israel resulting in national conversion. Whereupon the Lord himself will establish the long awaited kingdom and build his millennial temple.

Now who are these men? Well, there is much speculation regarding their identity. I cannot be dogmatic, but the most compelling evidence, I believe, points to Moses and Elijah. Let me tell you why. Deuteronomy 18 verse 15 Moses prophesied that:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”³⁰

In verse 18 the Lord said:

“I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”³¹

Now to this day the Jews are convinced that this prophet will be Moses himself.

In Malachi chapter four verse five we read:

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."³²

Now we know that John the Baptist came according to Luke 1:17, he came:

³⁰ Deuteronomy 18:15.

³¹ Deuteronomy 18:18.

³² Malachi 4:5-6.

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“... in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”³³

But this does not necessarily preclude Elijah from appearing again. It is interesting that both Moses and Elijah were fearless prophets that boldly proclaimed the truth. They confronted the tyrants of their day. They preached the Word of God without compromise. It is interesting also that both Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration when he peeled back his flesh and allowed the effulgence of his glory to go forth, a preview of his second coming glory. And it is also fascinating to note that the miracles performed by the two witnesses during the final three and a half years are very similar to those performed by God through Moses and Elijah.

In Revelation 11:5 we see that these two witnesses can destroy their enemies with fire that will come from their mouths. What did Elijah do with the prophets of Baal? He called down fire from heaven.

Also in Revelation 11 the beginning of verse six he says:

“These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying.”³⁴

Well, we know that Elijah pronounced a three and a half year drought in the land, you will recall, 1 Kings 17. The same period of time as the two witnesses in Revelation. Wow. What a coincidence.

In verse six of Revelation he goes on to say:

“...and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.”³⁵

Well, likewise, we know that Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood and he performed numerous plagues against Egypt.

And, finally, it is interesting that these two witnesses in Revelation 11, during the time of the tribulation, will be supernaturally translated into heaven. And in similar fashion, Elijah never physically died, but was taken into heaven in a fiery chariot. Don't you wish you could have seen that? And God himself buried Moses secretly disposing of his body.

³³ Luke 1:17.

³⁴ Revelation 11:6.

³⁵ Ibid.

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Likewise, God himself is going to intervene in a supernatural way with the departure of his two witnesses even as he did with Moses and Elijah. But, again, the text does not specifically identify these men so we can only speculate, but that, I believe, is a compelling argument for Moses and Elijah.

But, folks, what we do know is this. Even as God used Joshua and Zerubbabel, his two anointed ones he calls them to rebuild and restore ancient Israel, so, too, as we read here in Revelation, God is going to use two more witnesses, these olive trees, to assist in doing what? In rebuilding and restoring future Israel.

Elijah and Moses like lamp stands are going to be empowered by the oil of the Holy Spirit, you might say, to bring spiritual light and spiritual renewal to the people. And after their magnificent ministry we read of their morbid death in Revelation 11:7.

“And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.”³⁶

By the way, this is the first time we are introduced to the beast in the apocalypse. The beast, a θηριον (thay-ree'-on) in the original language, a term that describes a vicious carnivore, an animal with a ravenous appetite that functions solely on the basis of his instinctively cruel and violent nature. Of course, this is a reference to the antichrist who is called the beast 36 times in the book of Revelation.

He comes up out of the abyss. This is mentioned seven times in Revelation. It describes, the mysterious subterranean cavern on earth that extends down into the bowels of the earth through some kind of shaft that God has sealed shut for the purpose of incarcerating and tormenting the most vile of demons. That is discussed in chapter nine in the fifth trumpet.

This is not a reference to Satan. He is represented by the dragon. But this refers to a man empowered by demonic forces that is released from the abyss. And here we learn that after the divinely decreed duration of their ministry, God allows the antichrist to overrule the two witnesses and kill them and the world will rejoice, just like all the world would rejoice today if all of the Christians would just get out of the way.

Verse eight. It says:

“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”³⁷

³⁶ Revelation 11:7.

³⁷ Revelation 11:8.

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Obviously this is a reference to Jerusalem which will be the primary staging area of their ministry as well as the headquarters of the antichrist, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. By that time the city will be so infected with every imaginable form of wickedness it is likened to ancient Sodom, the original enemy of Israel and the nation of Egypt. The figurative likeness of those two places underscores just the loathsome depths to which the city will eventually fall. And it is such a macabre ghoulish scene here. It says:

“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city.”³⁸

My friends, the greatest form of indignity that can be perpetrated upon an enemy is to leave their body unburied and watch it gradually decompose. Verse nine:

And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, 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.³⁹

Beloved, can there be any greater demonstration of the rejection of the truth? Obviously the whole world is going to be watching. I can see the anchor news people right now celebrating, dancing around in uncontrollable delight. But what they don't realize is that even as they look at this barbaric display, the Lord Jesus is about to return.

Within two to three days a decomposing corpse begins to bloat and emit odors of putrefaction and during this time the world is going to be laughing and celebrating the prowess of the antichrist at the feet of Christ. But notice what happens in verse 11.

“And after the three and a half days 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.”⁴⁰

That has to be one of the greatest understatements in all of the Bible.

“And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.”⁴¹

Isn't this priceless? The news anchors will be speechless at that time. People will be absolutely panic stricken. Suddenly those decomposing corpses will miraculously return to their original state. They will stand up. It is interesting that there is no record that they did anything. God just says, “Come up here,” and they are caught up into the clouds.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Revelation 11:9-10.

⁴⁰ Revelation 11:11.

⁴¹ Revelation 11:12.

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Some might ask, "Well, I wonder why they didn't, you know, give one more sermon."

Well, the answer is because by now the people of the world have already been judicially hardened because of their unbelief. The day of grace is over. Judgment is coming.

Verse 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."⁴²

The word people or persons literally means names of men, ονομα (on'-om-ah) ανθρωπων (anth'-ro-pon), names of men. This is a very unusual expression and it is through to refer to the 7000 prominent men or leaders who served with the antichrist in his world headquarters, but we can't be dogmatic.

He goes on to say:

"...and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven."⁴³

Well, this would be a reference, primarily to the Jews still inhabiting the eastern part of Jerusalem in the region of the temple who will be saved at that moment. And here we discover, dear friends, more of the fulfillment of God's promise. And for this reason Paul would say in Romans 11:

"God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"⁴⁴

Verse four of Romans 11:

But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.⁴⁵

And in verse 26:

"...a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved."⁴⁶

⁴² Revelation 11:13.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Romans 11:1.

⁴⁵ Romans 11:4-5.

⁴⁶ Romans 11:25-26.

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So here in Revelation 11 as we close this morning we see an interlude that will happen between the seventh trumpet and the bowl judgments that will immediately precede our Lord's glorious return. That is why in Revelation 11:14 it says:

“The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”⁴⁷

So in the progression you have the desecration of the temple. You have the murder and resurrection of the two witnesses in Jerusalem. It is going to be followed by the terror of the Gentiles, the devastating earthquake and all will point to the coming of Christ, to the end of Gentile domination when the Lord will come and save his covenant people, when he will pour out his vengeance on the nations of the world and he will finally establish his glorious kingdom. And in anticipation of all of this, verse 15 of Revelation 11 says:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”⁴⁸

Oh, beloved, what a marvelous day that will be when the natural branches of Israel will once again be grafted into their own olive tree as Paul reminds us. Dear Christian, I pray that you will meditate upon these great promises. Allow them to sink deep down into your soul, because when it does, your praise is going to soar to new heights and your service is going to expand into new realms. And, dear friend, if you are here today and you know nothing of this Jesus that we love, if you know nothing of Christ, if you do not love him, if you do not serve him, if you have never cried out to him to save you knowing that he is the only hope of your salvation, I beg you, for your sake, for the glory of Christ to repent today and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

I would be honored to spend time with you at the close of the service. Please examine your heart. Let's pray together.

Father, these are glorious truths that exhilarate our souls. Lord, thank you for loving us enough, not only to save us, but to reveal your plan of redemption to us with such clarity, Lord, so that we can be blessed, so that our hope can have expression, Lord, so that we can look at the world around us and have some sense of what is going on. Lord, we love you and we praise you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. For it is in your name that I pray. Amen.

⁴⁷ Revelation 11:14.

⁴⁸ Revelation 11:15.

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