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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

I keep calling your attention to the overall perspective of the book of Revelation. Most of you know by now it is divided into three sections: the past (the vision of Jesus), the present (the seven churches which are representative of all churches of all ages including today) and futuristic time (in which we have not yet lived). During this time in the future, I believe is divided up into these events. The very next thing that’s going to happen could be the rapture of the church as is described in 1 Thessalonians 4. “The dead in Christ shall rise and we who are alive will be caught up to be with the Lord in the air.” Then there will be a seven year period of terrible Tribulation on the earth. That’s what we are studying right now. All the way to chapter 19 of Revelation describes that period. This seven-year period is divided in half three and a half years. We are going to study that today. Revelation should be read in conjunction with Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13, because Jesus is talking about the same thing in all of those passages. In those passages Jesus talks about this first period, the first three and a half years being the beginning of sorrows and the last three and a half years being what Jesus called The Great Tribulation. Today we are going to see some references to that three and a half year period dividing the seven-year period of Tribulation. Then, at the end of seven years I believe Jesus is going to come back and he is going to touch down on the Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem and that is going to be right after the battle of Armageddon that we’ll be studying about later on in the book and then there is going to be a 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth. We’ll talk about that also when we get to it. Then the new heaven, the new earth, the great white throne judgement and ushered into eternity the new heaven and the new earth. We are going to be studying more about this time of Tribulation and the title of the message is, “When Men Will Celebrate Anti-Christmas.”

I have good news and bad news for you. I guess you’ve heard the latest “good news, bad news” The good news is there is a physician in America who makes house calls; the bad news is his name is Dr. Kevorkian. The good news is Jesus Christ is going to come back; the bad news is those who are not saved at the time of His coming are going to be left behind during this terrible time of Tribulation. Revelation 11:1-2 talk about the measuring of the temple. John says, “I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, ‘Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.’” 42 months is three and a half years.

I. THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE

This is the measuring of the temple. In biblical times, they often used a bamboo reed; we would call it a pole, cut to a certain length to certify measurements. John was given this reed in his vision and he is told to measure the temple. What temple are we talking about here? When you start talking about temples, you have to go all the way back to Old Testament history and think about all the temples in Jerusalem that were ever built. For generations, the Jews had a tabernacle in the wilderness they moved from place to place. Then, when they went to Jerusalem King David wanted to build a temple, but God said, “I’m sorry, David. There’s blood on your hands. You can’t build a temple, but your little boy, Solomon, can.” So, Solomon built a beautiful temple to God’s glory. That’s in the Bible. In 586 B.C. the Babylonians destroyed that temple. We read in Esther and Nehemiah how after the Babylonian exile, the Jews came back and rebuilt the

walls around the city then they rebuilt the temple itself. That rebuilt temple was called, "Zerubbabel's Temple" because it was Zerubbabel who directed the rebuilding of it. That was the temple that existed for two to three hundred years before Jesus was born, but old Herod the Great loved the Jews even though he hated them in some senses, and he rebuilt and redesigned the temple of Zerubbabel, so when Jesus lived and preached, the temple was actually called "Herod's Temple" because Herod renovated it. That was the temple that existed during the time of Jesus. If you remember Jesus walked into that temple and he said, "This house has been made desolate!" In other words, he says, "God has left it!" He says, "It's supposed to be a house of prayer, but you've made it a den of thieves and God's moved out." The Jews thought God was still there. They didn't know Jesus was God in the flesh. What happened to that temple? The Jews continued to rebel against Rome and in the year, 70 A.D. the Roman general Titus, the son of Vespasian, besieged the city of Jerusalem and there was a terrible siege in which the Jews were trapped inside the walls of Jerusalem. Josephus writes about it and it is terrible to read. It got so bad they were eating their own children in order to survive. Finally they gave up and the Romans came in and wiped out the temple in 70 A.D. and there has not been a Jewish temple since.

Now when John is told to measure a temple, is it talking about the temple in heaven? Because we're going to see there is a temple in heaven. Notice it says, "But don't measure the court of the Gentiles." That lets us know it is a temple on earth. There is one architectural feature that captivates the skyline of Jerusalem. It is the Dome of the Rock built on the Temple Mount. If you have seen pictures of Jerusalem, it is a blue tile building with a beautiful golden dome called the Mosque of Omar. At the south end of Temple Mount there is another mosque called the Mosque of al-Aksa. That's where the Muslims worship. The Temple Mount is the third most holy place in the Muslim world third behind Mecca and Medina. In 1967 during the Six Day War when the Jews took over Jerusalem, they were not able to capture the Temple Mount. What the Jews do have control of is something called "The Wailing Wall." It is important to the Jews, because it is the literal wall to the old temple and the Jews go up there and they pray. They pray up against this wall. They take little prayers and roll them up into tiny rolls of paper and push the pieces of paper in the rocks and stand there and they cry and they pray. I've been to that wall and I've prayed and what they are praying for is for the Messiah to come and to deliver them from their enemies. What they don't know is the Messiah has already come and he is getting ready to come again.

According to Bible prophecy the temple will be rebuilt, because here John is told to measure it. Why else do we know it is going to be rebuilt? Because in Matthew 24, Jesus refers to the temple. He says, "When you see the abomination of desolation the Antichrist standing in the Holy Place, you know the time is at hand." Also Paul writes in 2 Timothy about the Antichrist setting himself up in the temple. When John received this vision in about 90 A.D. the temple had already been destroyed so this is a futuristic temple. Some people think the Jews are going to have to destroy the Dome of the Rock in order to rebuild the temple. If they touch the Dome of the Rock they would have about 800 million angry Islamic warriors descending upon Jerusalem. They know they cannot do that. When I was over there the last time, our guide told us the actual site of the temple is not where the Dome of the Rock is now. It's actually a little to the north of it. The Wailing Wall is over 60 feet tall and on top of it is the new Temple Mount. Some people forget that over the years rubble builds up in all cities. For instance, as we were walking along

the streets of Jerusalem, we came to one of the excavated sites the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed a man who had been waiting for the waters to stir. We’re walking along at street level and they’ve excavated it and the level of the city during the time of Jesus is at least 30 feet below the current level of the street. Where the Dome of the Rock is built that’s the level now but the level during the time of Jesus was at least 30 feet below that. I say that because many Bible scholars who studying this a lot more than I believe the Jews have been and are rebuilding the temple underneath the Dome of the Rock. I get the idea that anything the Israelis put their mind to they can accomplish. They have already done a lot. I do know this for a fact: They are training Rabbis to be Priests. They are training them to perform the animal sacrifices. You talk about the cries of the animal activists and the animal lovers when that starts again it’s going to happen! All I’m saying is the time is right now in our generation for all of this to take place. So John is told to measure the temple, whichever one it is.

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE TWO WITNESSES

Let’s go on to verses 3-14, the ministry of the two witnesses. Beginning in verse 3 God says, “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy [preach] for 1,260 days, [three and a half years] clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.” That is a direct reference to the book of Zechariah, who mentions these two witnesses. “If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.” [Jerusalem] “For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial.” And here’s why I call this one, “Men Will Celebrate The Anti Christmas.” “The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.” The same word for *breath* is the word for *Spirit of life*. “Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

Who are they? Perhaps Moses and Elijah

Who in the world were these two witnesses? The chronological chain that ties this part of Revelation together is made up of the three series of sevens: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of wrath. This is still part of this parenthetical section, the interlude. So this is something that has been taking place during the whole Tribulation and it’s just discussed right here. Notice several things about this. First of all who are these two witnesses? Most Bible scholars believe they are perhaps Moses and Elijah. We can’t say that for sure, because the scripture doesn’t say. But why do we speculate they are Moses and Elijah? They are called “the

two witnesses.” And the two witnesses that appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration in the New Testament were Moses and Elijah. Look at some of the things they are able to do. They can hold back rain for as long as they say. Elijah was able to do that in the Old Testament. He held back rain for three and a half years. They are able to turn water into blood and bring about plagues. Moses was able to do that in the Old Testament. They are able to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies. Go back to I Kings and read about Elijah. King Ahab sent a group of fifty soldiers to arrest him and bring him to the palace. The Bible says God sent down fire and consumed all fifty of them. So the king sent fifty more men to get Elijah and arrest him. The same thing happened. God sent down fire. I think the captain of the third guard was pretty smart, because he walked in and said, “Excuse me, Mr. Elijah. Please, sir. Would you come and see the king?” So Elijah came. So that’s why a lot of people believe they could be Moses and Elijah.

A. Their message

Notice four things about them. Number one, their message! What is going to be the message of these preachers? In verse 3 it says, “they are going to be clothed in sackcloth.” Sackcloth is burlap. All throughout the Bible there is one message always associated with wearing sackcloth and it is the message, “Repent!” “Repent!” Many times throughout the Bible people put on sackcloth and ashes and they would cry out, “Repent! Repent! Turn from your sins!” It’s going to be interesting. During the entire period of the Tribulation there are going to be these two witnesses on the earth who are going to be preaching for God. “You folks need to repent! This is why all these terrible things are happening!” and they are going to be speaking the truth. People aren’t going to like the truth, but the witnesses are going to be preaching it anyway. “Repent!”

B. Their miracles

The second thing about them is their miracles. They are going to be empowered by God to perform miracles. “These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time that they prophesy. They turn waters into blood and can cause every kind of plague as often as they want.” Look at verse 5. “If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouth and devours their enemies.” That looks like something you would see in some hi-tech movie, doesn’t it? Can’t you see some group of soldiers approaching these two witnesses and they just Hissssss like old Godzilla in the movies? That’s just what it says. I don’t know if it is symbolic and means fiery oratory; we’re not sure—all we know is their enemies die when it happens. That’s what I call “bad breath” for sure! They have the power to perform all those miracles.

C. Their martyrdom

The third thing about them is their martyrdom, because they are killed. For the whole time they are prophesying they are protected by God and nobody can harm them, but when they finish God says, “All right. I’m through with you” and he allows them to be martyred and who is it that martyrs them? Look at verse 7. I want to re-introduce you to someone we met in chapter 6 and here for the first time he is called “The Beast.” I John says, “You have heard that the Antichrist will come.” In the book of Revelation the Antichrist is always described or most often described as this beast that comes up from the pit. This is just where we see him on the scene but he will have been on the scene of world history during this entire time. He is going to be the world ruler.

Let me just stop and put in a little commercial here. For those of you who have ever heard of the Minirth-Meier Clinic. Drs. Minirth and Meier from out on the West Coast are highly respected physicians. Paul Meier wrote a book someone gave me entitled, “The Third Millennium.” It is a novel, but it is one of those novels based entirely on scripture. I have been reading that book and it is wonderful. It is intriguing and it’s true to scripture. Dr. Meier describes this time of history, the Tribulation, and what it’s going to be like and it’s interesting who he says the Antichrist is in his novel. In his novel it is the President of the United States, not Bill Clinton by any means but in this book one World Ruler it’s very interesting. If you want to read this from sort of a different perspective based on scripture, I encourage you to get that book by Paul Meier called, “The Third Millennium.”

We’re going to learn a lot more about the Antichrist in chapter 13. Let me give you a little preview. When you see that word “beast,” we’re talking about the Antichrist. Look in 13:2, “The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.” All of those stand for something and we’ll get into that later. This is the main thing I wanted you to see “The dragon.” In the book of Revelation the dragon is clearly revealed as Satan. “The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.” The main thing you need to know about the Antichrist is he receives his power from Satan. Satan is going to indwell the Antichrist. In the Bible the only person it says elsewhere who was indwelled by Satan was Judas Iscariot. On the night Jesus was betrayed the Bible says, “Satan having entered into Judas Iscariot, he got up to betray Jesus.” but this Antichrist is going to be indwelled by Satan. Why do we call him Antichrist? Because everything Christ is, this man is going to be totally opposite and opposed to just as Jesus was God in the flesh. In a real sense this man is going to be Satan in the flesh. He is the one who comes on the scene of world history and he kills these two witnesses. How he does it I don’t know but the world is so happy to be rid of these two preachers who were a thorn in their side how did they react? Verse 10, “The people of earth are so happy over their death that they jump up and down they celebrate and it’s like Christmastime. They celebrate and exchange gifts with one another actually what they are doing is celebrating Anti-Christmas!

It says in verse 9 “every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial.” It is common decency to bury somebody when they die, but these two witnesses are going to be so hated by the evil people on the earth during this time that they are going to watch their bodies lying rotting in the street in Jerusalem. Is it possible for you to see something that’s happening in Jerusalem? Yes, by television satellite. We can see things happening all over the world. Let me ask you another question. Has that technology been available before our generation? Absolutely not! How could that prophecy have ever been fulfilled until the age in which we live right now for every person, tribe and nation on earth to see something happening in one place, in Jerusalem? We can see how it could happen very easily. So that’s their martyrdom.

D. Their might

The fourth thing about them I want you to notice is their might, because God *always* has the last word. In verses 11-13 it says, “After three and a half days, these old boys stand up and the breath and the life of God enters them again!” You talk about the inhabitants of earth being scared—the

Bible says they are shaking with terror not only that they watch as these two witnesses ascend back up into heaven and the Bible says in verse 13, “At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city of Jerusalem collapsed.” People in California keep waiting for what they call, “The Big One.” They expect there will be a terrible earthquake, because the San Andreas Fault runs right through San Francisco down to the east of Los Angeles but the largest geologic fault line on the earth is not in California. It is in Israel—the Great Rift Valley goes right through Jerusalem and curves into northern Africa. So the Bible says one day there is going to be tremendous earthquake. Jesus talks about this same earthquake in Matthew 24. All throughout the Bible this great, great earthquake is prophesied. “A tenth of the city falls and 7,000 people are killed in this earthquake.”

III. THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD

The third thing I want you to see and this is changing gears a little. We finally come to the seventh trumpet, which I am calling, “The Majesty of the Lord,” because now the scene shifts back into heaven and the seventh trumpet is going to sound. Here we are three and a half years through the Great Tribulation and the last three and a half years are *really* going to be terrible, but this seventh trumpet is a preview—a prediction of all the things that are going to happen until Jesus comes back. It’s like a preview of Coming Attractions. Verse 14. “The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.” There were the first four trumpets, and the last three trumpets were called “The Three Woes.” So this is the third woe or the seventh trumpet.

Verse 15: “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.’ Don’t you love George Frederic Handel’s, “The Messiah”? He got those words straight out of this text. This predicts the time when the kingdom of God will literally rule and reign on earth. When we say “the kingdom of God”, there is a dual meaning of that. The kingdom of God is invisible. It says in Romans 14:16 that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but, peace, love and joy in the Holy Ghost. There is an element of the kingdom of God which is invisible and it is within us and it’s around us but there is an element of the kingdom of God that is futuristic that is going to happen in the future where Jesus will literally reign over all the earth. Remember when the angel said to Mary, “You shall have a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great” then the angel says, “And the government shall be upon his shoulders.” Think about that for a moment. Has the government of this world ever been upon the shoulders of Jesus Christ? I mean does the United States Congress get on their knees before they pass a bill and say, “Jesus, our government is on your shoulders. What do you want?” Does the Parliament do that? No. The governments of this world have never been on the shoulders of Jesus—but it literally will be one day and that’s what this is predicting.

Verse 16: “And the twenty-four elders,” Who were the twenty-four elders? We are! “who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.’ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of

his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”

A. The glorious announcement

First notice all the glorious announcement where the angel in heaven sounds his seventh trumpet and as I told you it covers all the last period until Jesus comes back and says all the world finally is going to be under the reign and the rule of Jesus Christ. He will reign forever and ever and ever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

B. The grateful adoration

Then the second thing is the grateful adoration, because when this is finally announced and enacted in heaven, all the saints of all the ages—now we have been pictured as seated on thrones—but at that moment we fall on our faces before the Lamb and we begin to worship him. Notice how we worship and praise the Lord. There is Thanksgiving. We acknowledge the great power of God. In the book of Revelation you are going to see the Antichrist has power. He has a Prime Minister we are going to call the False Prophet who also has power. We are going to see that their power is greater than any human’s power but we are going to see the power of God is ultimately stronger and greater than all of that power. It says in verse 18, “the time has finally come for judging the dead and rewarding the prophets.” As I told you a couple of weeks ago we are living in an age where we wonder “Lord when?” “Lord *when* are you going to justify yourself? *When* are you going to stand up for the righteousness and holiness that is part of your character? *When* are you finally going to punish wickedness and sin?” You had better wait because the time is coming when he will do that.

Finally John says, “It is as if heaven is open and in heaven we see the temple of heaven.” Is there a temple in heaven? Yes, there is. If you go back to the Old Testament when Moses designed the temple on earth, he got the dimensions from God in heaven and the temple on earth is a pattern of the temple in heaven. What did they see in the temple? The Ark of the Covenant. Somebody needs to tell Indiana Jones he will never find it because the Ark of the Covenant is in heaven. How did it get there? I don’t know but the Bible says there it is! The beautiful thing about the temple is that this temple in heaven is the dwelling place of the power of God but the glorious news about the temple is this all of this is in the future. The temple John measured at the beginning of the book is going to be in Jerusalem; the temple we see at the end of this chapter is in heaven but right now there is a temple of God. I’d like for you to point right now to the temple of God right now! That’s right! Because the Bible says we as Christians have the great privilege of being the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, “What? Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which you have from God and that you are bought with a price and you are not your own. So, therefore, glorify God with your body and your spirit which are God’s!

OUTLINE

I. THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE (vs. 1-2)

This is a literal temple, not the church

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE TWO WITNESSES (vs. 3-14)

Who are they? Perhaps Moses and Elijah

- A. Their message (vs. 3)
- B. Their miracles (vs. 4-6) Fire comes out of their mouths
- C. Their martyrdom (vs. 7-10) They will be brutally killed and disgraced and the population will celebrate like Christmas
- D. Their might (vs. 11-13) They come back to life!

III. THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD (vs. 15-19)

- A. The glorious announcement (vs. 15) This will be fulfilled in 19:11.
- B. The grateful adoration (vs. 16-19) We praise Him as we see the "end" of the conflict in sight.