

Revelation 10 & 11

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[0:00] If you want to keep your Bibles apps open, we'll look at these two chapters together. I think it's fair to say that this series, as we've gone through the book of Revelation! together, has been stretching. It's certainly stretching community group leaders or those! They sweat over the passage before they look at it, scratching their heads thinking, where are we going to get out of this? It's stretching preachers as they likewise look at the passage every week, and of course, just us as a fellowship. But I think stretching us in a really helpful way, in a good way, isn't it? I think that's our sort of universal thought. I think we had some trepidation about starting it, but I think we're finding it surprisingly helpful. Of course, I think it's helpful because the whole of Scripture, of course, God reveals himself, but there's just stuff that God is revealing to us through Revelation, which is helping to kind of put things in place and understanding what's happening in our world around us, why things are the way that they are, how we're to live in the light of that, in terms of what is the place of prayer, what should our expectations be about how societies will react to the gospel, and so on. So for those reasons, I think it's been really helping us. And I think some of this stuff that has just helped us get access to this material that God's revealing in the book of Revelation, that's kind of helped us to kind of steer away from the kind of frenzied thoughts of a thousand YouTube clips, or the cults that have just go mad over these things, or that have sort of bamboozled believers over the years. It's that ability that we've sort of taken to step back from the book itself and just look at it as a whole, so that we can see how it's structured. For example, noting the parallels with similar material with other books of the Bible, not least Ezekiel, but from elsewhere, that we've kind of been helped to get a little bit to grips with the numerology, that like, you know, the repeated numbers, number seven, you know, represents completeness in the Bible. Therefore, three and a half, when that comes up, it's half of seven, represents a partial or something that's limited. We also have tried to keep in mind that this book is not written principally for us. It was written in the beginning for those first century believers who were struggling in the midst of all the persecution that they were facing, but also by the grace of God. It is written for every generation of believers. In terms of these things, you can expect these things to be happening in one way or another over the centuries until the

Lord comes again. And all of those things, I think, have helped us get the meat off the bone of the book of Revelation. I hope that's been the case. I think, so I've said that partly because this week is no exception in sort of drawing all those kind of things that have helped us kind of get access to the teaching here, all are at play. So we've been saying there are seven, you know, groups of sevens, seven seals, seven trumpets. We're going to look at seven bowls. We said, if you're new, that these are not sequential, but they are different camera angles on a same period of time. The sevens are looking at different, the same time period, but from different angles. That time period being from the time that the Lord Jesus came the first time to when he returns. These are the kind of things we can expect over that time frame, looked at from different angles. So the first angle really was kind of looking at the socio-political stuff that might be going on. Last, you know, the second angle is that of kind of the meteorological, geological sort of cosmological stuff that might be going on.

And we'll get to the bowls, another camera angle. Of course, we're saying it's camera angles or paintings. It may seem a bit more Picasso than Wainwright, to be honest, but, you know, this stuff is there and it's brilliant. Someone else has described it a little bit as we've gone through the three angles, a bit like a replay, you know, at the end of a football match. I don't know whether you're rejoicing or, you know, lamenting yesterday's results in Aberdeen. But if you were sort of looking at the own goal replays, for example, then you sort of go back and sort of see the thing from different angles. In a sense, that's what's going on here in the book of Revelation. Didn't get much murmurs from either. You've no clue what a football match was played, which I didn't until this morning, or

you're all Celtic fans. I did say Mark's not going to be in a good mood this morning, but it's the way it went. Anyway, so moving on. Last two weeks, we've seen how the judgments of God are being worked out before the final judgment. And, you know, we've kind of been shown that we can expect there to be natural disasters. There's wars, there'll be famines, economic injustice, and so on. We shouldn't be surprised by these things. And these things are coming partly because, well, yes, there is a final judgment coming. But also, we're storing up judgments that are being outworked for ourselves as we rebel against God, as we reject his will and his way, his goodness, his grace, his kindness, his salvation offered through the Lord Jesus Christ. That the things that we're doing as we sort of collectively raise a fist to God, are not ignored by him, but are, as we're seeing, raising the wrath of the Lamb. And so we're saying, don't be surprised by these things.

So actually, neither John's use of numbers or revisiting the same material from different angles should surprise us, actually, if John is the author. It's interesting to note that in his gospel, his gospel is unlike any other gospel. They're all generally chronological. His is more thematically or theologically based, based around two sets of seven, the seven I am's and the seven miracles. And so we should be unsurprised that John will use sevens. Also, in his letters, rather than kind of just giving a sequential thought a little bit like Paul, he kind of, it's almost like a spiral staircase where you're looking at the same theme slightly from different angles as he spirals around the themes through his letter. So we're seeing these things kind of worked out in the book of Revelation as well.

[6:37] So in a sense, if John's the author, we shouldn't be surprised by that. I think one final thing to note, just before we get into the material, is that when we step back and look at the structure of the book in terms of the seven trumpets and the seven seals, what we noticed is that, or noticed in the seven seals was that there was a pause before the seventh seal.

And we're going to see, we're now in the pause before the seventh trumpet. So six seals, pause, seventh seal. And then there's, we've looked at six trumpets last week. We're in the pause before we come to the final trumpet. And in a sense, those pauses are there really to help us to kind of work out how do we live then in the light of all these things that are happening round about us to enable us to be, to walk faithfully before the Lord. And that's kind of where we're at in these two chapters today. So apologies for a lengthy introduction, but I think in terms of just keeping us on track in Revelation, those things are helpful to note.

Okay. So we're going to look at unsurprisingly three sections. There's the little scroll, the witnesses, and then the final, the seventh trumpet. So first of all, the little scroll, we see that that's passed on verse one by a mighty angel, probably the mighty angel who we encountered in chapter five, who shouted out in a loud voice. You remember the question, who is worthy then to open the scroll? And there was this kind of silence. And then the Lord Jesus steps forward as the only one who is worthy. Some have wondered if this angel was Jesus, but Hebrews is really clear that Jesus is greater than the angels. And also you notice in verse six that this angel swears by one who is greater. Well, of course, Jesus is, the members of the Trinity are equal. And so this can't be Jesus. This is a mighty angel as is described. But this angel does bring and carry with them some of the divine goodness, doesn't he? The cloud that in which it surrounds him represents the presence of God, the angel, the rainbow, like in Genesis, God's covenant faithfulness. His face is shining like the sun. Also, you can see that Moses to a lesser degree, his face shone as he'd spent time in the presence and the glory of God. And so this angel is radiating something of the, not only the presence and the covenant faithfulness, but also the glory of God. His legs are like fiery pillars, representing the presence and guidance of God. Like in Exodus, it was the cloud of pillar by day and the color, the pillar of cloud fire by night. So this mighty angel is holding, not the sealed scroll, but actually this is a different scroll. This is a little scroll. Literally in the Greek, it's like a scroll lit, a small scroll in comparison with the other one. So the word is different from the previous scroll, but it contains something similar in the sense that this is the word of God. This word is not given in the throne room this time, but on earth. The angel, this mighty angel has firmly planted his feet, verse two, on both the land and the sea, which is sort of affirming God's authority and rule over the earth and his word to the earth. And of course, as we've been saying, these images, these ideas are meant to calm the heart of the believer. It was meant to calm the heart of those first century believers, anxious about what was happening, saying, no, God is in congruent. God is sovereign. He is actively at work in our world. He has not left the throne. And that word is supposed to calm us too in the 21st century, that he is with us. He will lead us. He is faithful. He is present.

He will guide us. All of those images reminding us of who he is. But then in verse three, the angel shouts like the roar of a lion, which again, in the books of Hosea and Amos, means that he's sort of shouting like the voice of his master. And as he does, the thunders themselves begin to speak. And of course, the number of which we should be accustomed to tonight, the seven thunders. Interestingly, however, John in verse four, he's about to write down what he has heard, but he's told not to. And that seems strange. Why is that? Well, I wonder if part of that is that there is, Deuteronomy 29, 29 says that the secret things belong to our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever. So there are, you know, God has revealed what we need to know, but that it's not the complete knowledge of all that there is. There is more that our minds cannot fathom or more that we do not need to know, but is held in God and that he is working out his purposes more than we can know. But actually what he has revealed is what we need to know and what will hold us and what will sustain us. So John is told to kind of hold back on that. That's not to be revealed to everyone. Paul talks about a similar thing, doesn't he? In 2 Corinthians 12, where he says on one occasion he heard from the Lord inexpressible things that no man was permitted to tell. And I think that that's kind of helpful because sometimes, you know, we may scratch our heads and wonder what God is doing, why things are happening. And whilst Revelation gives some insight into that, it does not give us the full picture necessarily. And so actually there are the things that are held in God that he knows and understands and that we will discover when we get to be with him forever. But actually there are some things that we just don't need to know. The revealed things are what we need to hold on, that we hold on to, that will sustain us in this period until he comes.

[12 : 33] And what we're to do is to kind of trust his heart, even when we can't see his hand at work, knowing who he is, his nature, and that all will be revealed when we see him face to face.

Do you know what I mean when I say that? I guess lingering at the back of some of this is the question of those early believers enduring what they're saying and sort of thinking, where are you, Lord? What are you doing? Are you coming soon? And so he's sort of saying, hold on to what I've told you. Hold on to the revelation I've given to you. Yes, there is a bigger picture, but I've given you enough to see you through.

So the angel, verse 5 to 7, gives this assurance. He's sort of by this oath. He's raised his hand to heaven. He says, actually the mystery of God, his ways, purposes, plans will be accomplished. It is happening. There will be no delay. And Peter addresses a very similar question, doesn't he, in 2 Peter 3, 9, where again the believers under hardship are thinking, where are you, Lord? Be great if you turned up soon. And he says, the Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness. Instead, he's patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. So there's a kind of God's purposes are not being delayed, they're being worked out. But we need to be patient. We need to wait on him, and he will come in his good time. And then there's a kind of really strong parallel with the book of Ezekiel and Ezekiel's experience. Ezekiel chapter 2, he is also told to eat the scroll, as John is here in verses 8 and 9. Why is he told to eat it? Well, I guess the sense the word of God is not just for viewing. It's not just to have on our shelves. It's not just there never to be open gathering dust as a kind of, you know, an important part of our library or whatever. The word of God is to be digested, if you like, taken to heart, worked out, lived out. And it just becomes, in a sense, part of the very air that we breathe, our way of understanding things, part of our very DNA.

You know, instead of Tim Keller, amongst others, that if you cut him, he would bleed the gospel. He had so sort of saturated the gospel through his life that it just shaped the way that he thought, the way that he acted, and so on. Because it wasn't just a sort of dry word to him, but it was the very part of his very lifebloods. And this word, in a sense, I think this word is the gospel.

[15 : 06] This word is the gospel. We are told it bears resemblance to what we might see as an item on a Chinese restaurant menu. You're like, what are you talking about, Callum? Verse 10, it's sweet and sour.

I needed to put something light in here because this is, you know, there's a sort of weight to this. It's, it's the word of God. So it is, there's a sweetness, like the psalmist says in Psalm 119, it's sweeter than honey. But also there's a sourness in his stomach to it.

And I think it's right to see this word, this scroll, if you like, as the gospel that must be proclaimed until he comes again. And of course, this gospel, there's such sweetness in the gospel that we ourselves, having received Christ, have savored of. The sweetness of his love, the sweetness of

the forgiveness he's given to us, the sweetness of the assurances that he gives to us, and the fellowship that we enjoy, and so many other things besides that, not least just giving of himself and every attribute he owns is given to us that we might enjoy. There is a sweetness about the gospel that there also is a sourness, that we are sinners in need of a savior. We are subject to wrath apart from the cross. That as we proclaim it, it is a sweet aroma, we're told that Paul tells us, of life to those who are being saved, but it's the sour stench of death to others.

Some will be drawn to it and blessed by it and will bless you for sharing it. Others will curse you and persecute you because of it. It speaks of the sweetness of heaven, but also the sour reality of hell. It is both sweet to the taste, but there is a sourness to it. But this word must be spoken, verse 11, to many peoples, nations, languages. And interestingly, notice here, not tribes this time, but kings. And part of being at this time in history, we enjoy being part of a global village.

It means that there are peoples from every tribe and nation and language on our doorstep, part of our fellowship. And actually, I think I want to encourage you to get involved and see the importance of the work of Friends International, for example, which the Lord has greatly used to proclaim the gospel amongst many nations and peoples and tribes and languages. And we've seen many folks come to Christ because of that, which is wonderful. But actually, it's really interesting who passes through your door. We have also had a real-life king in our service a few months ago.

[17:57] The king of Lozoto was here, and we had the opportunity to share something of the gospel with him. But we must continue to share this gospel in our neighborhood, in our workplace, in our family, in our city, in our nation, around the world. We know that's the great commission, the great imperative of God's. But also, we may be called to go. Some of us may be being called to go, like Caroline White, like the Patersons who are coming to worship with us in a couple of weeks' time, like Will Niven, who studied in Stirling, has been out in Albania for many decades now, like the work of Comfort International. So many ways in which we can serve and be called to go.

But the truth is that there is a dearth of folks going out on short- or long-term mission. Perhaps it's because, actually, in Scotland, we need missionaries to come here. We're in such a sorry state. But I guess all of us need to ask the question, Lord, are you calling me?

Are you calling me to serve elsewhere? That might be in the short term, whether you're a student or whatever. It might be in the long term. Actually, there are opportunities to go out if you're a medic, if you're a nurse or doctor or involved in those kinds of areas. There are opportunities to go out and help for two weeks with the staff of the DBI. The medical facilities in India are not necessarily available to all. And so teams of doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers go out, dentists and others go out and help treat the staff team for two weeks a year. Speak to Phil here. He's up in Aberdeen this week. But, you know, grab Phil and he'd love to tell you about that. But what other ways can we go and help serve, not just here, but elsewhere as well? Maybe think about what's the opportunity to go on the Rwanda trip and, you know, go along to the info evening, find out about it. But we must, as we're told here, we must prophesy, we must share the word of God with the nations, with every tribe and language and tongue and people and even kings. We must share this wonderful, precious gospel of life that is powerful, that changes lives, that's changed our lives and is changing lives amongst us as a fellowship and in this city, which is wonderful. I said this, I was reflecting on this, that actually what we want in our fellowship is just a broad range of folks, whether they're kings or not, to be in our fellowship. And actually that to see that work of God transforming people coming in to be not just friends, but actually family, brothers and sisters who love one another deeply and from the heart, as the scriptures encourages us, to see the gospel's transformation, helping us overcome, whether that's our natural prejudices or our tibness or whatever. You know, one of the things I was reflecting on, one of the great things about having new folks in the fellowship is that I get to tell my stories all over again because half of you haven't heard them before, the other half you have and I apologize, but not really. But actually, you know, I come from a poor working class background from the northwest coast of the Highlands, brought up in a council house and all the rest of it. But actually there were poorer folks than us.

I can think of one family in particular, the Stuart family, who were, you call them kind of settled travelers, if you like. They lived in Plotten, literally in a tin, corrugated, you know, tin shack.

Their father was an alcoholic. They spent their money. There wasn't a lot of money. And, you know, they weren't, they found it difficult, let's just say they found it difficult to integrate into the school.

People tended to kind of shun them. They were a bit smelly. They tended to hang around the cloakroom and so on and people avoided them. It was pretty tragic when you think about their

circumstances and I look with shame on the way that I was part of that reaction to them.

[22:18] And they were pretty defensive. You know, they were pretty quick with their fists, as you can understand. You know, they had problems with alcohol themselves and the family. But actually, there was a profound work of God in the 1980s amongst the Roman, you know, the traveling community.

And many of them were saved. It was amazing to behold. And these guys were part of that. Their lives were turned round by the gospel. It was amazing to behold just one by one.

The Lord sovereignly, beautifully drew them to himself. And their lives were transformed. A guy, Jamie, who was in my class at school, went off to be a missionary in Switzerland.

One of the other lads is a pastor actually in the central belt amongst others. And one of the things that just demonstrated to me the power of the gospel, not only in my own life, but just in our lives, was actually when I saw Jamie for the first time, after we both become Christians, rather than shunning one another, actually just embraced as brothers.

And just the transforming power of the gospel, to see that, to experience that dynamic in my own life and see it in the life of others, it's just a wonderful thing. There is a beauty, there's a power. And we should long for that, to be part of our experience.

[23:38] People from different backgrounds, whether you're kings or not, just one in Christ, enjoying the power, the transforming power of the gospel in our lives. No matter what nationality or ethnicity we're from, what socioeconomic background, IQ or skills or personality type, we are people who have become not just friends, but family, who love one another deeply and from the heart, as the scriptures encourage. So, the gospel, the small scroll, needs to go out.

There needs to be a witness to that. So, let me just jump straight into what I think is going on in this next section, as it addresses the witnesses. You see the measuring of the temple and so on.

The temple was destroyed in AD 70, before this letter was written. So, the measuring that's going on might seem a little bit odd, but again, it mimics something that Ezekiel was told to do in Ezekiel 40 to 48.

He was told to measure the temple, to get the exact dimensions of it. So, when John is measuring, he's measuring with an exactness, the temple, its altar, its worshippers.

Because what he's saying is that, actually, I want you to count, if you like, another word that could be translated for some of the measuring that's going on here. Those who are mine.

[24:59] Because who are the temple in the New Testament? It's not a building. It's not a steeple. It's the people, isn't it? It is Christ, you know, John 1 says, I have come and I've tabernacled, templated amongst you.

But also, as we come to Christ, we are added into the temple. Peter tells us, we are living stones. We've been built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable God through Jesus Christ, who is, verse 6, the cornerstone.

And if you're new to Christianity, you're looking into Christianity and thinking, how did we get our name? Well, we got our name because Christ is the cornerstone. And so, in a sense, we're, yes, cornerstone community church. We're Jesus community church.

And it's measured, you know, he's measuring the temple in his exact dimensions. Again, just sort of reiterating, God knows the exact number.

He has counted the number. They are known to him, those who are his. And they, we, are under his divine care, his great love, his divine control, his protection, and his goodness.

[26:04] And then verse 2. It's interesting that the outer court of the old temple area, if you like, is not measured. That's because the outer court was given over to Gentiles. They weren't allowed to come into the inner court.

That was for Jewish believers only. But, of course, in Christ, we are all one. The dividing wall of hostility has been, has gone. And so, we are all one in Christ Jesus, Jew and Gentile.

So, there's no need for the Gentile courts. But that's given over, in a sense, to those who are in opposition. They are at the gates of the temple, if you like.

And actually, something in our community group, something that Pedro said, I think is really helpful in just getting a flavor of what's being communicated in this chapter, and through the whole book of Revelation, is that ultimately, you and I, by the grace of God alone, are on the winning side.

He has won. And we are part of that, enjoying some of that victory now, and in full to come. That actually, whether we lose in life, and lose our life with Jesus, or we're winning life, if you like, with

Jesus, it doesn't matter.

[27:16] Because ultimately, we are on the victor's side. God has said, and he has promised, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Well, here in these chapters, as the Gentiles are in the Gentile court, the gates of hell are rattling, you know, at the doors of the church, of the temple. But they will not prevail.

Because this temple is built by God, established by God, founded in God. You know, Christ is its cornerstone, and he will not abandon it.

Because he has paid for it, purchased it with his own son's precious blood. And so, you know, buildings may be emptied, or torn, drowned.

Temples may be destroyed. Church buildings may be bulldozed, as in some countries, believers can be threatened, marginalized, criminalized even. But the building of the kingdom will continue.

[28:16] That is, building for which is eternal will continue, whether it's seen or unseen, because no one can stop God. No one can stop God. They can do their best, but they cannot do it.

So in our work as a fellowship, in the outreach that we're doing, in our daily witnessing with our friends, they're praying for their opportunities to share the faith.

And I hope you do that, that you make that bold prayer. Encourage us all to do that. Once you say, Lord, give me an opportunity just to plant a gospel seed today, and help me to be ready to give an answer when they do.

But, you know, in our work as a fellowship, and in a partnership with the other, you know, outreach organizations that we partner with, whether it's Young Life and the kids in the area, whether it's street pastors and the city streets at night, the Christian Union and the campus of Christians in Sport, amongst the sporting community, prison fellowship, and those in prison, whether it's your navigators, Homes for Good, Hope for Addiction UK, Comfort International, Illyrian Gospel Trust in Albania, DBI, or OMF.

We are, as we support them, as we pray for them, as we work alongside and with them, we are building that which will last forever. That is where we are to invest our time, our lives, our energies, as well as in our families and in our workplaces.

[29:38] So whilst the enemies of the gospel, who actually, by the way, we need to remember, are not always lost to the gospel, God has a brilliant habit of turning enemies into friends, doesn't he?

Look no further than the Apostle Paul who had been persecuting the church, became one of its greatest assets and advocates. But think also today of the high-profile antagonists, atheists, whose lives are being turned around by the gospel to ultimately see the emptiness of atheism.

And just the unreality of life just doesn't make sense of the world. Their lives are being wonderfully turned around and they're being a beautiful witness to the gospel of grace. But this trampling in verse 2 of the city for 42 months mirrors the time of the actual siege of Jerusalem.

It was for approximately 42 months. But also the 101,260 days, which is actually three and a half years, is referred to in the book of Daniel.

As we said before, three and a half is kind of half of seven, it's a limited time of event. But Daniel prophesied an event for three and a half years.

[30:51] It was the three and a half year tyranny of the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes. And so he's sort of mirroring that there will be a time of trial, but it will be limited.

It will be three and a half years, that period of halfness, if you like. So it's used here in this prophetic period to speak into the persecution and the hardship.

It will not be forever. But in that period, how are we to be? Well, he says it is a time of sackcloth. It's a time of humbling. It's a time of mourning. And it's a time for penitence.

It's a time where we seek the Lord for his grace and his mercy. But it's also a time when we are humble, when we're enabled to be a witness, to shine like lamps or lampstands.

You know that in Revelation, lampstands represents the church. So what then is the significance of the two witnesses if this is talking about the church? Well, it's a kind of metaphoric way of talking about our witness.

[31:58] The two witnesses, they probably represent a number of folks in the Old Testament. They represent not least Moses and Elijah. And that makes sense of the kind of things that go on there in terms of the turning the water into blood, Moses, and the plagues.

Again, that's Moses calling fire down in heaven. That's Elijah. That makes sense of who the kind of symbolic witnesses are. But I think also there's a very similar passage in Zechariah chapter four.

Where Zechariah also has a vision of a golden lampstand and there are two olive trees that are pouring their oil into the lamp to keep it alight, to keep it burning.

You see that in Zechariah 4, 14. And Zechariah says that these lampstands represent two people, Zerubbabel the king and Joshua the high priest.

And I think that is our kind of way into how this represents the church. Because when the New Testament speaks about believers, it says that we're what? We're a royal priesthood.

[33:04] That there's that kingly element to who we are now in Christ and that we're sons and daughters of the living God. But also priests, we're given that ultimate access to the most holy place that only the priests were able to go in.

That is now our reality. That we are sons and daughters of the living God and also we have access to the actual presence and closeness to him like they did.

And so that we are called to be, enjoy these things and to be witnesses. In a sense, in if you like, the power of it, with the same power as Elijah and Moses.

Because as we speak the words of life, miracles happen. Lives are changed. People are born again. They're made new.

But also people's lives, they are hardened. They turn away from the Lord's. I think also the thing that's helpful about thinking about this in terms of Zechariah and Zerubbabel and Joshua is that in that chapter, chapter four, one of the best known verses of Zechariah is there, isn't it?

[34:15] Zechariah 4, 6. It's not by might. It's not by power. But by my spirit, says the Lord. That is the secret to our strength is that we are not able, we're not doing it in our own strength and ability.

And actually they are very great in this room. Some of you are very smart. Some of you are very able. Some of you are very gifted. You have wonderful, incredible experience with which that is a great asset to the Lord.

But ultimately that is not where our strength lies. And that's a good thing because many of us at times feel that we have no strength left because of the things that we are facing. Where then do we turn?

Where then are we to get our strength? Well, we get our strength from the one who gives us strength beyond our own strength. As he enables us, helps us by his Holy Spirit. It's not by might, not by power, but by my spirit.

Says the Lord. That is how they and we will be witnesses, able to live consistent lives, faithful lives, be the overcomers that we're called to be.

[35:20] Then in verse seven, Satan raises his head. He is, of course, hates God. He hates the church. He hates the gospel. And so where there is gospel witness, you can expect there to be opposition.

That opposition will look different at different times in different places. The opposition can be, it can be very personal as people object to you as you share and live out the gospel. You just try and live your Christian life before others with integrity and they hate that.

The opposition may be verbal. It may be political. There are political devices that are used to kind of close down the gospel. We're seeing some of that in our own time.

It can be legal. It could be much more subtle. Also, it can be, you know, not in the big things, especially in a fellowship. The way that Satan often destroys churches is not necessarily in the big stuff.

Although he does that as well. It's often in the detail. It's the small things. When folks are tired, when folks at the end, you know, when folks are a little bit ratty and irritable and just a silly word comes out and then there's unforgiveness and it just, it gains a whole new life and it starts dividing families and friends and so on.

[36:28] And we need to be on the lookout for those kind of things. That we're quick to say sorry. Quick to kind of just, or not quick to speak, slow to speak. Quick to listen, as the scriptures encourage us to be.

But also that opposition can be violent and murderous as we see in verse eight. And it's interesting that the word in the NIV for body is actually a singular. It's body.

So we're thinking about the church in mind. It's the body of the church. It can be publicly shamed in the public square, in the cities and in nations where there is, you know, wickedness, which, and oppression.

Wickedness. Sodom means wickedness and oppression is what was seen in Egypt. Ultimately, you know, as exemplified in Jerusalem itself where they crucified the Son of God.

And he first faced what some of these believers were facing as he dies at the hands of the enemies of the gospel. He dies actually to save those enemies, to make them friends.

[37:37] But in a culture, but particularly at the time of writing, to have your body left out in the public spaces was an ultimate insult and adding insult to injury.

Humiliation upon humiliation. And again, there's a limited period of that. It's not three and a half years this time, but verse 11, three and a half days. It represents a short time, a fixed period of humiliation as others gloat and celebrate and self-congratulate how the witness of the church in their land, in their nation, in their city or wherever, this thorn in their flesh, this prophetic voice in the wilderness that cries, this is the way of the Lord that sheds light on their sin and dark deeds is seemingly gone, verse 10.

But then verse 11, gloriously, resurrection. resurrection. Gloriously, rapture. The rapture of the church as we are caught up to heaven as the Lord himself is returning in sight of all.

Paul describes that day in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 16, he says, for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the trumpet of the archangel, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God.

The dead in Christ will rise first and after that we who are still alive and are left will gather and are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever.

[39:01] Therefore, Paul says, encourage one another with these words. We're going to look at 1 Thessalonians in late August and September and actually just to give you a heads up on where we're going in terms of our Bible teaching, we're going to look at 1 Thessalonians after the summer, then Exodus, then 2 Thessalonians, God willing, then Jude, Hosea, 1 Timothy and Zechariah in the mornings.

That will take us up, God willing, to August, to the summer next year and then evenings we're going to look at Ruth, Romans, Esther and James, God willing. But during the rapture, when we're taken up to be with the Lord, there is this devastating earthquake, verse 13, and here's the response of those, it's different from the responses given before.

The response before was to head for the hills, to ask that almost like the stones to cover them as the glory of the Lord arrives. But here they marvel at the glory of God but it's too late for them.

Then Joan notes that that's the end of the second woe, the first ended in chapter 9, verse 12. And then briefly, sorry, this is a very long explanation, we have the seventh trumpet.

And as all of this is happening, as the people of God are raptured, this sets off heaven's affirmation of all that is happening as they, and as they do.

[40:23] I think as we read these words, we find our hearts resonating and the heart of every believer and every generation resonating with the wonder of what will happen.

For then, as Christ returns, his work is complete. The kingdom that has been dawning since his first coming is finally and fully established. Verse 15, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever.

Handel's Messiah going off in the back of my mind there. when we are done with sin, we're done with striving to overcome the old nature with temptations, with addictions, with sickness, with the ravages of aging, the conflicts within ourselves and with others, the mess in our heads with fear, with anxiety, with sin, with pride, with shame, with guilt, with falling and failing time again.

When that trumpet sounds, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, 52, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet, the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed.

I don't know about you but I just get goose pimples when I think of that day. The perishable, clothed with the imperishable, dishonor with glory, the earthly with the heavenly, weakness with power, mortal with immortality and we will be like him and we will see him face to face.

[41:56] And at that, these things, the 24 elders, they're up, they're off their thrones and they are falling on their faces. They're exclaiming at last and saying, verse 17, we give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who was because you have taken your great power and you have begun to reign.

And then the solemn warning, verse 18, for those who reject him, there is wrath and destruction on that day for those who have not followed him.

But there is reward for those who have done nothing other than receive him as Savior and Lord, call in his name and who have suffered with him and now reign with him.

And then verse 19, God's temple in heaven was opened and within his temple was seen the Ark of the Covenant and there came flashes of lightning, rumbles, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

The Ark was in the Holy of Holies, if you remember, in the earthly temple, hid behind a big thick curtain. None but the high priest could go in, enter in once a year. And of course, that place behind it represented the presence of God amongst his people.

[43:07] But here now, that was just a prototype in Jerusalem. Here now is the reality. And there is no curtain for the curtain that's been ripped, it's been removed. And for those who are his own, for those who are washed in, saved and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ who was slain, those who are now resurrected and glorified, we are able to enter in and enjoy the fulfillment of that covenant that is mentioned there, of his faithfulness, of all that he promised at beginning, right at the beginning of the Bible, through Moses, is ultimately in Christ established because he is the faithful one who does what he promises.

And at all of these events, as all of these things are happening, as the elders are off their thrones and they're bowing down before, no wonder, the fireworks start, the flashes of lightning, the rumbles, the peals of thunder, the earthquakes, the skies, if you like, throwing down their hail.

And so these verses, as they reach this climate, they scream two things. One, to those of us who are inquiring into the things of God, is it time, in the words of Isaiah, to seek the Lord whilst he may be found?

For today, today is the day of salvation. Secure your salvation in Christ. Receive him as Savior and Lord. Receive the gift of a new life that he has for you in Christ and the wonder of all that he has promised for you.

but also believer. Find your hope. Find your peace. Find your joy in what you have received and what you will receive in Christ.

[44:49] That you are, by his grace alone, come what may, on the victor's side. You are so precious to him.

You are deeply loved by him and he has prepared a place for you that he cannot wait. Forgive the turn of phrase for us to be there.

He's been planning it for all eternity. So precious and so loved by him are we. Now I want us to pick up on some of those thoughts in our final song as we sing this song of Moses.

You'll see here some of the things that we've been talking about repeated. So take them to heart. Rejoice in them as we close today.