

Revelation 11: 3-6; “The Two Witnesses and the 1260 Days”, Sermon
80 in the series – “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 18th, 2007,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The last time that we were together we were “measuring the temple” with the Apostle John. John was given a reed like a measuring rod and told to go and measure “the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there”. This is a measurement of the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ in this 3rd time period of her history; what its dimensions were to be like. This measurement is of the kind of worship that the visible Church would give to God through our Lord Jesus Christ; a measurement of the worshipers themselves in this regard; and the length of time that “the holy city” would be trampled down by the Antichristian forces which are pictorially represented by the word, "the Gentiles", here in this passage. The Church of Jesus Christ itself, is pictured here as a temple having an altar which is representative of the worship and the kind of sacrifices which would be offered through Jesus Christ our Lord. The temple would consist of an outer and inner court. The worship given, would either be acceptable inner court worship or unacceptable outer court worship. I believe that this outer court worship was unacceptable to God based upon the idea that John was instructed not to measure the outer court. John was instructed to measure the inner court only, and to leave out the outer court in his measurement. This was to signify that during this 3rd time period that there would be many who would profess to be Christians in those countries that make up the fallen Roman Empire; countries where the gospel flourished the most in the first and second time periods, but that only the inner court worshipers would be worshiping by the standard of the Word of God which is represented by the measuring rod that John was using. The worship of the visible Church would therefore be trampled underfoot by “the Gentiles” for “forty-two months”. The Roman Antichrist would introduce doctrines and practices into the worship of the Visible Church, into the outer court, and their witness to Jesus Christ would be trampled down. The inner court worshipers and their worship would be accepted by God and their witness would be established, even though suppressed by the many who would not receive the measurement and the “rule” of the Word of God.

Last time I began to explain to you the way that prophetic time is calculated here, for we are given here in this passage two very specific periods of time to think about; the forty-two months and the 1260 days. I said to you that these periods of time refer to the same period of time; the time that the Church, the Holy City, would have to endure being trampled down by the Antichristian forces. So the Church here in Revelation 11 is being pictured as a temple, in terms of her worship, and a Holy City in terms of her witness to Jesus Christ her Lord. “You are the light of the world,” Jesus says in Matthew 5: 14; “a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden”. So what is being introduced to our minds here in Chapter 11 is the idea that the Church of Jesus Christ will have to endure Antichristian oppositions and oppression in relation to her worship and her witness for this specific period of time, after which she will be delivered from it. What I want to do this afternoon then, is to explain to you first, the Biblical evidence for the day-year concept of calculating prophetic time in this passage, and then secondly to introduce to you to the two witnesses who are to “prophecy” during this whole 3rd time period of Church history.

1st- Let me give you the evidence for the Day-Year Concept of Prophetic Time.

What evidence do we have in the Bible that the prophetic times mentioned here in Revelation 11 and other places in the book, are not literal days composing three and a half years, as many believe? How can they refer to 1260 years, a considerably longer period of time? Well turn with

me to Numbers Chapter 13 and we will begin our study there. Here in this chapter we find that the Lord is very displeased with many of the children of Israel which He had brought out of Egypt, and out of their bondage to Pharaoh. He had Moses send out 12 men, one from each of the 12 tribes, to spy out Canaan, the Promised land that He was about to give them, and the group gave a report when they got back, which is recorded for us in verse 26 and following. "Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land." "Then they told him and said, 'We went to the land where you sent us.' "It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit." "Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there." Verse 30 says, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.'" "But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.'" "And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, 'The land through which we gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.'" "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." "So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night." "And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt!' "Or if only we had died in this wilderness!" "Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?" "Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" Joshua speaks up in verse 7 and says, "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land." "If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey." "Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us." "Do not fear them." "And all of the congregation said to stone them with stones."

The Lord, my friends, was very angry with this bad report and this unbelieving response of the people whom He had shown such mighty wonders to already. This unbelieving response, by the way, is the response of many persons in our own day to the whole idea that their worship and their witness for Christ should be governed by the Word of God. They wrongly think that it is too hard to live the Christian life in accordance with all of the Bible. They see the giants of difficulty, in the good land of living the Christian life according to God's Word and Promise, and they balk at it. And they want to put something of their own making, something simple in its place. They want to have a worldly and a fleshly Christianity. They want to think that they are spiritual and religious so they make up their own religion and call it Christian. But let's see what happened to these unbelieving Israelites in Chapter 14. Verse 27 says, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me?" says God. "I have heard their complaints which the children of Israel make against Me." "Say to them, as I live, says the Lord, just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above." "Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the Son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in." "But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised." "But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness." "And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness." Now here is what applies directly to our study this afternoon. "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and

you shall know My rejection.” There is the prophetic principle. The people had been unfaithful in general. There were exceptions to that in the faithfulness of Joshua and Caleb. But because of their unbelief and their complaints, they were to suffer this judgment upon them; and the prophetic word was a year for a day.

Now turn over to Ezekiel chapter 4. Ezekiel has received his commission from God to go to “the rebellious house of Israel”. He was among the children of Israel who had been taken into captivity into the land of Chaldea. He has been appointed a watchman to the house of Israel to declare to them their sins and the disciplinary punishments that would befall them as a people. In verse 1 it says, “You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem.” “Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around.” “Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city.” “Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it.” “This will be a sign to the house of Israel.” “Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it.” “According to the number of the days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.” “And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days.” “I have laid on you a day for each year.” There it is again, “a day for each year.” And the Lord laid it on the house of Israel in relation to the siege of Jerusalem and her captivity.

Now the reason that I think that we can apply this Day-Year concept to what we are studying in the book of the Revelation is that we have already seen that there was a great sinful problem that had come into the Church during the second time period, the period of the Trumpets. I will not review all of that with you. But it was the weakness of the Church doctrinally during that time period, which allowed the emergence of the influences of Antichristian thought to penetrate many churches. There was a general willingness among many churches and among many people to allow the development of false doctrine and false authority to come into the Church; even to the point of idolatry and blasphemy. These were the reasons why the Lord brought His judgments upon Israel in specific Day-Year time periods in the Old Testament. And I believe that on that basis, that the concept applies well to what we are studying. When this great apostasy took place, those who were truly worshiping God in Spirit and truth became fewer in number than the many who were tolerating falsehood or receiving it. God, as you will remember brought spiritual plagues and judgments upon the visible church as a scourge to her. But, as it says, in verses 20 and 21 of Chapter 9, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.” “They did not repent of their murders, or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” In other words, there were many people who were deceived by the false doctrines and practices of those false Christians, people who perished eternally. But those looking on, who allowed or approved of these false doctrines did not repent of their many sins in relation to this false worship. So God would bring all of the implications of these doctrinal compromises and heresies that were introduced, to complete fruition. And He would allow them to have full course in this third time period, and during this time period, He would, by stages destroy these forces of systematic opposition to the true gospel.

But there would be a long time period of the “trampling down of the holy city”. All of these issues of what the Church’s true doctrine and practice were to look like would take a long time to sort through; much longer than 1260 literal days. They would take many generations. So what I am saying is that this great apostasy of the Church began its rise, it began to take place in the 2nd time period of Church History, from 606 A.D to 756 A.D. 756 A.D. is the time when the Pope at Rome first exercised temporal power over other nations. And Mohammed’s power in the East was at this time firmly established. From my standpoint this is where the 1260 days

begin. If my calculations, and the calculations of other commentators are right concerning these dates, it would seem probable that we are nearing the end of that time period. Theoretically it would end in the year 2017. This would not be the year of our Lord's return, which no man can know or will know; but rather the trampling down of the Holy City would end then, and the Lord will raise the cause of His Church from the dead spiritually. Times of gospel prosperity will follow. When we speak of the fulfilling of these times in such an exact way, we must always be humble enough, as Christians, to admit that we may be wrong; we may be off by some considerable time, based upon whether the Year-Day concept is applicable to this passage, and based upon whether we can discern what the beginning date of the 1260 years is. The end of the Antichristian powers may not be in 2017. It may come some years later. Only the Lord knows for sure. But it will come, and I believe that the Day-Year concept is the true one concerning these times mentioned. And so I conclude that the end of the 1260 days is probably not far off.

Footnote – The year 2017 having come and gone, and our not having come to the end of the 1260 days prophecy because the spiritual reign of Antichrist has not come to an end, I must confess that my calculation of when the 1260 years began, cannot be right. It must be later. And so, the assumption that those years beginning with the establishing of the temporal power of the Papacy must also be incorrect. The next major event following 756 A.D. was the controversy which arose in the Visible Church concerning the worship of images. The Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Second Council of Nicaea took place in 787 A.D. It rejected iconoclasm and restored the veneration of icons in the churches, was not part of the tradition received by the Reformation.

Now 2ndly- Let me introduce to you, briefly, the Two Witnesses of this time period.

You find them in verse 3. "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophecy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." "These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." There are many Christians, mostly Premillennial and Dispensational, who believe that these 2 witnesses are real men who will appear during the Great Tribulation of 7 years, according to their scheme of prophetic interpretation, which has many adherents. The next time that I preach to you I will try to show you that these verses cannot refer to literal men because of the description which is given of them in verses 5 and 6. But I think that it will suffice to say, based upon the things that I have said to you this afternoon, that since the time of the Antichristian powers trampling down the Holy City is years rather than days, that the witnesses who prophecy during this time period must be mystical witnesses. That is; these 2 witnesses that are mentioned are referring to a witness which will take place all during this 3rd time period. What these 2 witnesses really represent can readily be seen if we will turn back to Zechariah Chapter 4. Our text in Revelation calls them "the two olive trees". Here we read this. "Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who wakened out of his sleep." "And he said to me, 'What do you see?' "So I said, 'I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps.'" "Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." "So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, 'What are these, my lord?' "Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." Skipping down to verse 11, "Then I answered and said to him, 'What are these two olive trees – at the right and at its left?' "And I further answered and said to him, 'What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?' "Then he answered me and said, 'Do you not know what these are?' "And I said, 'No, my lord.'" "So he said, 'These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.'"

Now remembering that olive trees are full of oil and oil is a good representation of the Holy Spirit, these two olive trees which "drip" into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from the

golden oil drains can be none other than the ministers of the Church in their two-fold ministry of Church Teaching and Government. In this passage they are referring to Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the Governor. That was literal Israel. In the spiritual Israel of God all the instruction and government of the Church is found existing under the Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the High Priest and Governor of His Church. Those who witness for Him are those ministers who “stand before the Lord of the whole earth”. They are full of the Spirit’s oil, His golden anointing, to declare the Word of God and to preside over the worship of God here upon the earth. Now they are clothed in sackcloth because they know that their witness is not being widely received. It is a cause for mourning. But blessed are you if you will receive their message and act upon it. Now is the time to believe in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to learn to worship Him in accordance with His Holy Word. Will you not praise God if He has brought you to be an inner court worshiper? Your altar is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will speak more in detail of these 2 Witnesses next week.