

On Trial

Revelation 11:1-13

Sooke Baptist Church

April 11, 2021

9am Facebook and YouTube

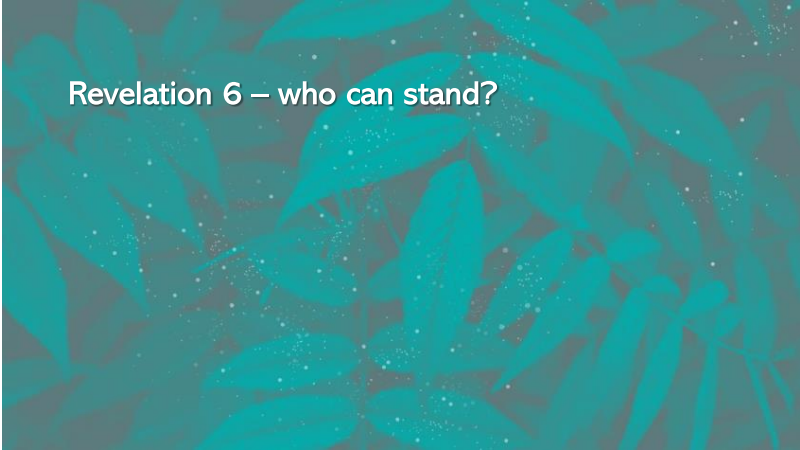


Coffee/Question:

Have you ever had to speak in defense of someone? Why did you do so? What happened when you did?

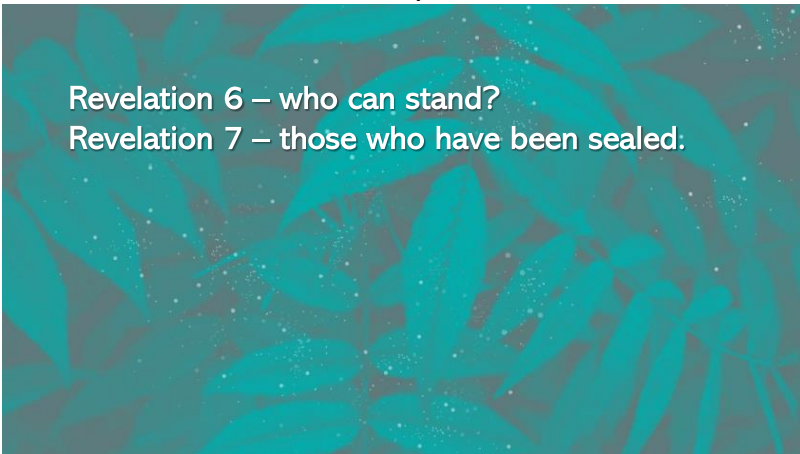
In the book of Revelation, we learn that things are not as they seem. There is more to reality than what our eyes see, our ears hear, our hands touch.

As the sixth seal was opened, humanity saw the glory of the One who sits on the throne of heaven even as they experienced the wrath of the Lamb. They asked a most haunting question....



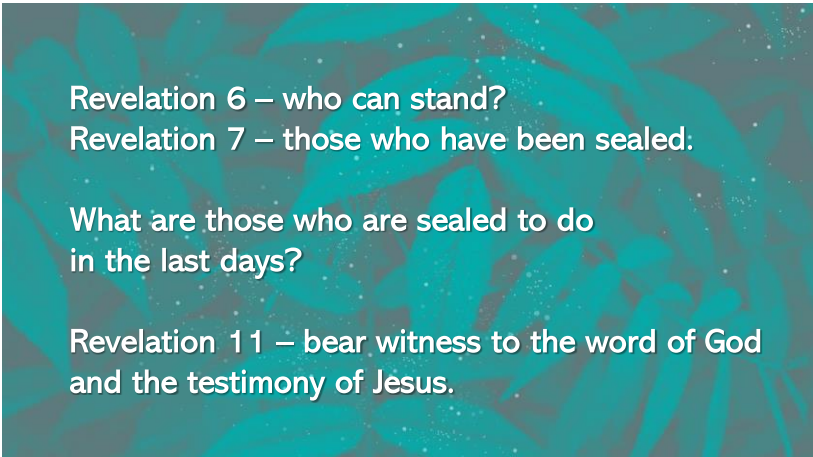
Revelation 6:17.

Revelation 7 answers that question.



... that is, those who have believed in and received Jesus...and have been born of and filled with the Spirit of God.

In Revelation 11, the reader discovers... what... those who are sealed are to do in the last days...



Let's read today's passage.

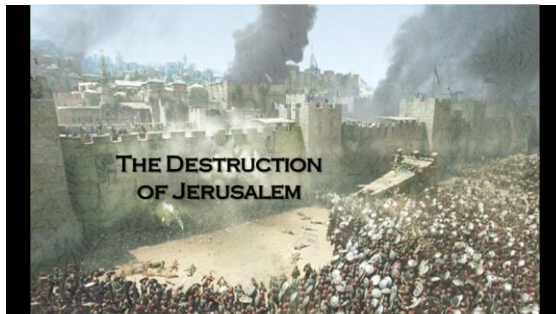


Revelation 11 is a challenging chapter to understand for it makes use of much symbolic imagery taken from the OT.

Let's pray and ask for the help of God's Spirit as we work our way through the text – verse by verse.

11:1 – what is the temple, the altar and the worshipers that John is told to measure?

You need to know that when John wrote down what he saw in this vision, that it had been 20+ years since the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans.



Jesus had foreseen this...which is why he had wept over the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday, saying...



"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.

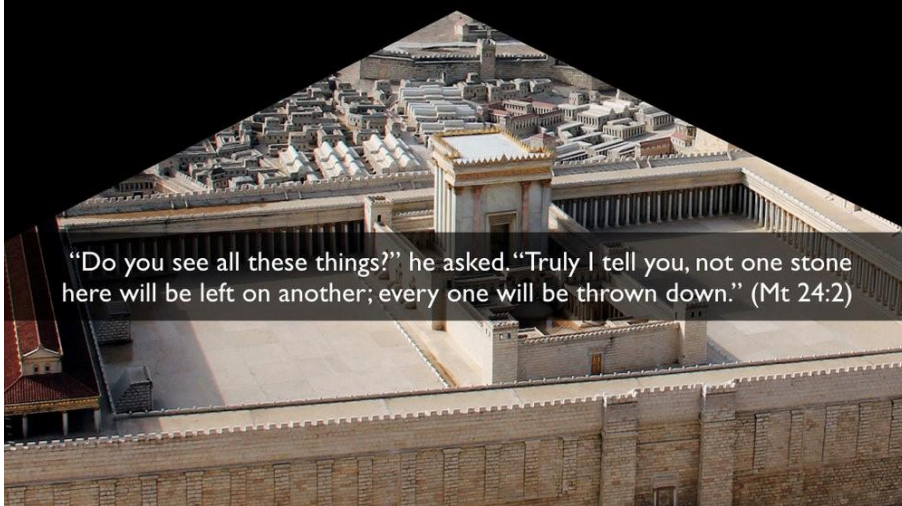
⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.



⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls.

They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

A few days later Jesus again spoke of this theme, Matthew 24:2...



"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." (Mt 24:2)

In the vision of the new Jerusalem, John in Revelation 21:22, writes...



Revelation 21:22

And I saw no temple in it,
for **the Lord God** the Almighty
and **the Lamb** are its temple.

The temple John is told to measure is symbolic.

If John is not being told to measure a literal building, then what is he measuring?

To answer that question, we need to ask another.

Is there a temple of God is in this present time?

1 Corinthians 3:16

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

1 Corinthians 6:19

Don't you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

2 Corinthians 6:16

For we are the temple of the living God.

1 Peter 2:5a

...you also like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.

On the basis of these verses, we are able to understand that what John is measuring is the church of Jesus Christ, which is now the temple of the living God. But what about the altar?

The altar is a place of sacrifice.

Are there sacrifices the church is to make?

Peter in his first letter answers that question.

1 Peter 2:5a

...you also like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:15-16 (ESV)

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

The church offers to God sacrifices of praise, the doing of good and of sharing with others.

11:1 – but why was John told to measure?

Here the reader is pointed back to the book of Zechariah.

In chapter 2 Zechariah saw a man measuring Jerusalem... remember that following the exile the city was left in ruins.

But it was the heart of God to see the city rebuilt and his people brought back to once again live there.

Another angel at that moment came with a message from God for Zechariah.

Zechariah 2:4-5

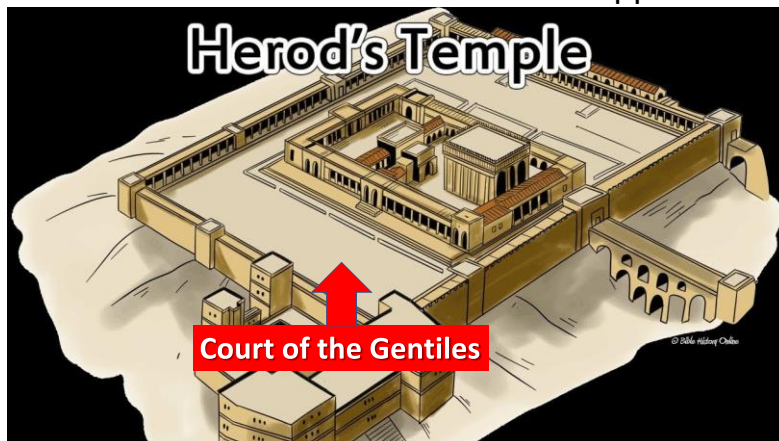
Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it, declares the LORD, and I will be its glory within.



As John was told to measure... it was impressed upon him and in turn his readers, that the LORD, who by his Spirit now lives within his people... guards, protects, sustains and satisfies them... just as he had promised long ago to Zechariah.

11:2 – why was John told to not measure the outer court of the temple?

In the temple at Jerusalem... before it was destroyed, there was a courtyard which Gentiles were allowed to enter that wrapped around the temple.



In the last days, the church of Jesus, by God's design will live surrounded by those who didn't believe; those who will attempt to trample upon the church in order to harm and destroy it.

11:2 – what is meant by the reference to 42 months?

Just as the temple is symbolic, so is the number 42.



Remember the number seven represents... perfection.

Four times this number... or a variation of it... is used in chapters 11 and 12.

11:2 – the Gentile will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

11:3 – the two witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days.

12:6 – the woman who flees into the wilderness will be cared for by God for 1260 days.

12:14 – this woman will be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, which is 3 ½ years.

This number is used repeatedly in the OT.



- Numbers 33 details that there were forty-two stages to Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan.



- When Elijah called his nation to repentance, God told him to pray that it would not rain, and it did not rain for... 3 ½ years or forty-two months.

Matthew 1:17

Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ fourteen generations

1:1	1:2-6	1:6-11	1:12-16	1:17
Introduction stating key figures	14 Names Abraham to David	14 Names David to Babylon Captivity	14 Names Return from Babylon to Jesus	Conclusion and summary of numbers

- In the genealogy of Jesus included in Matthew’s gospel we read that there were three fourteens totaling forty-two generations from Abraham to Jesus – see Matthew 1:17



- Twice in the book of Daniel, 7:25 and 12:7, the phrase, “time, times and half a time” is used meaning one year, two years and a half a year which total... three and a half years or 42 months.

Forty-two is a symbol which describes the period of time... from the day Jesus inaugurated the new covenant with the shedding of his blood until his return to the earth when the new city without a temple comes down out of heaven – see Revelation 21:10.

11:3 – why are the two witnesses clothed in sackcloth?

Sackcloth occasionally was the clothing of a prophet.

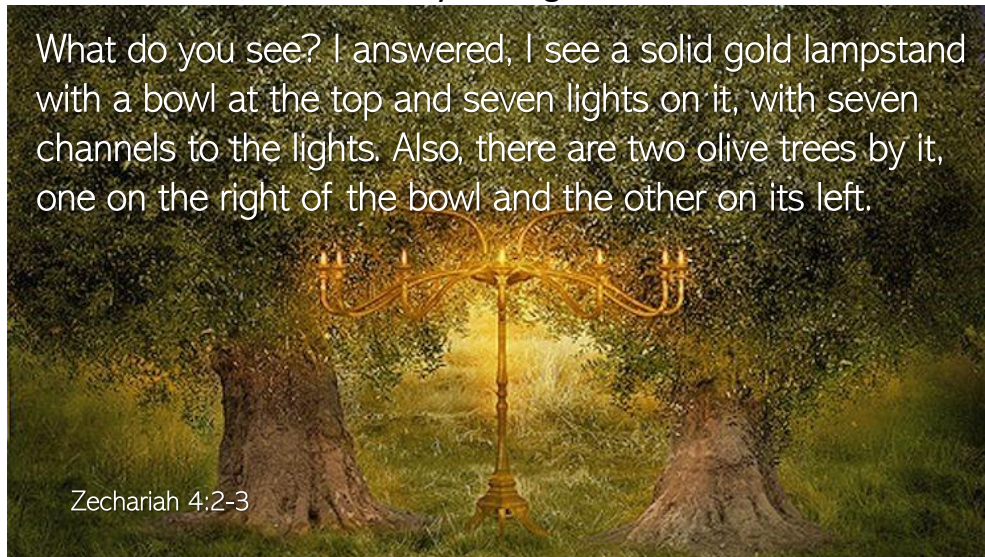
A person would also wear sackcloth as a sign of repentance.

What the witnesses wear tells us that their task is to speak God’s word... and call people to repentance.

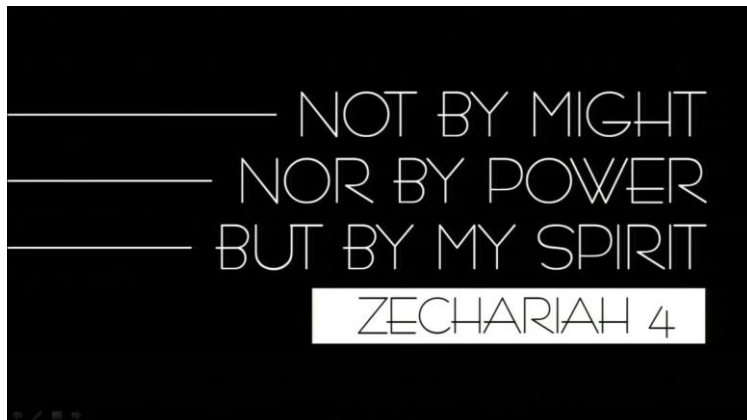
11:4 – what does it mean that these two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands who stand before the Lord of the earth?

Zechariah saw a similar vision – see 4:2-3.

In this vision he was asked by an angel...



When Zechariah asked the angel, “what are these?” he answered, **“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel..**



...says the LORD Almighty.”

Through the hands of Zerubbabel, the temple, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians seventy years earlier.... was to be rebuilt.

Several verses later God said this about what Zerubbabel would do...

DO NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

Zechariah 4:6-10

What Zerubbabel was to do would seem insignificant. But it would be by the Spirit of God that he would work, and God said that he would rejoice to see what Zerubbabel began.

Zechariah asked in 4:11, **“What are these two olives trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?”**

The angel told him, 4:14... **“These are the two who are anointed to serve the LORD of all the earth.”**

GK Beale explains that this connection to Zechariah’s vision reveals to the reader that though the two witnesses live in the midst of danger, they are near to their Lord’s sovereign presence, and that nothing can separate them from him.

The same powerful Spirit of God, who worked through Zerubbabel, enables and empowers his church to faithfully stand for God and give testimony, even though it may seem so insignificant. p.222.

The temple is symbolic.

The number 42 is symbolic.

And the two witnesses?

They are also a symbol of God’s people, speaking his word, filled with the Holy Spirit, who empowers their witness in the last days.

We know this... from the way the Revelation in other passages collectively speaks of the testimony of all believers.

6:9 - ...the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and **the testimony** they had maintained.

12:11 – They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of **their testimony**...

12:17 - ...the dragon...wages war... against those who keep God's commands and hold fast **their testimony** about Jesus.

11:5-6 – what does this mean?

The same Spirit who empowered the testimony of Elijah and Moses, empowers the testimony of his church.

As God determines and chooses, he will, in the last days, do remarkable, miraculous things through his servants.

Gerhard Krodel writes of this and says God's does so because...

“The Spirit-endowed people of God in the last days are the successor to Moses' rod and to Elijah's mantle.”

Gerhard Krodel

p.224.

God is with his witnesses.

God tells them what to do... in his name.

God grants to them authority to speak and act on his behalf.

And as they do so, God provides them with the resources of heaven to carry out his will here on the earth.

We'll stop here and finish the passage next week.

Because the Revelation was given, not simply to provide details about the last days, but to encourage and embolden the followers of Jesus to stand their ground; to be faithful to give testimony; and to live in this world demonstrating the presence and goodness of God, I remind you and would urge to hold onto and live out the truth we have considered this morning.

Two things.

- Remember who lives in you.



1 Corinthians 3:16

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

You are a temple of the living God.

Remember church, this reality defines us individually... and... it shapes who we are as a community of faith.

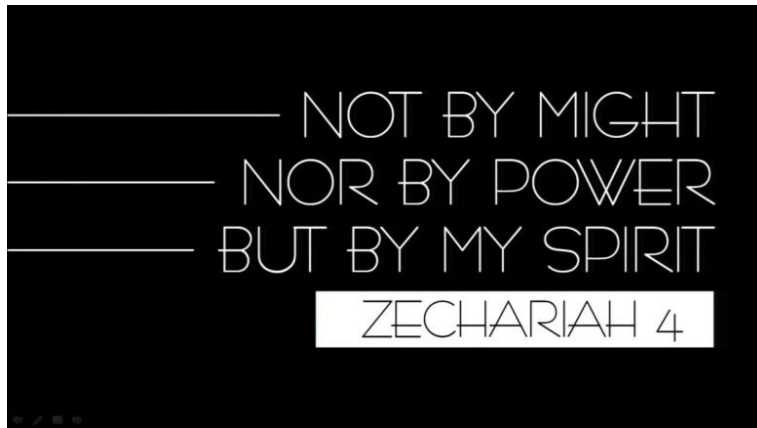
God's Spirit dwells in... our midst.

It is true that God is everywhere present.

But he uniquely manifests his presence through his Spirit when his church gathers in his name to worship and to serve.

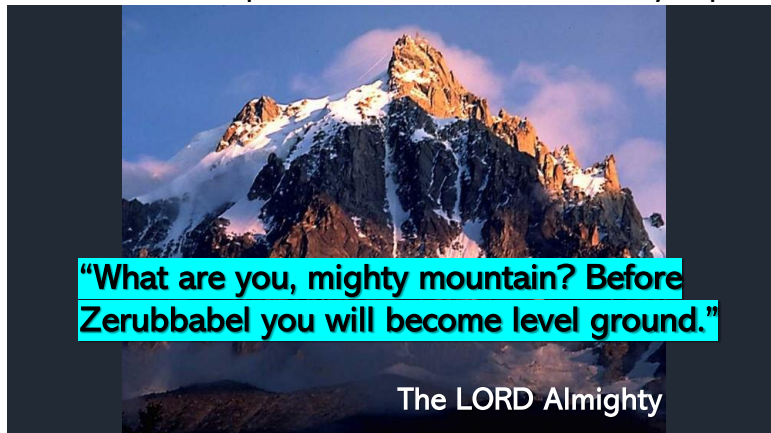
- Remember follower of Jesus... that having been saved we live our lives in service to God – Revelation 11 impresses upon us that we are his witnesses.

The assurance spoken to Zerubbabel applies to us.



The impact of this local church and the extent to which God is able to work through us in Sooke and beyond... is not determined by the sum total of our abilities and giftings of grace, but by our yielded-ness to God so that his Spirit is welcomed and he is free to work in us and through us as he chooses.

The word God spoke to Zechariah in his day is pertinent to his church today.



The task before Zerubbabel was great... it was like a mighty mountain.

Zerubbabel's authority was limited by Persia;

- he had a shortage of labour and materials...
- his workers were discouraged by certain Jews who despised the new building as being small in comparison with Solomon's magnificent temple; and...
- he was surrounded by hostile foreigners who tried to hinder the work at every point possible.

But God's power was to be the source of Zerubbabel's strength.

The culture of his day, like ours was enamored with big.
And nothing about Zerubbabel and the people with him was big.
This is why God said to his people through Zechariah...

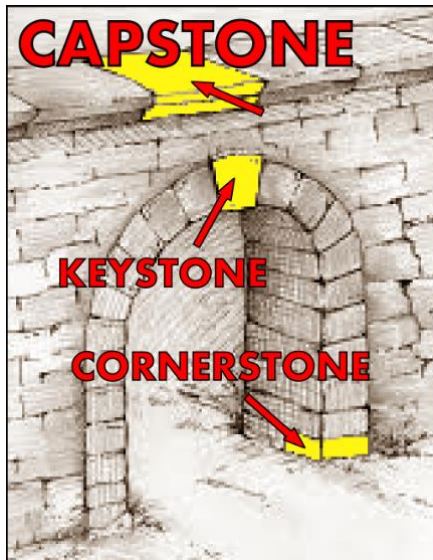
DO NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

Zechariah 4:6-10

God always begins small.
But what God begins... God finishes.

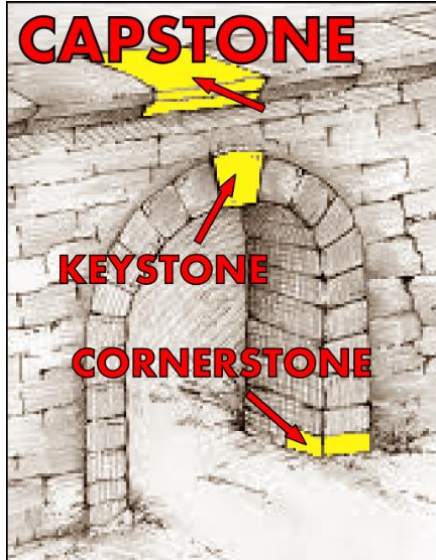
And those through whom his mighty Spirit works... are privileged to experience first-hand the glorious truth that there is nothing that our God can't do.

Twice in Zechariah 4 God says to Zerubbabel – the temple will be rebuilt.



What are you,
mighty mountain?
Before Zerubbabel
you will become level ground.
Then he will bring out
the capstone
to shouts of
'God bless it! God bless it!'

Zechariah 4:7



“Who dares despise
the day of small things,
since the seven eyes
of the LORD
that range throughout
the earth will rejoice
when they see
the chosen capstone
in the hands of Zerubbabel.

Zechariah 4:10

Do you see what the capstone is?
It is the last piece.
When it is put in place... the job is done.

God who sees the end from the beginning, says that he himself will rejoice, when the job through Zerubbabel is finished.

In these last days we are given a responsibility that is just as daunting as the mighty mountain that was before Zerubbabel.
But I remind you the power of Moses' staff and Elijah's mantle, the power that strengthened Zerubbabel's hands.... has been given to us in the Holy Spirit.

What God has asked of us, God will enable us to do...not by might nor by power but by his Spirit.