

Theme: One Story (Acts 17:26-28)

Title: Yet to Come ~ Faithful Witness – Revelation 11:1-18

Aim: Be faithful witnesses of the good & bad news of the Gospel.

Intro: Last week we opened the message by talking about good news/bad news & how the book of Revelation (& all the Bible) is filled w/good news & bad news, such as the measured wrath of God intended to turn nations/people to Christ. A time is coming when the full wrath of God will be poured out in righteous judgment, but the good news is that throughout the history of the world, since the time of the fall, God has been gathering a people for Himself. The good news of the Gospel is that Christ died to pay for our sin & reconcile us to God, & whoever believes in Him is given the right to become a child of God & heir w/Christ. However, the truth of the matter is, the Gospel contains not only good news, but bad as well. The bad news is there have been & will continue to be those who hear the Gospel but do not believe/receive Christ by faith. Those who reject Christ are judged by Him & face God's full wrath in that judgment. The same good news that saves is the bad news that condemns, all depending upon what we do w/Christ. There is more good news/bad news associated w/the Gospel as well, as we'll see, but we are called to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel. Theme: one story – one God, one plan, one story – God's plan of redemption, of His eternal kingdom's triumph. If you remember, last week we walked thru Revelation 6 & 7. In chap6 we witness the opening of 6 of the 7 seals on the scroll taken from the hand of God by the Lamb of God (Jesus - chap5). The scroll contains the plan/will of God to be carried out by the One (Jesus) who was the only One able to take & open it – the only One found worthy. We see in the opening of these seals the measured wrath of God poured out on 1/3 of the earth & its people, intended to turn nations to Christ. In chap7 we are shown another type of seal, this one the seal of the living God – His mark of

ownership. In John's vision 12,000 from every tribe of Israel are sealed w/the seal of God. Then John saw an innumerable multitude of those from every nation, all tribes & peoples & languages. They were each clothed in white robes (righteousness of Christ) & had palm branches in his hand, worshiping the One who saved them. These also bear the seal of God, marking them as belonging to Him. They break into praise & are joined by the angels, 4 living creatures & elders in worship of God, who gathered this multitude for Himself. **Chap8** opens w/the 7th seal being broken & an angel coming forth, taking fire & ashes from the altar & throwing it on the earth. We see a continuation of God's measured wrath intended to drive nations/peoples toward Him, as the 7 opened seals give way to 7 trumpets. Again, this is, in Palmer's words, "Jesus executing the Father's will in heaven & on earth." Again, it is measured wrath/judgment calling people to Christ. As the 1st 4 trumpets are sounded in succession, 1/3 of the earth, trees & green grass are burned up, 1/3 of the sea becomes blood, sea creatures died, & ships were destroyed. 1/3 of the rivers & springs were poisoned & many died, 1/3 of the sun, moon & stars were darkened. John then heard an angel crying out, "Woe, woe, woe!" – warning of what's yet to come w/the last 3 trumpet blasts. **Chap9** opens w/the 5th trumpet's sounding John saw a star fall from heaven & he (either the star is a fallen angel or the angel who blew the 5th trumpet is the "he") is given the key to the bottomless pit, opens it & locusts come forth to torment those w/out the seal of God on their foreheads. The leader of these tormentors is Abaddon/ Apollyon – perhaps Satan himself, an unwitting pawn in the hand of God, carrying out His plan. W/this the angel announced that "the 1st woe has passed" w/the other 2 "still to come." The 6th angel sounds his trumpet & angels are released to kill 1/3 of mankind. Again, all of this is a measured judgment, intended to drive the lost of the nations to Christ. But notice in 9:20-21 that those not killed still do not

repent [READ]. Much of the world refuses to bow to Christ. **Chap10** seems to be an interlude, ushering us forward. John saw an angel w/a little scroll, open, in his hand. Palmer sees this scroll as the one opened by the Lamb who was slain, the scroll of God's will. Perhaps so, but evidently it is only part of God's will. When the angel spoke, 7 thunders sounded. We're told nothing of what these 7 thunders represent. John was about to write down what he heard, but was told to "seal up what the 7 thunders had said. It was a mystery. However, the angel swore by God that the time was short, there would be no more delay, & when the 7th trumpet sounded, the mystery would be fulfilled. We're told in Paul's writings about a mystery, coinciding w/the promises made to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. 1st of all it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:28). If Christ is in you, you have a sure hope of glory w/Him. But Paul also wrote about the mystery that Gentiles would be grafted into the vine of God thru Christ (Eph.2:11-22). Remember that in Genesis 22:18, God told Abraham that thru his seed (speaking of Christ) all the nations/ families of the world would be blessed. In Palmer's words, "The mystery of God's will is the full realization of His redemptive plan, to unite all things in Christ (Eph.2:10). John is told to eat the scroll & was told it would be sweet to the taste, but bitter in his stomach, & it was. You may certainly disagree, but I think this little which John was told to take & eat was/is that part of God's will which is the gospel – the good news of salvation through Christ – how sweet to those who receive it & believe, but how bitter for those who receive/hear it & reject Christ. They will be condemned, judged by the very gospel. It's good news & bad at the same time. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:16-18, ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes***

in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because He has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” There are only 2 kinds of people in God’s sight: those who believe & those who do not; those who are His children thru faith in Christ & those who are not. Which are you? On this side of eternity you have the opportunity to believe/receive Christ. The struggles of this life are meant by God to draw you to Him. Count His measured wrath now as a work of His grace, calling you to faith in Christ. That brings us to **Chap11**, which we will read. David Palmer, in Casket Empty, wrote: “The prophetic witness of the Church is vividly portrayed in Rev.11, the focus of which is the faithful witness of the Church. The Church exists in the world as the very means by which nations are converted. The prophetic role of the redeemed is symbolically depicted as the story of 2 witnesses, identified as lampstands = the Church in the world (chap1).” These lampstands are fueled by the oil of the Holy Spirit. Palmer states that these are “not necessarily 2 literal witnesses, but they depict the nature & result of the Church’s prophetic witness leading up to the return of Christ.” The # 2 is significant, as we read in Deut.19:15 that a matter is established by 2 or 3 witnesses. The witnesses (the Church) face opposition & persecution as they issue a “call to repentance a world addicted to idolatry & immorality.” Part of the “bad news” of the “good news” of the Gospel is that there is a cost to those who proclaim it. It may well lead to opposition & even martyrdom, as plenty have died throughout the history of the Church. These 2 witnesses were killed & many even rejoiced, but then God raised them up. The Church will never die out – the gates of hell/grave will not prevail against it. Palmer: “The glorious result of the Church’s prophetic witness is that tho many are taken away by God’s righteous wrath, still others repent & believe, fear God & give Him glory, which describes conversion & genuine response to the eternal gospel, in

contrast to those who did not repent (9:20). The angel announced that “The 2nd woe has passed,” w/the 3rd yet to come. The conclusion of this section comes w/the 7th trumpet sounding & the triumphant announcement of “loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord & of His Christ, & He shall reign forever & ever.” Palmer wrote that “This is the initial climax of Revelation. The heavenly court erupts in praise & thanksgiving. God has taken up His great power & begun to reign. He has redeemed some from every nation for Himself. The kingdoms of the world rightly belong to Jesus Christ. All who believe are transferred into His glorious kingdom. The time has come for final judgment & reward. God’s temple is opened to all (the redeemed) & God is enthroned in the midst of His people. God will surely accomplish what He has planned. Rev.11 allows us to see it in advance. It encourages our faithfulness as the Church is engaged in spiritual battle for the hearts of the nations. This spiritual battle is depicted in the next section. Our part here & now is to be faithful witnesses of the gospel. It will cost us time & energy & may bring opposition & even death, but it’s why we’re here. Let us be the Church – not primarily a political force, but a gospel distributor; not ensnared in the things of the world, but living out our faith & pointing others to Christ. God doesn’t have a plan B. Our part in the story of God is to be about His business as He gathers a people for Himself. It’s one story: one God, one plan, one story.