

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

LESSON 21: THE KING TAKES THE THRONE (REVELATION 8-12)

Examples of Silence Before Judgment

Just before God's judgment in Noah's day, everyone was brought onto the ark and the door was shut. There was silence from God as Noah was now separated from the people and unable to preach warnings any longer. The judgment came after seven days.

When the Israelites were conquering Jericho, trumpets blew continually while the people were ordered not to utter a word from their mouths as they marched around the city every day for six days. On the seventh day, they marched seven times. So, there was silence for seven days, then loud shouting and the blasting of trumpets to initiate the judgment on Jericho. Revelation 8 is very similar: a task is given to God's chosen people (the 144,000), there is an eerie silence, and then judgment (associated with trumpet imagery).

David seemed to understand that God's judgment sometimes follows after a period of silence.

To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Psalm 28:1

Reasons the Angel in Revelation 10 is Not Jesus

In Revelation 10, John encounters a very powerful spirit-being, who is demonstrating authority over both the Gentile nations and the Israelite nation by having one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. This cannot be Jesus, for the following reasons:

- The angel swears by the Creator, so he can't be the Creator.
- The voice that continues speaking to John from heaven (verse 8) is likely that of Jesus, since that's whose voice he was hearing earlier in the book.
- The voice instructs him to take the scroll. So John goes up to the angel and tells him to give him the scroll (verse 9). I don't think he would command Jesus to do anything.

The Identities of the Two Witnesses

Those who support the amillennial or postmillennial positions tend to interpret Revelation 11 symbolically, often suggesting that the Two Witnesses are Israel and the Church.

Premillennialists commonly propose that they are two men from the past. Enoch and Elijah are favorite candidates because they were raptured and did not die, so the idea is that God sort of set these two aside for the purpose of using them later on in history. Some people use this verse to support that idea:

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment... Hebrews 9:27

We need to be careful about concluding that everybody needs to die once. After all, raptured saints won't ever die, and Lazarus died twice. The context in **Hebrews 9** is that Jesus doesn't have to keep dying over and over. It's an important passage to contradict the ideas of Purgatory, reincarnation, and transubstantiation. It doesn't mean that Enoch and Elijah have to come back because they must experience death.

Others believe the Witnesses are Moses and Elijah, because the things they are doing very much resemble the things Moses and Elijah did (plagues, drought, prophesying, etc.).

I don't have a solid opinion about whether they are people from the past or not, but I see a strong connection to Joshua and Zerubbabel of the post-exilic period. I think these Old Testament passages about them ought to be considered in the discussion.

Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel was the political leader and governor of Judah after the return from Babylon, while Joshua was the religious leader and high priest at that time (this is a different Joshua than the one who was Moses' assistant and leader of the Conquest).

It appears to me that **Haggai 2:20-23** is giving us another look at the Sixth Seal:¹

The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, everyone by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts."
Haggai 2:20-23

God did not shake the heavens and earth or overthrow the throne of kingdoms during the actual lifetime of Zerubbabel, yet somehow He is connecting Zerubbabel to a future event. We see that God is going to raise up Zerubbabel like a signet ring. The signet means that he is God's official representative, just as a signet ring gave the authority of the king to the one who possessed it.

Zerubbabel played a major role in the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Maybe he, or someone in his likeness, will have something to do with the building of the Third Temple—or perhaps the actual Temple of God, which is the Church. We need to find out more.

¹ Several items here match the descriptions of the Sixth Seal in Revelation 6 and the description of the Gog-Magog war in Ezekiel 38: a great shaking of the earth, the overthrow of kings, horses used in battle, and the enemy army killing each other (look at Ezekiel 38:21!).

See how **Revelation 11:1-4** and **Zechariah 4** overlap.

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.* Revelation 11:3-4

And [the angel] said to me, “What do you see?” I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” ... Then he 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. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “*The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it...*” These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth.” Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?” And a second time I answered and said to him, “What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?” ... Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” Excerpts from Zechariah 4

So **Revelation 11** says the Two Witnesses are connected to two olive trees and two lampstands. When we find those olive trees and lampstands in Zechariah, we learn that they are identified as “two anointed ones,” and these are connected to Zerubbabel. So Zerubbabel laid the foundation of the Second Temple, and it says here that he will complete it.

I do not have this figured out in detail, but I think one possible explanation is that Zerubbabel represents a person who is a believer but is not raptured with the rest of the Church. Instead, he is set apart to be God’s representative (signet) as one of the Two Witnesses, but he is still part of the Church. So when he and his partner die and are resurrected and raptured, the full Church is now complete before God’s throne. In this way, the first Zerubbabel would have laid the foundation of the Temple and the second Zerubbabel would be the one to complete the actual Temple.² This would be a big enough deal to lead into that thing we’re supposed to pay attention to when the seventh Trumpet sounds, when “the mystery of God would be fulfilled.”

Joshua

Identifying Joshua, the high priest, as the other of the Two Witnesses is a little more involved, but I’ll point out just a few things:

² It wouldn’t be the first time that God used a prophet this way. John the Baptist was not actually Elijah reincarnated (made clear in John 1:19-21), yet he is called Elijah because he filled an Elijah-like role. See Malachi 4:5 and Matthew 11:13-14.

Zechariah 2 describes a measuring of Jerusalem that looks a lot like **Revelation 11:1-2**. The people of Israel who dwell in the “daughter of Babylon” are told to flee from it (**Zechariah 2:6-7**). Since they lived in relative safety and were able to establish thriving communities in Babylon during the exile, we know this hasn’t happened yet. It sounds a lot like “Come out of her, my people” in **Revelation 18:4**. God will “again choose Jerusalem.” (**Revelation 2:12**) The command to “be silent all flesh, before the Lord, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling” hearkens to the half hour of silence at the beginning of **Revelation 8** just before His judgment falls. All of these add up to the conclusion that this section of Zechariah is talking about last days’ events.

Immediately after this set-up chapter, we see Joshua undergoing what appears to be a trial before God. Instead of being condemned for unrighteousness, he is given clean clothing (indicating that his sin is removed from him) and he is crowned with a clean turban. Even though Satan tries to accuse him (**Revelation 3:1-2**), he is transformed from filthy to clean.

The angel of the Lord (probably God the Son)³ assures Joshua that if he walks in His ways, Joshua will rule His house, have charge of His courts, and He says “I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.” (**Zechariah 3:7**) Where are they standing? In the same place where Satan now stands as accuser: “before our God” (**Revelation 12:10**). This is where the multitude of raptured saints can be found in **Revelation 7:9**. So Joshua is standing before the throne of God and “those who are standing here” are very likely to be the Church, since we are talking about an end-times event. I think God is telling Joshua that he will have a special role in end-times events. I’m not claiming that God will raise the former high priest, Joshua, from the dead, but perhaps he will raise someone up after the pattern of Joshua. The connection is mysterious to me, but there is certainly a connection of some sort here!

Joshua and Zerubbabel

We’ve already made the case from **Zechariah 4** (the next chapter) that Zerubbabel is involved in these same events. Joshua and Zerubbabel were partners in the rebuilding of the Second Temple just after the Exile (one as the civil leader and one as the religious leader), so it would stand to reason that they would serve as partners as the Two Witnesses. Another connection between them is seen in **Zechariah 3:9**, in which Joshua is given “a single stone with seven eyes.” Just after Zechariah is told that Zerubbabel will complete the house of the Lord, he is told that “these seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth” (**Revelation 4:10**). Somehow both men are connected to the seven eyes of the Lord in a passage that is speaking of future prophecy.⁴

When it comes down to it, the identity of the Two Witnesses is not a critical factor in understanding end-times prophecy. Though it raises more questions and gives few concrete answers, I think this is a great example of the richness we find when we move away from the need to “get it all figured out” and discover the beauty of the Bible as a unified whole.

³ I don’t like to call him “Jesus” when He appears in the Old Testament because He technically wasn’t named Jesus until after He was born of Mary.

⁴ For further discussion about Joshua and Zerubbabel as the Two Witnesses, see Goodgame, Peter. *Red Moon Rising*. Xulon Press, 2005, Chapter 11.