



# The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

## SESSION 8. CAN I GET A WITNESS? Revelation 10–11

### I. “No More Delay” (10:6). Is that Your Final Offer?

- A. On the Niagara River, just above the falls, there is a place known as “**The Point of No Return.**” Here the current is so strong and so swift that not even the most powerful boat is able to overcome the pull of the water. Beyond this point, going over the falls is inevitable. The fate of the boat and its passengers is sealed.
- B. Our Scripture describes an **interlude** between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> trumpets. Judgments and plagues are coming on the earth but men and women still have the opportunity to turn from sin and get right with God! It is still possible to flee from the wrath to come (Matt. 3:7). But when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet blows (11:15–19), we have reached the point of no return. If one is not right with God, he will be swept up in the current of destruction coming on the earth. There will be no escape. For sinners, Revelation 10–11 represents God’s **final invitation** to salvation.
- C. What will happen to believers during these days of God’s fury unleashed on the world? Though they have been sealed and thus protected from God’s wrath (7:1–4; 9:4), they are not spared from the tribulations and trials of living in this evil world. *“In the world you will have tribulation. But **take heart**, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).*

### II. Examining the Text (10:1–11:14).

- A. Our Scripture is composed of three basic events that may at first appear to be unrelated.

John eats the little scroll and gets a <b>belly ache</b>	The <b>two witnesses</b> preach the Word and are martyred	The 7 <sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown. <b>Time’s up!</b>
10:1                      10:11	11:1                      11:14	11:15                      11:19

- B. The 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown. Time’s up! (11:15–19).

Let’s begin with the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and work backward. This trumpet signals that Christ has come to reign on the earth. All earthly kingdoms are now his! His arrival means that everyone’s destiny is now **fixed forever**. Repentance is no longer possible.

*We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was<sup>1</sup>,  
For you have taken your power and begun to reign (11:17).*

<sup>1</sup> Note that the elders do not add “and who is to come” as is usually the case in these kinds of statements (1:4,8; 4:8). Why? Because with the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, he is already here!



C. John eats the little scroll and gets a belly ache! (10:1–11).

1. Read 10:1–7. The big angel and his oath.

This big angel has a little scroll<sup>2</sup>. With one foot on the sea and one on the land, he speaks and 7 thunders sound. But the message John is to communicate to us is not in the thunders but in the little scroll. The angel raised his right hand and gave a solemn oath:

- There will be no more **delay**. Once the last trumpet sounds, the final events of human history will be set in motion. Time's up!
- When the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet sounds, the **mystery of God** will be revealed. The term refers to the coming reality that the kingdoms of this world will all become the kingdom of Christ. And he will reign forever and ever (11:15)!

2. Read 10:8–11. The little scroll and its impact on John.

The mighty angel tells John to “take” the scroll. John hesitates and asks that the angel would “give” it. No! You must **take** it and **eat** it! Jeremiah and Ezekiel also ate the book of God (Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1–3). Though it was **sweet** in his mouth, it was **bitter** in his stomach. With the little scroll now inside of him, John was commanded to proclaim the Word.

D. The two witnesses preach the Word and are martyred (11:1–14).

1. Read 11:1–3. Measure the temple of God.

John is commanded to measure the temple, the altar, and **the worshipers...** but not the court of the Gentiles. The nations will “trample the holy city” for 42 months (or 1260 days, or 3 ½ years).

2. Read 11:4–14. The two witnesses.

Few passages anywhere in the Bible are more **difficult** to interpret than this! But before we try to interpret the meaning, let's make a few observations:

- a. The two witnesses are clothed in **sackcloth** and called “olive trees” and “lampstands” (11:3–4).
- b. They have supernatural powers (fire from mouth, no rain, water into blood, plagues, etc.) (11:5–6) but their real ministry is to witness... to proclaim **the truth**.
- c. The Beast<sup>3</sup> kills them (11:7).
- d. The city called “**Sodom**,” “**Egypt**,” and the place where their Lord was crucified (11:8).
- e. People will **celebrate** their death, exchanging presents, etc. (11:9–10).
- f. The dead witnesses are raised from the dead after 3 ½ days and taken bodily into heaven (11:11–12).
- g. A great earthquake strikes the city and 7,000 die (11:13).

Though many commentators want to make the two witnesses into historical persons (Moses and Elijah, for example), claim the city is a geographical city (Jerusalem), and go to great lengths to determine when these events will occur

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word for “little scroll” is a diminutive, such as our word *booklet*; a scroll-ette. Unlike the earlier big scroll in 5:1 this little scroll is open.

<sup>3</sup> Note the definite article. This is not “a beast” but “the Beast”. We have already seen in Revelation that Antichrist is at work in the world (6:1–2; 9:1–2, 11; etc.).

and which temple it is that is to be measured... my attempt to discern the meaning of the text is much more humble. It seems to me that the wiser path is to see chapters 10–11 as a **symbolic** expression of how Christians are to witness to the truth while living in the evil empire in times of tribulation.

A number of scholars believe **the message** contained in the scroll that John eats in chapter 10 is in fact the story he tells of the two witnesses in chapter 11. In other words, when a follower of Christ eats “the Book”, he/she will become **a witness** and his testimony will be similar to that of the two martyrs depicted here.

3. Numerous indications in the text itself, encourage a symbolic interpretation.
  - a. The **temple** in Jerusalem was no longer standing when John wrote the book of Revelation. When John then measured “the temple” and the “worshippers” (11:1), he was probably speaking of the church, the people of God (I Cor. 3:16; etc.).
  - b. The **42 months** (1260 days, 3 ½ years) (11:2–3; 12:6; 13:5) is surely symbolic. To what does it refer?<sup>4</sup> It is very difficult to know and probably should be left without a specific definition until God gives further clarification.
  - c. The two witnesses are called “**lampstands**” (11:4), symbols of the churches (1:20). Note that only two of the seven churches were blameless (chs. 2–3). Christ had nothing negative to say about Smyrna or Philadelphia. Perhaps the two witnesses stand for that part of the church which has never compromised the truth, as the other five churches did, and is wholly faithful, even **unto death**.
  - d. Though the city is identified as the place where the “Lord was crucified,” it is also called “Sodom” and “Egypt” (11:8). It appears John has a bigger “city” in mind than the literal Jerusalem, that he is speaking of the “**city of man**” in opposition to the “**City of God**” (see chapters 21–22).<sup>5</sup>

CONCLUSION: In his two visions (eating the scroll in chapter 10 and the two witnesses of chapter 11), Pastor John is answering two questions that persecuted Christians and the suffering church always ask:

Question 1: *How long, O Lord?* (chapter 10).

Answer: Once the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet blows, there will be **no more delay**.

Question 2: *What is the role of the church in tumultuous times?* (chapter 11).

Answer: **Be witnesses**. Though the mission is difficult and dangerous, ultimate victory is certain.

### III. Being Effective Witnesses in the Evil City

#### A. **Eat** this Book.

1. You are what you eat!
2. You must **take** the Book, not wait for someone to give it to you.
3. One of the surest marks of spiritual maturity is the ability to **feed yourself**.
4. You must bite off, chew, savor, swallow and **digest** God’s Word.

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<sup>4</sup> Scholars note that Antiochus Epiphanes tyrannized Jerusalem for 42 months and that there were 42 encampments of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 33:5ff.).

<sup>5</sup> In fact, a very good title for the book of Revelation could be “A Tale of Two Cities.”

5. Eat **all** the Book... the parts you do understand and the parts you don't.
6. Today, we find many eating **disorders** in the church!
7. God's Word is sweet like honey but it sometimes has a **bitter** after effect because the Word reminds us of the coming judgment and our call to lay down our lives.
8. When you've assimilated the Word into your very being, then....

B. **Proclaim** the Word.

Only when we have digested the Book are we ready to speak the truth and be witnesses. While not every believer is called to be a preacher, we are all called to be witnesses. It takes great **courage** to name the Name! This involves two things:

1. Measuring **the temple** (the people of God) (11:1-3). *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? (I Peter 4:17).*
2. Evangelizing **the city** (the Gentiles) (11:4-13). *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.(Matt. 24:14).*

C. **Lay down** your life.

But those who proclaim the Word and witness to Jesus inflame the anger of **the Beast** and invite the hatred of **the world**. The Greek word for witness is *martus*. In the early church, to be a witness and to be a martyr were two ways of saying the same thing.

IV. **Marching Orders for the Church (Acts 1:6-8).**

This passage gives us six truths about being a witness in an evil age:

- A. **You** will be my witnesses (this is not a gifting for some but a privilege for all).
- B. You will **be** my witnesses (not, "you shall do witnessing").
- C. You will be **my** witnesses (of me).
- D. You will be my **witnesses** (martyrs).
- E. Witness begins **at home** (Jerusalem).
- F. To obey these marching orders requires **Pentecostal power**.

**TABLE TALK**

1. Why does the world hate Christians so passionately?
2. You are what you eat. How does this explain our culture? Our church? Our family?
3. Describe your Bible study routine. Do you "eat" the word?
4. What is the difference between "doing witnessing" and "being a witness"?
5. Does the American church regard martyrdom as something strange and foreign to the Gospel or something integral to it?
6. What is the relationship between witnessing and the infilling of the Holy Spirit?