

What to Do While We Wait

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 October 2024

Preacher: Ricky Njoto

[0 : 00] Well, we are continuing our series through the book of Revelation, and today we're going to look at two chapters again, so chapter 10 and 11, and because it's a very, very big passage, we're not going to be able to look at every single detail, but we'll look at the overview and get the general meaning.

I have a younger brother, and when we were kids, we were very, very different from each other, and our differences were made even more obvious when we had to wait.

So when we had to wait, I was more of a passive waiter, so I was happy to stay sitting and waiting, watching people, looking at things.

My brother was more of an active waiter. He was very, very active. He had to walk around. He had to talk to strangers and touch things that he shouldn't have.

He actually got lost multiple times. I'm surprised he's still with us. I wonder which one you are. And I wonder which one we should be as Christians as we are waiting for the coming of Jesus.

[1 : 28] Passively? Actively? We certainly see either-or types of Christians. There are some Christians who spend this waiting period being very, very still, firmly confident that Jesus has finished everything on the cross.

He said it. It is finished. And firmly confident that God is sovereign over all. And so they don't do anything. They just wait passively.

Other Christians spend this waiting period being very active, being very anxious, restlessly working to grow in their holiness. Anxious about their progress.

Oh, not much. Not enough progress. Going around talking to people and evangelizing. Oh, I've only talked to three people this week.

We need more. Anxious to finish the work. Which one should we be? Well, our passage today shows that our waiting attitude should not be an either-or, but a both-and attitude.

[2 : 40] So our passage today is an interlude. It stands between the first six trumpets and the last one. And we will see here that God is indeed sovereign.

So we can trust him and be spiritually still. But we will also see that because God is sovereign, there is a task unfinished that God has entrusted to us to do before Jesus returns.

And so we go and work. We will see both of these things. And so first, God is sovereign.

In chapter 10, verse 1 to 4, we read about a mighty angel who is strangely described in a similar way to Jesus and God in the book of Revelation.

He came down from heaven.

[4 : 02] And he is like a lion, which are descriptions of Jesus in chapter 5. Perhaps this is Jesus himself. Or if not, at the very least, this is a great angel that reflects all the glories of God, just like Jesus.

In any case, we see that he is a representative of God's glory. This angel shows God's glory. And as a representative of God, this angel shows God's sovereignty.

He stands with one foot on the sea and another foot on land. You can imagine a very, very big angel. But it's also a picture of dominion.

God rules both over the sea and over the land. And he holds an open scroll.

This is very likely the same scroll that Jesus was worthy to open in chapter 5. Now, again, this shows God's sovereignty.

[5 : 13] God is sovereign over what will happen with the world. And his plans are laid out in the scroll. And so, the fact that this angel holds the scroll shows God's sovereignty.

And when the angel speaks, seven thunders also speak. But strangely, the message of the seven thunders is sealed up, not revealed.

Which is a bit ironic because this book is called the book of Revelation. But something is not revealed. Something is hidden. Now, there are many different interpretations of this message.

But I think the point is the same. It reveals God's sovereignty. That even though God has chosen to reveal a lot of his plans in this book, some things are still a mystery to us.

Only he knows everything and only he is sovereign over everything. We don't need to know everything because we can't. No, everything. And so, we need to trust him.

[6 : 28] Nonetheless, something is sure. God will sovereignly accomplish all that he has planned. In verse 5 to 7, the angel swears by God's eternity and sovereignty that even though there is mystery in God's plan, it will be accomplished.

There will be no more delay. When the time comes, there will be no more delay. God is sovereign. Everything happens when it should.

At exactly the right time which God has ordained. Not one second earlier, not one second later. God is sovereign. God is sovereign.

God is sovereign. God is sovereign. Now, this serves as an additional assurance to both Christians and non-Christians that judgment is coming. both Christians and non-Christians might read the previous chapters remember from last week about the trumpets and say alright we keep seeing disasters and wars and bad things happening in the world and if these are warnings, if these are trumpets to warn us about the coming great final judgment where is the real thing?

it's been 2,000 years and all we see is just warning after warning after warning where is the real thing?

[8 : 01] maybe it's not coming now this passage says it will come at the appropriate time but that time is a mystery only God is sovereign and only God knows when but when it does come there will be no more delay God is patiently, patiently waiting for the world to turn back to Him so first we see God's sovereignty and so we can we can wait quietly and be still because God will accomplish His plans at His appropriate time but second we also see that this sovereign God gives His servants a mandate an unfinished task so we don't just wait passively because we have the task unfinished in verse 8 to 10

John is commissioned to prophesy what's the message of this prophecy? well he has to prophesy about many peoples, nations, languages and kings but what about peoples, nations, languages and kings?

well remember that this is the context is within the trumpets of judgment and so here John is commissioned to participate in God's act to warn peoples, nations peoples of many languages and kings that there is the coming judgment and that's why the message of the prophecy is both sweet and bitter at the same time sweet because it's God's word and God's word is sweeter than honey that's what the Old Testament says but it's bitter because it's the message of judgment John is commissioned to go out and proclaim the prophecy of judgment to the people around him but John is not the only one who is commissioned to do this in the next chapter we read about God's two witnesses who are likewise commissioned to prophesy chapter 11 verse 3 to 4

God says this and I will appoint my two witnesses and they will prophesy for 1260 days clothed in sackcloth they are the two olive trees and the two lampstands and they stand before the Lord of the earth now just like almost all numbers in the book of Revelation 1260 there is not literal it's roughly three and a half three and a half years and that's basically that basically means it's half of seven and seven is the complete perfect number that indicates eternity which just means that the prophesying doesn't last forever it's just half of seven but who are these two witnesses these two witnesses represent the church as a whole which is a community of witnesses to Jesus how do we know that well these two witnesses are called two olive trees in verse 4 they are called the two olive trees and in the Old Testament olive tree is a symbol for God's people they're also called two lampstands we've seen that in the book of Revelation lampstands symbolize the church so seven lampstands symbolize the seven churches and they also stand before the Lord which is a description of the saints in chapter 7 remember in chapter 7 the wicked hide from the Lord and the saints stand before the Lord these two witnesses represent the church as a whole and there are two of them because that's the minimum requirement for witnessing in the Old Testament and so again two is a symbolic number it symbolizes the community a community of witnesses now these two witnesses represent the witnessing community of the church as a whole that's us and so everything that we will read here applies to us and we read that we are given the power to prophesy in verse 5 to 6 if anyone tries to hum them fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies this is how anyone who wants to hum them must die they have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want now these are not literal we can't breathe fire that's obvious these are symbols of prophesying power fire comes out of our mouths means we are given great power in our words when we speak from God's word we could lead people to life with our words when we speak of God's words but if they keep rejecting the message of the gospel they are heading to death the power to stop rain refers to the prophesying power of Elijah in the Old Testament who did stop rain and the power to turn waters into blood refers to Moses with the plagues in Egypt so all these are symbols that symbolize that we are given great prophesying powers when we speak from God's words because we are his witnesses

do you believe that that when we speak from God's words we have great power in our words we are called and equipped to prophesy as in to warn the world like John in the previous chapter we wait quietly sure because God is sovereign and we trust him but we must also work and do this unfinished task given to us we have been called and equipped we have been given the power so how do we prophesy how do we warn people of the coming judgment well as a community this is what we do every Sunday right we preach the gospel the good news because there is the bad news the judgment as individuals we can evangelize which is what we've been focusing on this year sorry we've been focusing on evangelism this year at HGD

[15 : 54] I'm not sure if we've been focusing on that here but maybe we should anyway we can evangelize and in our evangelism we can present both the warning that God has shown that we have read about last week that this world is full of disasters and wars and conflicts and nasty things and this world is not fit to be called home that's the warning and we can offer a salvation in Jesus a few years ago before I joined this church I was leading a Bible study at another church and I knew that at least two people in that Bible study group did not know Jesus and so I shared about my past my past addiction to pornography how it led me to unhappiness deep deep unhappiness my past reliance on my wealth I come from a relatively wealthy family and I relied on my wealth and that disappointed me greatly my past pursuit of people's acceptance which led me to not enjoying life

I kept having to please people these are warnings aren't they that this world cannot satisfy what we have cannot satisfy this world is full of conflicts and disasters as we've seen last week and then I shared about what Jesus offers the freedom the community the love and the life his life that he has given me when he died on the cross what other gods what other idols would die for you no they demand your life they wouldn't want to give up their lives for you so when we evangelize we can talk about both the warning and the gospel the warning message however can be confronting and offensive and so the devil hates us when we warn people and people may hate us when we warn them in verse 7 now when they have finished their testimony the beast that comes up from the abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them now we haven't met this beast before in the book of revelation but in

Daniel 7 and later on in revelation 13 there are beasts that represent satanic influence through political powers basically satan using political powers to try to annihilate christians now the early christians have seen such a beast the roman empire who constantly persecuted and killed them like the emperor nero who would burn christians alive and use them as torches to light up his garden but this beast can manifest in any political power in the past or in the present or in the future when a political power becomes anti-christian and wants to annihilate the church or christianity political powers can hate the church because we warn the world and worldly people can hate the church as well in verse 8 to 10 their bodies when they die the witnesses bodies will lie in the public square of the great city which is figuratively called

Sodom and Egypt that is enemies of God's people where also their Lord was crucified for three and a half days again there is that three and a half some from every people tribe language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth we read here of the mockery the shaming the celebration of the church's failures because at the end of verse 10 our message of warnings can torment people when I was working for city Bible forum a Christian organization people constantly commented on our social media mocking us mocking

Christians wishing that your entire work would fail there was a guy who got offended by a video that we posted on social media of a talk about what the Bible says about humanity and what Jesus offers humanity he got so offended he didn't like what the Bible said about humanity and so he started name calling he kept calling us dumb and irrational and he asked for evidence that our God existed so I engaged with him giving him evidence and arguments for God but he did not like that at all because our message was offensive and so he kept calling us stupid and irrational the mockery the celebration of the church's failures the wishing that our work would fail and the active attempt at destroying

[22 : 11] Christians all of these have been happening over and over again throughout history when we read the book of revelation we don't need to wait for sometime in the future for these things to happen they're around us right now and yet even after being mocked rejected even killed even after the church seems to be defeated it rises up again verse 11 to 13 but after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them and they stood on their feet and terror struck those who saw them then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them come up here and they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies looked on at that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed 7,000 people were killed in the earthquake and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the

God of heaven even after all the attempts at destroying us God is keeping us with the power of Jesus here the church is pictured in the pattern of Jesus dying rising back to life and then called up to God and again isn't that what's been happening in the history over and over again every single time the church seems to be close to dying we rise back to life and not only throughout history but also throughout the whole world in some countries right now churches and Christians are being destroyed they are very close to dying and yet more Christians rise up there is always more Christians we are like cockroaches we can't die try to trample on us we can't die we are being kept in the power of

Jesus and at the end of history we will be vindicated as God calls us home in victory and he calls us come up here and enjoy my happiness and those who mock and hate and persecute and kill Christians will be judged unless they repent like those people in verse 13 unless they get terrified and give glory to the God of heaven just a few weeks ago I met a Christian uni student and he said he had friends from another religion who constantly mocked his God our God and apparently these friends always said look at those Christians in such and such countries man they are losing they are being killed where is your

God why are they losing why is your God losing and so this uni student never knew what to say or what to think about that and so he asked me if God is sovereign why is he not acting well here in our passage and from the previous chapters in the context of the trumpets we see God waiting out of both love and justice his love wants people to repent and return to him and so he sends warnings through disasters wars so that people see that this world is not worth it and so that people come home and he sends Christians to go and warn them and spread the good news of this great

God who loves us and who has died for us he doesn't want people he doesn't want to judge people yet he wants to warn them but his justice means when people keep rejecting him and hardening their hearts he justly gives them over and allows them to ridicule him to reject his people which makes them worse off in their condition and when that happens that's scary instead of us saying to God thy will be done God saying to us thy will be done and that is scary but there's also a promise of final judgment and this leads to the final trumpet in verse 14 to 15 the second woe has passed the third woe is coming soon the seventh angel sounded his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven which said the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our

[27 : 44] Lord and his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever that's the seventh trumpet now compared to the first six trumpets this trumpet doesn't sound bad at all here it's a celebration now if the trumpets are warnings how is this a warning it's a warning for those who refuse to repent because where are they here they are nowhere to be found all their mockery their celebration over the church's failures disappear and there's no trace of them or what they have done it's like they've been forgotten completely replaced by the celebration of heaven again that is scary the contrast is stark we just went straight from the mockery and persecution of

God's people straight to celebration of God's people victory is achieved just like that it's like there is an instant seizing of power suddenly the kingdom of the world now belongs to God and straight away after that there is doxology in verse 16 to 18 Christians praising God this is like the final song at a worship service that's it the curtain rolls down there's no fighting there's no chance for the unrepentant to win again that is scary the silence of the unrepentant is deafening they are nowhere to be found and so whether the seventh trumpet will be a trumpet of doom or a trumpet of victory depends on how you respond to

Jesus now and so before that happens if you haven't seriously decided to follow Jesus here is another chance to do so come home return to the God who loves you and has given his life for you he is waiting he's sending all these warnings for thousands of years he's patiently waiting come home to Jesus if you have been following Jesus let's do the unfinished task out of love let's warn the people around us that if they continue in their path following their sins following their idols rejecting Jesus depending on the world rather than on God they will end up in destruction in massive unhappiness and depression and even death and offer them the path of life in

Jesus we can do this we must do this with love with gentleness with a lot of wisdom knowing what to say and how to say and when to say things but we have to do it they might not want to hear us like the audience of Ezekiel but we still have to give them the message I'll invite the band up now as we close now this is a scary scary mandate isn't it it's a scary mission the bible says that it's scary and that's why the message is both sweet and bitter but we have to bear it and therefore we have to trust

God it's appropriate that our passage starts with a view of God's sovereignty the one who is eternal the one who rules over heaven and earth who knows everything who can accomplish his plans just like that we need that view of God as we wait in this world so that we can wait both being still trusting in God and being active facing a task unfinished so let's rise as we to God to continue to