

Comments on Revelation 11

This chapter returns us to the chronology of the sounding angels, picking up from the end of ch. 9, and so we presume it is still in the time of the sixth angel sounding.

Elder Pratt commented on this chapter:

John, in his 11th chapter of Revelation, gives us many more particulars concerning this same event [the appearance of Jesus Christ to the Jews]. He informs us that, after the city and temple are rebuilt by the Jews, the Gentiles will tread it under foot forty and two months, during which time there will be two Prophets continually prophesying and working mighty miracles. And it seems that the Gentile army shall be hindered from utterly destroying and overthrowing the city, while these two Prophets continue. But, after a struggle of three years and a half, they at length succeed in destroying these two Prophets, and then overrunning much of the city, they send gifts to each other because of the death of the two Prophets, and in the meantime will now allow their dead bodies to be put in graves, but suffer them to lie in the streets of Jerusalem three days and a half, during which the armies of the Gentiles, consisting of many kindreds, tongues and nations, passing through the city, plundering the Jews, see their dead bodies lying in the street. But after three days and a half, on a sudden, the spirit of life from God enters them, and they will arise and stand upon their feet, and great fear will fall upon them that see them. And then they shall hear a voice from heaven saying, 'Come up hither,' and they will ascend up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beholding them. And having described all these things, then comes the shaking, spoken of by Ezekiel [Ezek. 38:18-20], and the rending of the Mount of Olives, spoken of by Zechariah. [Zech. 14:4-5.] John says, 'The same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand.' [Rev. 11:13.] And then one of the next scenes that follows is the sound of voices saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.' [Rev. 11:15.]

Now, having summed up the description these great events spoken of by these Prophets, I would remark, there

is no difficulty in understanding them all to be perfectly plain and literal in their fulfillment.

Suffice it to say, the Jews gather home, and rebuild Jerusalem. The nations gather against them in battle. Their armies encompass the city, and have more or less power over it for three years and a half. A couple of Jewish Prophets, by their mighty miracles, keep them from utterly overcoming the Jews, until at length they are slain, and the city is left in a great measure to the mercy of their enemies for three days and a half, the two Prophets rise from the dead and ascend up into heaven. The Messiah comes, convulses the earth, overthrows the army of the Gentiles, delivers the Jews, cleanses Jerusalem, cuts off all wickedness from the earth, raises the Saints from the dead, brings them with Him, and commences His reign of a thousand years, during which time His Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, men and beasts, birds and serpents, will be perfectly harmless and peace and the knowledge and glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the Saints of the Most High. ([Parley P. Pratt, A Voice of Warning, 1847, pg. 55-57](#))

¹ And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. ² But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

v1-2 John measures out the Temple described by Ezekiel (v. 1, cp. Ezek. 40-44) and then is informed of the Abomination of Desolation to be upon that Temple (v. 2, cp. Dan 11:31). Assuming a literal reading on this passage, we would conclude the Jews will build a Third Temple in Jerusalem at some point.

v2-3 "forty and two months...a thousand two hundred and threescore days", both are metrics for 3.5 years, suggesting they are concurrent.

³ And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must

in this manner be killed. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

⁷ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. ¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

¹¹ And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

¹³ And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

v3-14 These verses detail the rise and demise of two prophets to minister in Jerusalem. They exercise great power in their ministry over the course of 3.5 years (v. 3-6), but after their mission is accomplished, the beast makes war with them and overcomes them (v. 7). The wicked initially rejoice at their demise (v. 8-10), but only to be shocked at their resurrection 3.5 days later (v. 11-12), followed by a terrible earthquake (v. 13). And this ends the sixth sounding (v. 14).

B. R. McConkie, in his Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, contradicts Elder Pratt (see Pratt's comments above), and insists the two prophets must be Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because the various powers they apparently exercise are limited to holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is not necessarily the case though. We are informed in D&C 77:8 that the four angels in Rev. 7:1 have the various powers described in v. 6 of the present chapter. If these two prophets have the keys to the ministering of angels by birthright (i.e., literal Aaronic descent, cf. D&C 68:16-21), then the angels would perform the various actions at the request of the two prophets. The two prophets would thus not need to

have the Melchizedek Priesthood or even be Latter-day Saints.

Who then are these two prophets? D&C 77:15 informs us these are two prophets raised up specifically to the Jews in Jerusalem, as follows:

15 Q. What is to be understood by the two witnesses, in the eleventh chapter of Revelation?

A. They are two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers.

Verse 4 of the present chapter paraphrases Zech. 4:11 in identifying these two individuals. In reviewing Zech. 4:11 we see the two described as "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of all the earth" (cf. Zech. 4:11). Preceding this, in Zech., 3:8-9 we see two individuals identified, the Temple High Priest, who at that time was Joshua, and the Branch, or the Davidic King. These two are apparently called after the fashion of Joshua and Eleazar in Deut. 27:15-23, which followed the pattern of Moses and Aaron. These two character, the High Priest and the Branch, are again referred to in connection with the construction of the Temple in Zech. 6:9-13. I would therefore be inclined to agree with Pratt's Position.

The Temple High Priest would naturally be a literal descendant of Aaron, and would therefore be eligible to administer in the Aaronic Priesthood.

The Latter-day David, or Branch, would be lineage of David, and therefore presumably of the tribe of Judah. For additional discussion on this Branch, cf. Isa. 16:5, Jer. 23:5, Jer. 30:9, Jer. 33:14-23, Ezek. 34:23-24, Ezek. 37:24-25.

v3 "And I will give power unto my two witnesses", the term "power" in the KJV is an insertion which is not attested to in the Greek. A more literal translation would be "I will endow my two witnesses".

v4 A paraphrase of Zech. 4:11.

v5 John draws on the imagery of Jer. 5:14 and Jer. 23:29, and perhaps that of Elijah as well, cf. 1 Ki. 18:38, 2 Ki. 1:10-15.

v6 John presents the two prophets as performing miracles

similar to Elijah (cf. 1 Ki. 17:1) and Moses and Aaron (cf. Exod. 7:19-11:10, Exod. 12:29-30).

The similarity of the rather brief description of miracles in this verse to those miracles described in ch. 8-9 and 16 present the very real possibility that they are in fact one and the same. If this is the case, those miracles detailed in ch. 8-9 and 16 would be plagues cast upon the followers of the beast by the two prophets in the same manner Moses and Aaron cast them upon Egypt.

These two prophets are killed in the sixth sounding, their ministry is for 3.5 years (cf. v. 3) and must precede that, and we know the abomination of desolation is to be about 3.5 years long (cf. v. 2, 13:5, Dan. 12:11). As this is the case, the plagues detailed in the first 5 soundings are probably cast upon the beast by the two prophets in the 3.5 years of the abomination of the desolation, and perhaps prior to that.

If they are not one and the same, then there must be an additional 3.5 year battery of plagues cast upon those perpetrating the desolation of abomination not elsewhere discussed.

v7 This is the beast discussed in ch. 13. This great war is the one described as Armageddon, cf. 9:14-21, 16:12-16.

v8 "Sodom and Egypt", these epithets are applied to Jerusalem in Isa. 1:10 and Isa. 30:1-2. John's use of these names suggests the two prophets were not generally popular among the people at Jerusalem.

v14 The second woe, the sixth sounding, is finished, the third woe, the seventh sounding, is next. The first woe was the sixth sounding per 9:12.

¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷ Saying, we give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. ¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy

the earth. ¹⁹ And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

v15-19 The seventh angel sounds (v. 15, the sixth sounding was back in 9:13), the hosts of heaven rejoice because of the imminent retribution (v. 16-18), and the Apocalypse occurs (v. 19). This is a rather terse description of the events of the Apocalypse. For a much more detailed account see ch. 19.

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