Good morning!

We’re going to be continuing this morning in our study in Revelation 11. We’ll read that passage in a moment, but before we do, let’s pray.

Father, I thank you once more for the opportunity to preach and study your Word – for the beautiful truth revealed in Jesus Christ here in this book. We thank you for a promised return and a coming King; we praise you for His power and majesty, His Kingship, His glory and His mercy. We thank you that you have not left us confined to a world of darkness, but have shone your radiant light through the Son you promised from the beginning... and we praise you that His work, accomplished on the cross so many years ago, remains powerful and effective today, even for sinners like us.

Lord, as we look back to the cross, and forward to the return of your Son, I pray that we would be encouraged by the nearness of that day, and comforted by the character of the King. He is Holy and Just, powerful and mighty... but the work is done, the price is paid, and we may come without fear before Him, through the blood of the Lamb.

And so to Him, Father, be all the glory and power and praise this morning. Be glorified in us, be blessed as we search your Word, and seek your face... as we sing, and learn, and pray, and praise... be honoured, be exalted... and may you be lifted high above all things in our eyes.

Amen.

Turn with me in your Bibles, if you would, to Revelation chapter 11. We’ll be starting at verse 7.

Revelation 11, beginning at verse 7.

The Witnesses Killed

7 When they [that is, the Two Witnesses] finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.
The Witnesses Resurrected

11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. 13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

Seventh Trumpet: The Kingdom Proclaimed

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” 16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,
The One who is and who was and who is to come,
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.
18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,
And those who fear Your name, small and great,
And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

Those of you who were here the last time I preached may remember what we heard on that occasion, but I’d like to briefly recap before we move on to look at the latter half of this passage. We saw, first of all, that the temple, which will be rebuilt in Jerusalem prior to the ministry of these Two Witnesses, was both a blessing and a judgment: a temple accepted by the Lord, but nonetheless set aside as an indictment against Israel for the rejection of the Messiah. We saw from the book of Ezekiel that the very layout and design of the temple is a shame and a reproach to those who have rejected God’s anointed, as every item, every structure, every room and door and image and fabric is a reflection of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We saw from the book of Zechariah that these two witnesses have a ministry that is anointed by the Holy Spirit, and marked with great power, in the likeness of Moses and Elijah. And we saw, perhaps more importantly, that in sending these two men to bear testimony to Jesus Christ, that the Lord was both sending Israel exactly who they expect to precede Messiah, with a message they’ve been denying for almost 2,000 years. Now, we’ve reached the point where that denial comes to its crescendo, with the murder of the Two Witnesses upon the streets of Jerusalem.
What I’d like to do this morning is to look at this passage as a tale of two Kingdoms. We’ll spend most of our time this morning looking at the Kingdom of the Beast. We’ll study both his kingdom, and the Lord’s, in greater depth as we progress through what remains of this series, but I’m going to use this opportunity to establish a solid foundation upon which to continue.

So this morning, we’ll see the kingdom of the Beast, and the Kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ – and between them both, two men who prophecy the end of one, and the glorious appearing of the other.

The Kingdoms of this World: the Rise of the Beast

First, let’s start by looking at the Kingdom of the Beast. Look at verse 7.

> When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

When we last looked at Revelation 11, we saw the testimony of the Two Witnesses, their role in preaching the coming of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the power that was given to them by the Lord. Here, immediately, we have their deaths. When their testimony is complete, so too is their mission here on earth, and the seal that has protected them thus far is removed. Into this picture steps one who is called “The Beast that Ascends out of the Bottomless Pit”; but this is not merely a description, it’s a title.

This fact is often missed, but there’s actually a specific literary function used here that should inform this interpretation. In the Greek, this verse contains the word “ascends” in the present active participle form. Looking at this word in English, a number of commentators have suggested that this beast takes the lives of the two witnesses as he rises from the abyss. That causes problems with the timeline, however, as we saw the opening of the Abyss in Revelation 9; and this is far too early in the Tribulation for the Two Witnesses to have met their deaths.

When taken literally and grammatically, however, this phrase reveals itself to be a title – and I’d like to demonstrate how this literary device works by taking you to one that you’re already familiar with. In the book of John, Jesus describes Himself as “He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world”. Obviously we don’t expect that Jesus was coming down at that very moment – clearly he wasn’t – nor do we assume that Jesus is continually coming down. What this particular literary device implies is that the fact that He came down from heaven is a distinctive part of His character. It is what sets Him apart, and identifies Him as the Son of God. It is that part of His identity by which He is both revealed and known to be unique among men – because He came down from God the Father, that we might have life.

It’s this same device that is being employed here to describe the Beast. This Beast who Ascends from the Bottomless Pit is characterized by His ascension. Just as Jesus Christ is known by the Fact that He is the Bread of Life, who came down from Heaven, so this Beast is shown to be distinctively unique by his ascension from the bottomless pit. We’ve seen and
studied what the bottomless pit is, and in fact spent some time studying both the nature of the pit, and its inhabitants; so as you can probably imagine, what John is conveying here is intended to be horrifying to his readers – not only because the locusts we saw in chapter 9 were terrifying in and of themselves, but because this beast is *distinctively more awful than they*. And it is this beast, who ascends from the bottomless pit, that will rule the earth for three and a half years, and make war against the saints. Let’s look ahead, briefly, to Revelation 13.

Revelation 13, and verse 1.

*Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.*  
*Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.*  
*I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.*  
*So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”*

...and he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

So, this is what we’re dealing with here. We’ll study this beast in more depth when we reach Revelation 13, but for now, it’s sufficient that we understand who this beast is. This is the character we commonly call the Antichrist, but he’s actually known by at least 30 different names in Scripture. He is “The Assyrian” of Isaiah 10, the “King of the North” of Daniel 11, the “Man of Sin”, in 2 Thessalonians, and “the Prince of the People who is to come” of Daniel 9:26. He is described here in verse 3 as one who has received a mortal wound, but had it healed; that is, he has been wounded, died, and was raised to life, and brought out of the bottomless pit. Without going into great detail on this topic today, Scripture suggests that Antichrist will die shortly before the midpoint of the Tribulation, and will be raised back to life and indwelled by the devil himself. There are those who have struggled with this concept, believing God alone to be capable of resurrection. I see no conflict in that; I believe this is what chapter 13 verse 5 refers to when it says that he was “given authority to continue for forty-two months”. While it is the dragon who gives the Beast authority, it is God who grants him the right to be reborn, and it is He who permits him to continue his reign. God, and God alone allows these events to occur.

Regardless, it is for this reason that the people of earth respond as they do, saying “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” – because who could possibly contend with a man risen from the dead?

What we see here in Revelation 11 is the reign of this unrighteous, resurrected beast: a reign of 42 months, or 3 and ½ years. In this time, he will continue to expand his kingdom, opposed by the Two Witnesses, who stand before the Lord of all the earth. I can only imagine how greatly he will rage against their ministry; however, he will be foiled in his attempts to harm them until their testimony is complete (11:7).
There is something else I’d have you notice here about his reign, though. Look at the last few words of chapter 13 and verse 2.

_The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority._

So many of the sources I read just glossed over these words... but we need to be careful to take every word in Scripture seriously, and that’s certainly true here. You see, it’s not just power and authority and a throne that the dragon gives to this man. It’s _his_ power; _his_ authority, and _his_ throne. We understand from Scripture that Satan has both power and authority. It was the devil himself, of course, that offered Jesus Christ all the kingdoms of the world during his temptation here on earth. Scripture never contradicts his right to do so, and even Jesus only rebuked him for demanding worship, and never for offering something that was not in his authority to give. The throne, however, is a different matter, and is, I believe, a far more specific reference.

What I’m suggesting to you is that there is already a throne established, both historically and even now, upon which the Antichrist will sit, in the power and authority of the dragon. In fact, I’d suggest to you that that throne has been established for millennia.

Let me explain that.

Those of you who have particularly good memories might remember that when we studied Revelation 2, we saw a specific reference to the throne of Satan. This is Revelation 2 and verse 12.

_“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,_
_‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 18 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.”_"

When I preached to you from these verses, I explained to you what this meant. The “throne of Satan” is a reference to the altar of Zeus, which stood atop a hill outside the ancient city of Pergamon; Pergamos in the Greek.

What I suggested to you at that time was that the “throne of Satan” in Pergamos was both a literal altar in that city, and a continuation of the Babylonian system of worship that had been carried by the Chaldeans, who fled Babylon upon the arrival of Cyrus the Great. I also suggested to you that this same system of worship later infiltrated the Roman Catholic Church, and that thus the “throne of Satan” could be considered to be the seat of power of that church.

…but there’s more to this concept than that. What I didn’t share with you on that occasion, was that there was another city that hosted the throne of Satan in between Babylon and Pergamos, and it may come as a surprise to some of you. We need to understand that while the dragon has his plans for the end-times, He has been at this for a very, very long time... and he has wanted the same thing from the beginning.
Turn with me to the book of Isaiah, just briefly. I’d like you to see this for yourselves.

Isaiah 14, and verse 12.

“How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
13 For you have said in your heart:
‘I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.’

You might remember when I preached on Daniel’s 70th Week that I made the distinction between a Western understanding of prophecy, and the Hebrew understanding. To the West, prophecy is prediction. To the Jew, prophecy is pattern. I believe we’re looking at a pattern here. This prophecy refers primarily to the fall of Satan from God’s Heaven – but I believe it also applies to the rule of the Antichrist, indwelled as he is by the dragon himself.

See, we must understand that this has always been the devil’s desire: not that he should rule from Pergamos, but that he should rule from the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north. This explains the Abomination of Desolation in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and it explains the Antichrist’s pursuit in Revelation: it was never Satan’s desire to rule from Pergamos, but from the throne of God in heaven. Failing that, he sought to rule from Jerusalem; from the earthly Mount Zion, on the farthest sides of the north.

And so it was in Jerusalem, in 168BC, that Antiochus Epiphanes slaughtered a pig in the Holy Place, and erected an altar of Zeus in the Holy of Holies. In this act, an act that we see repeated at the midpoint of the Tribulation, we see the serpent, the devil himself, seeking to establish his throne in the place of God – not in heaven, but here on earth, among men.

Antiochus Epiphanes is, of course, a type of the Antichrist who is to come – and he, in like manner, will seek to establish the throne of Satan in the holiest place of all.

...and this explains so much about the tribulation period.

Antichrist’s push in to Israel is not to take spoil, nor is it exclusively to destroy to the Lord’s chosen people (though it is that). It is an attempt to restore the Throne of Satan to the place it occupied only briefly, so very long ago: the Holy of Holies, in the heart of Jerusalem, the city of God.
Now, let’s place the Two Witnesses back into this context. We’ve passed the midpoint of the Tribulation, and the Abomination of Desolation has occurred again – prophecy repeating itself, as is so often the Hebrew way. But the violation of the temple at this point does not equal the destruction of the temple.

Turn with me to Daniel chapter 12.
Daniel 12, and we’ll begin at verse 7.

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. 

8 Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?”

9 And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

11 “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

This is the pattern laid out for us in Scripture. I don’t want to go into too much detail today on the timing of these things, but I will lay it out for you.

The desecration of the temple, in which the Antichrist shall set up the throne of Satan in the temple of the Most High God, shall persist from the midpoint of the Tribulation, for one thousand, two hundred and ninety days. This includes the 1,260 days in which the Antichrist will reign, plus 30 days set aside for the restoration of Israel. This period ends with the cleansing of the temple by the King of Kings Himself.

The one thousand, three hundred and thirty-five days, includes this same time period, but with an additional 45 days in which the sheep and the goats judgment will occur. At that time, the King of Kings will judge the nations according to their treatment of His chosen people, the children of Israel. Daniel describes those who live through these days as “blessed”, because they will see the Millennial Kingdom of God. Now, this comes as a shock to many, but Scripture shows us that there will indeed be unbelievers in that Millennial Kingdom. We’ll study that in more depth when we reach chapter 20 and beyond.

…but Daniel has another time count in chapter 8, and it’s worth highlighting that, too.

This is chapter 8, and verses 13 and 14:
Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?”

14 And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

Now, this count is different, in that it works backward from the cleansing of the temple, to the commencement of the sacrifices in Jerusalem. Counting back, we can then see that the temple will be in operation for one thousand and ten days during the first half of the Tribulation, one thousand, two hundred and sixty in the second, plus the thirty in which Israel is restored and the temple cleansed. This leaves Israel with two hundred and fifty days for its construction at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Now, I apologise, I realise that’s a lot of math for a Sunday morning, but hopefully that puts some of these events into context for you.

But what of the Two Witnesses here? What role do they play, sandwiched as they are between two Kingdoms, and what function do they serve while all these things are taking place?

The Two Witnesses

Turn back to Revelation 11, and let’s read again from verse 7.

7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. 13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.
I’m going to keep this portion of the sermon simple, because we’ve spent so much time on the Kingdom of the Beast already. What we’re seeing here is the representation of the Two Witnesses as types, foreshadowing Christ. ...and so it makes great sense that these verses occur before the declaration of the King.

Let’s put these pieces together.

They’ve preached for three and a half years.
They are killed by the beast, their bodies left to lie on the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days.
At the end of three and a half days, they are brought to life, and stand on their feet.
...and then, they hear a voice from heaven, calling them up... and they ascend in a cloud.

I’m sure each of those things sounds familiar to you.

In his book, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, Dwight Pentecost argued that the ministry of Jesus was three and a half years. As we know from Scripture, the Lord Himself spent three days in the grave, and of course we all remember the dramatic scene of His ascension into heaven, as He was received into the clouds while the apostles looked on.

And so here, immediately before the coronation of the King and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, we see the two witnesses serve their final function; not prophesying the return of Jesus Christ, as they’ve done for three and a half years, but living, dying and ascending as a very real and very visual reminder of His promise.

...and as a sign and a signal of the impending, final judgment of the King, the Lord causes a great earthquake to strike the city of Jerusalem. Look at verse 13.

“In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake, seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

This is important, not only because of the judgment upon those who gloated over the deaths of the Lord’s Two Witnesses, but also because it signals the judgment to come.

Verse 14.

“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”

This reveals to us the timing of these events. The Two Witnesses’ deaths occur after the second woe – which was the four angels released from the Great River Euphrates, and the locust horde from the bottomless pit.

...and that brings us to the Kingdom of the King.
Look at verse 14.

“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

Now, we need to make something of a distinction here, and in many of your Bibles, it will be highlighted by the heading that this section of the chapter comes under. This is the proclamation of the coronation of Jesus Christ, and not the fulfilment of His acceptance of the Kingdom. We can see this here in the wording used by the angel. The words “He shall reign” are in Greek in the future aorist tense; that is, that He will reign in future, and will continue to do so from that point onward. What we’re being shown here is the transfer of power. Jesus Christ has been crowned; God the Father has bestowed upon Him all the Kingdoms of the earth. …but before He takes His seat to reign from Jerusalem, there must be a final judgment.

We can see this from the context here, too, can’t we. Look at verse 16.

“And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped…”

This is a heavenly event; the coronation of Jesus Christ, in the throne room of heaven. And so there’s a sequence being established here.

Let me take you back a little bit to chapter 10. Turn with me to that, if you would – chapter 10, and verse 5.

[Then] the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

So this is the pattern: chapter 10, the proclamation of the coming Kingdom; chapter 11, the transfer of power and the coronation of the King, chapters 15 and 16, the consummation of the judgment of God, and finally, in chapter 19, the return of Jesus Christ to reign.

…and it’s this process that is the third and final woe to those who remain on the earth.
Look at verse 17.

“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,
The One who is and who was and who is to come,
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.
The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,
And those who fear Your name, small and great,
And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

In order for Jesus Christ to take ownership of the Kingdoms that have been transferred to Him by the Father, there must be a final judgment. One final woe, greater than all the judgments that preceded it... and it is called into being here in a way that we’re familiar with already: by the voice of God Himself. With lightning, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail, the final outpouring of the wrath of God begins.

...and we can see here that in the final judgment, these events happen quickly. Look at verse 14 again.

“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”

We read a moment ago those verses from Chapter 10 in which the Lord proclaimed that there would be no more delay. That is the same sentiment echoed here in verse 14, where the angel declares that the third woe is “coming quickly”. The Greek word for here is “tachu”, and it’s where we get words like “tachometer” from. It means “rapidly”, or “without delay”. That is, the events that occur here at the seventh trumpet occur in quick succession one after the other. And so, from the coronation of the King here in chapter 11 to the final bowl judgment and the Lord’s return to claim His throne in chapter 19 may be a matter of mere days.

The angel announces the coronation of the King, the bowls are poured out, and then the Lord returns to claim that which is rightfully His.

...and so He comes. Gloriously, beautifully, terrifyingly, He comes. Turn with me to Revelation 19, and we’re going to read from verse 11.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He
had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

This is, of course, the consummation of everything that we’ve read in this passage. The final judgment of the Lord. The head bearing many crowns; the crowns of all the Kingdoms of this world. A robe dipped in blood, a sharp sword, and a rod of iron. We can see in these things all the beauty and the terror of the Lord. The righteous judge, the mighty God of great wrath... but also the Word of God. Faithful and true. King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

I can honestly say that throughout this series, my view of the Lord Jesus Christ has changed immeasurably. To see and understand the glory of the King, not only in mercy, but also in judgment, is an overwhelming thing. We’ve seen that from the first chapter, where the apostle John fell at His feet as though dead, and we’ll see it in the last, as the Spirit and the Bride say “come”, and the Lord echoes “I am coming, quickly.”

And Jesus says, “Behold, I am coming soon.”

This world, and all the nations in it, are aligned today in precisely the pattern that Scripture foretold. The events of this book could begin tomorrow. Even today.
Are you ready for the coming of the King?

Let’s pray.