

## Lesson 9 – 27 December 2009

### God Demonstrates His Love

**Lesson Scope:** Revelation 7; 10:1-11:13

#### Lesson Focus

The scope of this lesson is parenthetical to the scope of last week's lesson. This lesson presents special scenes that show God's mercy during this time of judgment. The scenes in chapter 7 fall between the sixth and seventh seals. The scenes in chapters 10 and 11 fall between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets.

There are two questions that come up in the study of this lesson that lead to the very heart of the lesson.

The first; *How is it that such a great multitude of people is saved during this time of judgment?*

The answer is found in Isaiah 26:9. The opportunity to repent is still extended during this time of judgment.

The second; *Does God pour out judgment upon the righteous?*

This same question was asked by Abraham in Genesis 18:23. The answer is found in Isaiah 26:12. God did in the past and always will make a difference between the wicked and the righteous when He pours out judgment. Mention is made of this in Luke 21:36 and Revelation 3:10. This truth is also illustrated in the experience of Noah, Lot, and the children of Israel in Egypt.

The judgments of God are not only punitive but also redemptive (Isaiah 26:9-10). Neither does God pour out His wrath upon His own people (Revelation 3:10). Before the fires of judgment fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked God, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" The answer was: No. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

*"The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" Even while pouring out judgment He preserves the faithful remnant as a witness to the world.*

**Lesson Aim:** To see God's mercy displayed in the midst of His wrath.

## Theme Verse

[Habakkuk 3:2](#). O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known in wrath remember mercy.

## Lesson Text

### The Sealed Servants

[Rev. 7:1-4](#)

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. <sup>2</sup>And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, <sup>3</sup>Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. <sup>4</sup>And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

### The Blood-washed Multitude

[Rev. 7:9-10](#)

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; <sup>10</sup>And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

[Rev. 7:13-14](#)

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? <sup>14</sup>And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[Rev. 7:17](#)

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

## **The Two Witnesses**

### **Rev. 11:1-4**

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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* three-score days, clothed in sackcloth. <sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

### **Rev. 11:7-8**

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. <sup>8</sup>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.

### **Rev. 11:11-13**

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. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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.

## **Questions for Study**

### **The Sealed Servants**

1. What is the significance of four angels holding the four winds of the earth?
2. What were the spiritual conditions for being sealed'? (See also 14:1-5.)

### **The Blood-washed Multitude**

3. List the characteristics of this great multitude.
4. What actions of the Lamb are described in these verses?
5. What applications can be made to our day from this heavenly scene?

### **The Two Witnesses**

6. Why do the beast and the earth dwellers oppose the two witnesses?

7. How does the ministry of the two witnesses give evidence of God's justice? of His mercy?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The parallels between Revelation 7:1-4 and Ezekiel 9:1-6 are striking. Both passages relate to angels bringing judgment on a wicked society, and both have angels sealing the righteous before judgment falls.

Revelation 7:1-4 describes judgment on a much broader scale; it is world-wide, affecting the four corners of the earth. This is the great day of the Lord's wrath (6:17).

The great multitude of redeemed ones bear testimony to God's great mercy and grace. Their white robes symbolize personal righteousness through the blood of Jesus. Their victorious faith is indicated by the palms in their hands. The size of the group is noteworthy and helps us to perceive the scope and success of God's redemptive work.

The two witnesses are special representatives of God during this time of judgment. They receive special protection from God and exercise miraculous power as a proof of their divine mission. Their resurrection and ascension after being slain by the beast is a special testimony to God's power and ultimate victory. The ministry of these two witnesses gives evidence that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **The Sealed Servants**

1. *The withholding of judgment is a demonstration of God's love (7: 1– 4).*

In this text, judgment was withheld until God's people could be sealed. Likewise judgment on Sodom was delayed because of Lot's presence. The Flood was not sent until Noah and his family were in the ark. If judgment were meted out immediately, no one could be saved. Every delay of judgment is an opportunity for repentance.

2. *God knows those who are His (7.-3-4).*

No servant of God will accidentally be missed; no servant of Satan will be overlooked and escape. No one is lost in the crowd. Each person is judged according to his response to the Gospel.

#### **The Blood-washed Multitude**

3. *God provides salvation and victory through the blood of the Lamb (7.-9-*

10, 13-14).

Revelation 12:11 states clearly, "They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb." Christ offered Himself without spot to God, making an adequate provision for all. This great sacrifice is the ultimate demonstration of God's love. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? - (Hebrews 2:3).

4. *The Lamb of God, who pours out judgment upon His enemies, is a tender Shepherd to His flock (7:17).* Oh, what consolation and comfort. Like David in Psalm 23, we declare, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Jesus is able to meet all of our needs eternally!

### **The Two Witnesses**

5. *God knows the measure of every worshipper (11:1).*

As the surveyor uses a fixed standard to determine parcel size and boundaries, so God surveys the heart and worship experience of every individual. Those who meet God's measure receive mercy, but those who fail receive judgment.

6. *God in love makes Himself known by His witnesses (11:3).*

In this time of unparalleled judgment, God's two witnesses as "olive trees" and "candlesticks" are a testimony of life and light to the world. Noah was a preacher of righteousness in his time. The Old Testament prophets spoke God's message in their day. Christ came as the true source of life and light in that day. Now we are to be the light of the world in this day.

7. *Ultimately God will vindicate Himself and His people (11:7-8, 11-12).*

Calvary illustrated this principle very well: what looked like a victory for Satan turned out to be his very downfall. Although God's messengers are mistreated and persecuted, the truth of their message will stand, and they will be rewarded.

8. *Judgment moves men to recognize and glorify God (11:13).*

Like the Egyptians men still seek to discredit the sovereign hand of God. But in the end they will acknowledge the God of heaven. We may choose to do that now and be numbered with those who are "accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

### **Important Teachings**

1. The withholding of judgment is a demonstration of God's love (7:1-4).
2. God knows those who are His (7:3-4).

3. God provides salvation and victory through the blood of the Lamb (7:9-10, 13-14).
4. The Lamb of God, who pours out judgment upon His enemies, is a tender Shepherd to His flock (7:17).
5. God knows the measure of every worshiper (11:1).
6. God in love makes Himself known by His witnesses (11:3).
7. Ultimately, God will vindicate Himself and His people (11:7-8, 11-12).
8. Judgment moves men to recognize and glorify God (11:13).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. *What is the significance of four angels holding the four winds of the earth?*

One significance is that the pending judgment is universal. The number four is the number of man and the earth. There are four seasons, four directions, and four winds. The four winds are also referred to in Matthew 24:31.

Another significance is that judgment is being withheld until the servants of God are sealed. This will protect them from the judgment. God has His eyes upon His servants and will shield them from judgment.

2. *What were the spiritual conditions for being sealed (see also 14:1-5)?*

The chief condition mentioned in the text is that they are the servants of God. We are either the servants of God or the servants of Satan.

In 14:1-5 more detail is given. They are singing the song of redemption. They are pure and undefiled by the world. They follow Jesus. And they are honest and sincere. In summary, they are faultless! That is indeed remarkable, but we know that such a state is possible only because of redemption through the work of Christ.

3. *List the characteristics of this great multitude.*

- a. They are innumerable; that alone is amazing.
- b. They are of all nations; the Gospel had reached the whole world.
- c. They are clothed in white robes; they are cleansed.
- d. They have palms in their hands; they were victorious.
- e. They were willing to die for the truth; they were faithful.
- f. They serve God day and night.

4. *What actions of the Lamb are described in these verses?*

The wonderful truth is that the Lamb is also the Shepherd. He shall feed the multitude. He shall lead them to living fountains of water. And He shall

wipe away their tears. It is all very familiar. He did the same while here on the earth. He fed the five thousand; He offered living water to the woman at the well; and He comforted Mary and Martha.

5. *What applications can be made to our day from this heavenly scene?*

a. We are cleansed from sin in the blood of the Lamb. Someday we will walk with Him in white in a fuller way than we do now.

b. We are commanded to go into all the world with the Gospel.

c. We have a battle to fight and a victory to win. Are we willing to give our lives for the cause?

d. We, likewise, are called to serve and are always on duty.

e. We have the Holy Spirit to feed, guide, and comfort us in the absence of our Shepherd.

6. *Why do the beast and the earth dwellers oppose the two witnesses?*

The two witnesses are opposed because their message is unacceptable. As the prophets of God, they proclaimed a message of warning and judgment. For a time they exercised miraculous powers over their enemies and caused the earth dwellers to experience great torment and suffering. It is no wonder that men make merry and give gifts when the two witnesses lie dead in the street.

7. *How does the ministry of the two witnesses give evidence of God's justice? of His mercy?*

Justice is demonstrated by the plagues that were brought upon those who resisted and would have slain the witnesses. Mercy is evidenced in that warning was given before the final judgments fell. The resurrection and ascension of the witnesses gave proof that they were prophets of God and caused men to give glory to the God of heaven. By sending the two prophets God gave another opportunity for men to repent.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

God's judgments upon the wicked are not inconsistent with His love.

"For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9) But God's love is best seen in the deliverance of His people from judgment. "Lord thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us" (Isaiah 26:12). We have nothing of ourselves in which to glory. All glory, honor, and praise belong to God, for His ways are true and right.

## **Research Guide**

1. Second Peter 3 is a helpful chapter. Of particular interest are verses 9, 15 and 16. Note the long-suffering of God, and that some things are hard to be understood.
2. Read Luke 21. These are the teachings of Jesus. Note particularly verses 25-36.
3. Of special interest are chapters 24-26 of Isaiah. They add much detail to the lesson, and reference is made to some of the verses in the lesson comments.