

The Great City

Revelation 11:8

By Phillip G. Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2017-03-19

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Text

11:1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who are worshipping there. 2 And leave out the outer court of the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

3 And I will give authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” 4 These are the two olive trees, even the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies. So if anyone wants to harm them he must be killed in this way. 6 They have authority to shut up the sky so that no rain falls during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they wish.

7 When they finish their witness, the Beast of prey that comes up out of the Abyss will make war with them, overcome them and kill them 8—and leave their corpses in the street of the great city! (which is called Sodom and Egypt, spiritually speaking), even where their Lord was crucified.

9 And those from the peoples, tribes, languages and ethnic nations look at their corpses three-and-a-half days, and will not allow their corpses to be buried. 10 And those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and they will enjoy themselves and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

11 And after three-and-a-half days the breath from God entered them and they stood on their feet, and a great fear fell on those who were watching them. 12 And I heard a loud voice from the heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. 13 And in that day there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand individuals were killed in the earthquake. And the rest became fearful and gave glory to the God of heaven.)

14 The second woe is past. Look out, here comes the third woe!¹

Introduction

Last week we got introduced to the Beast who made war on the two prophets. And I mentioned that one of the things that the apostle John consistently does is to give interpretive clues the first time that a subject or phrase is used. And verse 8 is the first time that the phrase, "the great city," is used in Revelation. And I believe it has the potential for settling a huge controversy over the identity of the great city in later chapters. In the second

¹ Translation of the Majority Text by Wilbur M. Pickering - [The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken](#).

half of the book, the great city is called Babylon and the harlot city. And when we get to those chapters, I will give a lot more details about the identity of the harlot that rides the Beast. But this first occurrence of that technical term gives us plenty of material to settle the controversy.

I. The great city is clearly identified as Jerusalem, "even where their Lord was crucified" (v. 8 with Luke 13:33; Matt. 23:34-37)

Let's read verse 8 again, and I think you will see that it is crystal clear that John intends us to see "the great city" as being Jerusalem. It says, "and leave their corpses in the street of the great city! (which is called Sodom and Egypt, spiritually speaking), even where their Lord was crucified." The great city is another way of saying, "the capitol city." But the question is, "Which capitol?" Some say it is the capitol of Rome. Others say it is the capitol of a future resurrected empire. But since the city that is being spiritually called Sodom and Egypt is identified as the city where their Lord was crucified, I (and most commentaries) believe it is Jerusalem. And the Gospels clearly identify Jerusalem as the city where Jesus was crucified. Some people object that Jesus died outside the gates of Jerusalem. And that is true. Though Golgotha was outside the walls of the older city, it was still within the boundaries of Jerusalem as a whole (the New Jerusalem of Jesus' day), as the map on the back of your outline shows. In Luke 13:33, Jesus says, Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

That is a very significant statement - "it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." Jesus is predicting that he would be crucified in Jerusalem and that all His prophets must die in the same city. In Matthew 23, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and says,

Matt. 23:34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, Matt. 23:35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Matt. 23:36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Matt. 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

Yet despite the clear testimony of Jesus that all of His prophets must die in Jerusalem, many commentaries engage in all kinds of exegetical gymnastics to make this verse conform to their eschatology, rather than vice versa. They say that the great city can't possibly be Jerusalem in the rest of the book, and

since this is clearly the same city as the great city in the second half of the book, it can't be Jerusalem here. Mounce thinks this verse is referring to Rome. He thinks they die in Rome. So how does he explain the phrase, "where their Lord was crucified"? He says,

The inclusion of a reference to the crucifixion is not to identify a geographical location but to illustrate the response of paganism to righteousness.²

And I scratch my head and think, "Huh! It sure doesn't seem like that to me."

So I look up other commentaries to see what they say. And non-preterists have to explain this away (if they are logically consistent) because it messes with their eschatology. Leon Morris is another commentator who does everything he can to avoid the conclusion that this is Jerusalem. He says, Some conclude that Jerusalem was in mind. But if the passage is symbolical, as I have maintained, it is unlikely that any one earthly city is meant. The 'great city' is every city and no city. It is civilized man in organized community.³

Uhh, I don't think so. I think John explicitly identifies the great city as being a city, and as being the city where our Lord was crucified. And that great city is given two spiritual or symbolical names. It seems pretty straightforward.

Some, like Beale, refuse to see "the great city" as being a place at all, even though they admit that Jerusalem is repeatedly called "the great city" in ancient literature. Instead, he says that it is just the world system.⁴

But there are several reasons why I believe that is not credible. First, the Greek word for "where" in the phrase, "where also their Lord was crucified," is defined by the dictionary as "a marker of a position in space" (BDAG). He is talking about real geography in real space history. He is pointing to a location.

Second, if he wasn't talking about real geography, why say that their bodies are left in the street of the great city? If it is just a symbol of the world system, what does a street have to do with it? Those commentaries don't explain that.

Third, those two words, "the street," that these commentaries leave totally unexplained, are critically important for understanding a timing puzzle in this passage that we will look at next week, Lord willing. I'll give you a tiny introduction to it today.

2 Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co), p. 221.

3 Leon Morris, [The Revelation of St. John. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.](#), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 146.

4 He says, "But "the great city" where the bodies lie is best identified as the ungodly world and not the earthly city of Jerusalem." G. K. Beale, [The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text. New International Greek Testament Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 591.

First, notice that it doesn't say "a street in the great city." It says, "the street in the great city." Second, the Greek word for street is πλατείας, and refers to a particularly broad street or plaza. As one version translated it, "the main street." What difference do those two facts make? Well, Aune's commentary says,

That ἡ πλατεῖα is articular [in other words, it has a "the" in the front of word "street"] probably means that it refers to a well-known street or square in either pre-AD-70 Jerusalem or in Rome."⁵

After ruling out Rome, he starts examining what well-known street in Jerusalem could be referred to. Because the word πλατεῖα refers to a particularly broad street, known as a plaza, he narrows it down to a very broad street that was previously just outside the temple grounds. John is writing to Jewish believers, and every Jew would be extremely familiar with "the plaza" that John was referring to.

So after spending several pages dealing with the grammar and the archeology of streets in Jerusalem, Aune draws several conclusions from that grammar. First, it shows that John was very familiar with the streets of Jerusalem and expected his readers to be. This argues for an early dating of the book - before the streets of Jerusalem were destroyed. This is a Jewish book, written to Jewish Christians, in the first century. They were keenly interested in what would happen to Jerusalem and their native land. And John is telling them.

Second, John is telling them the exact street that the bodies were lying on. One translation translates this word as the main street (NLT), another as the "public square" (WBC), another as "the wide street" (L&N), and Lenski paraphrases it as the Broadway street (to put it into modern lingo). But first century Jews would have known exactly what he was talking about. It was the plaza right outside the temple.

But that in turn explains a puzzle that preterist commentaries have never dealt with: The puzzle is, how can the Roman Beast penetrate the city, kill the prophets, yet have the Jews of verse 10 be rejoicing and giving gifts to each other? That would seem to indicate that they are not conquered yet. But how could the Romans be in the city if the Jews were not conquered yet? And furthermore, how can both the Jews and the Romans see the bodies from where they are standing, but it be in a period when the Jews are not conquered and are still confident? It seems contradictory. But if you know the history of the war, you know that it is not contradictory at all. And my

5 David E. Aune, Revelation 6–16, WBC 52B; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 618.

detailed chronology of events on the back of your outlines gives you a sneak preview of how perfectly this passage fits in.

Next week I hope to show how it was during the last week of the war, when the Romans were indeed inside the new city section and the second quarter section of the city, but could not gain the upper city, the lower city, or the temple. Every attempt to penetrate the first wall had failed. The rebels were celebrating a very successful defense of the temple. Titus was discouraged. The rebels might have wondered if he was going to give up. But something strange and unexpected happened. In the dark of the night on August 2, a few soldiers scaled the wall of temple completely, killed the guards (who may well have been asleep), took the Jewish soldiers by surprise, and took over the temple, which they burned on the next day. What they had not been able to achieve over the last month with battering rams, they achieved with a few soldiers in the dead of night. It is during the last week of July that this happens, and four days later, the temple is destroyed and the events of the last section happen. The timing is perfect. During that time the Jews are still confident of victory, they still possess the temple, they can look down from the height of that temple wall and see the plaza where the bodies of the two prophets are lying. And of course, the Romans possess that plaza, so they too can see the prophets whom they have killed. They no doubt executed the prophets in an effort to intimidate the rebels in the temple. But they could not. The history of the war fits the description given here perfectly.

But there are other reasons we need to take this as a reference to Jerusalem, rather than Rome. The third reason is given by Charles, in his commentary. He points out that the Greek phrase in verse 10 for "those who dwell on the earth" is always used for Palestinians, not for members of the world.⁶ So the context militates against interpreting this as Rome or the world system.

And there are a few other reasons that I that I won't go into detail on: I will just list them. 4) The fourth reason is that he starts this chapter by dealing with Jerusalem. 5) Fifth, we've seen that the two prophets have been witnessing in Jerusalem. 6) Sixth, Jesus said that no prophet that He had sent could perish outside of Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). Well, He has explicitly sent these two prophets, so they too must die in Jerusalem. Jesus prophesied that they would. 7) Seventh, if this is neither history nor geography (as Idealists claim), why would John mention that the people would not allow the bodies

⁶ He says, "The phrase οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (11:10) appears to denote the inhabitants of a single country, i.e. the Palestinians, not the inhabitants of the whole world." R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, vol. 1, *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 287.

to be put into the grave, and the earthquake, and the number of people killed in the earthquake if it is only a general symbol of a world system? It doesn't make sense.

By the way, if the seven thousand in verse 13 is a tenth of the population of Jerusalem (the way some people interpret it), then the death of the witnesses had to happen in the last week before the temple is burned. And we will look at that next week. Over a million Jews had died by this time within the city, and so the population of Jerusalem had dwindled to about 70,000. But all of these details seem to be dealing with a real geographical spot in real history. And verse 14 confirms that. It says, "The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly." That is the language of historical sequence, not of general non-historical principles.

You see, John didn't write this book to deliberately confuse us. But he would have been confusing us if he really didn't want us to see this as Jerusalem. He would have been giving us so many false leads. And of course, commentators who don't take it as Jerusalem are confused about several issues. As several commentaries that I agree with have pointed out, the names Sodom and Egypt can't be symbols of how bad the city where our Lord was crucified had become, if the city where our Lord was crucified was itself a symbol and not a literal city. You can't have symbols of symbols.

So it doesn't matter which way you slice this cake, the last clause of verse 8 has to refer to Jerusalem. I have studied every argument in my extensive library of commentaries, and I do not see any way around those plain facts. The great city is clearly Jerusalem.

II. Yet Jerusalem is spiritually or symbolically called Sodom and Egypt - pagan nations under God's judgment (v. 8)

And that brings us to point two. John describes Jerusalem by pagan names. Here he calls Jerusalem Sodom and Egypt. He makes clear that the city is not literally Sodom and Egypt, but he says, "which is called Sodom and Egypt, spiritually speaking." Spiritually it had become a Sodom filled with homosexuality and every perversion, as the historian Josephus documents. And it shouldn't surprise us that when that happened, it was ripe for judgment.

Judgment came to the Old Testament Jerusalem for exactly the same reason. And back then he likened Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah - just like he

did here. In Isaiah 1:10 God said, "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah." He was warning the rulers of Jerusalem back then that just as Sodom and Gomorrah were judged for their sins, Jerusalem was about to be judged for similar sins. But he explicitly calls Jerusalem, "Sodom", just like Revelation 11 does. And Ezekiel 16:49 explains the reason why Jerusalem was now being treated as Sodom. Because it had all the sins of Sodom. Has America become like Sodom? Yes it has. That's the Biblical background to this name. We need to understand John's symbolism in light of the Old Testament's use of the same symbolism. The Bible tightly connects the name with rebellious Israel.

Nor should it be surprising that he also calls Jerusalem, "Egypt". God had previously done that when Israel apostatized in Old Testament times. And He called His people to flee from this new Egypt in a new Exodus just like Revelation called God's people to exit Jerusalem into the wilderness. In Ezekiel 23:8 God called Jerusalem Egypt because she engaged in all of the harlotries of Egypt, and the worldviews of Egypt, and the practices of Egypt. For all practical purposes it had become Egypt. And both chapters call Jerusalem the harlot over and over again. No wonder the later chapters of Revelation refer to Jerusalem as the harlot. It was familiar imagery for apostate Jerusalem.

You might wonder why the great city is called Babylon later in the book. It is for the same reason. She had become like Babylon. There is a reason why the Jewish Talmud is still called the Babylonian Talmud. Most of its ideas are Babylonian to core. It is an occult book that mixes Babylonian ideas with the Bible. We call that syncretism. Israel had come up with a new religion. Its politics was not the decentralized politics of the Bible, but the centralized politics of Babylon and Rome. No wonder Revelation 13 calls Israel the beast from the land. The Jewish leadership admired Babylon's wisdom, artwork, medicine, and worldview. And just one illustration of that is the enormous veil which covered the Temple gate (over 80 feet high and 24 feet wide and incredibly thick). That veil did not follow the prescriptions given in the Bible. No. In their adultery they preferred Babylon's ways. Josephus says, "[It was] a Babylonian tapestry, embroidered with blue, and fine linen, and scarlet, and purple." - the same fabrics that the harlot city is described as wearing in chapter 17:4 and 18:16. Interestingly, archeology shows that the temple furniture that Titus carried away to Rome had Babylonian occult symbols carved into the pieces. There was idolatry going on in the temple. And we will look at that in a future sermon.

So the point that is being made by those names is that Jerusalem has no more

right to be called God's special people than Sodom did, or than Egypt did, or than Babylon did. By AD 70 Jerusalem had become so corrupt that it looked little different than those pagan nations. And just as Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon had all come under God's judgments for their corruptions, Jerusalem was now under judgment for its sins. The symbolism of these names was perfect.

Now, we will see in a later sermon that verse 13 seems to indicate that even at that late hour there were Jews who repented. God is gracious and offers salvation to all who repent. So the issue is not that Jews are outside the scope of salvation. That is the false conclusion that some Amillennialists have come to. The issue is that they need salvation to be considered God's people. And too many Christians like John Hagee have become heretical Zionists who deny that Jews need the Gospel. He thinks he is loving them. That is actually hatred for their soul. It is not loving their souls.

III. The principle of "first mention" means that John is interpreting the later uses of this phrase (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:18 18:10,16,18,19,21). Thus, "the harlot," "Babylon," and "the woman" who rides the beast all are spiritual references to Jerusalem. People object and claim that the later uses of the term must refer to Rome or some other city. However:

So this verse is not an inconvenience that needs to be explained away (like so many commentaries do) in order to maintain some system of prophecy. Our prophetic views must submit to the clear text of Scripture. As John has done repeatedly in this book, the first mention of a subject is accompanied by some interpretive clues of how to interpret that word or that phrase in the rest of the book. We call it the principle of first mention. And it beautifully opens up the book of Revelation when you follow those clues.

The phrase "the great city" is always a reference to either the Jerusalem below or the Jerusalem above. And the rest of this book will be contrasting those two great cities. The Jerusalem below is called the filthy harlot. The Jerusalem above is called the spotless bride of Christ. The great city below submits to the Beast and then is destroyed by the Beast. The great city above submits to Jesus and is blessed by Jesus and is victorious in Jesus. The great city below is a woman who rides the Beast and is drunk with the blood of the saints - until, of course, that Beast devours her. The great city above is a woman adorned as a bride for her husband, Jesus. It is critical that we see

"the great city" below as being apostate Jerusalem.

A. This is consistent with Old Testament usage (Jer. 22:8; Lam. 1:1)

And this is consistent with the Old Testament usage of that phrase. In Jeremiah 22:8 God prophesied that Jerusalem was soon to be so utterly destroyed, that "many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his neighbor, 'Why has the LORD done so to this great city.'" Notice the reference to many nations witnessing the destruction of the great city. Lamentations 1:1 laments the destruction of Jerusalem, the great city among all nations.

B. This is consistent with Jewish usage. Josephus, War 7.1.1; 7.8.7; Against Apion 1.22; 1.197,209; Sibilline Oracles 5:154; see also 5:226, 413; Hegesippus XXXV; Abraham A 2:6; Isaiah A 3:13, 18; Lives 10:3; Pseudo Hicat. 6:15; Abot. 6:10

But as you are considering the original audience to whom John was writing, it is helpful to know that the first century Jews were quite familiar with using this phrase to describe Jerusalem. The Sybilline Oracles speak of Jerusalem as "the great city" three times (5:154, 226, 413). Josephus calls Jerusalem "the great city" five times. Hegessipus laments the destruction of Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the great city of Jerusalem...?" The Jewish Pseudepigrapha calls Jerusalem "the great city" another five times. This usage of the term was not out of the ordinary.

C. This is consistent with Christ's prophecies that all the prophets that He sent would die in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33; Matt. 23:34-37). Here are two prophets slain in Jerusalem, and Revelation 18:24 says of the great city Babylon, "And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the land" (Rev. 18:24; cf. 16:16; 17:6; 18:21,24; cf. Acts 7:51-52)

But it is also helpful to see that this is totally consistent with Christ's prophecies that no prophet would die outside of Jerusalem. Obviously that fact should be factored into whether there are continuing prophets after Jerusalem was destroyed, but laying that debate aside, consider what Jesus said in Luke 13:33. He said, "Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." That is a pretty absolute statement: "it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." If these two prophets died in

Rome, then that would seem to contradict Christ's statement.

D. This is consistent with numerous comparisons between "the great city" here and "the great city" later in the book (see chart for 22 points of identity)

Common feature	Jerusalem (11-12)	harlot (16-19)
called "the great city"	11:8	14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:21
given a pagan name	11:8	14:8; etc.
The name is a symbol	11:8	14:8
The name is spiritual	11:8	17:5
Destined to destruction	11:2,13,14,18	17:16-17; 18:1-24
prophets witness against	11:3-13	18:20
prophets & saints killed in	11:7-8	17:6; 18:20; 19:2
witnessed by nations	11:9	17:15; 18:23
great earthquake in	11:13	16:18-19
lightnings, noises, thunder	11:19	16:18
great hail	11:19	16:21
plague	11:6	16:21; 18:4,8
water to blood	11:6	16:3
land judged along with city	11:10,18	17-18; 18:9,11,24
in wilderness	11:6,8; 12:12	17:3
three and a half years	11:3	13:5
heavens rejoicing over	11:17-18; 12:12	18:20
woe to earth and sea	11:14; 12:12	18:10,16,19,21
loud voice cries salvation	12:10	19:1
avenging the dead	11:18	18:20
Lamb overcoming enemy	11:17; 12:7-12	17:14
Jesus king of nations	11:15	19:16

But if you look at the chart at the bottom of the back of your outlines you can see that I have listed 22 striking parallels between the great city Jerusalem in this chapter and the great city harlot Babylon in later passages. They are one and the same city. Let me quickly read them. Both are called the great city, both are given pagan names, both have the name as a symbol and the symbol reflects their spiritual nature. Both are destined to destruction, have prophets witnessing against them, have prophets and saints killed in their midst, have the death of prophets witnessed by the nations, experience a great earthquake as well as lightnings, noises, and thunderings. Is that coincidence? No. They both have great hail, plagues, water turned to blood, and the land judged along with the city. They are both in the wilderness, have a three and a half year crisis, have the heavens rejoicing over the judgments, and have woes pronounced on both earth and sea. Both have loud voices crying out about God's salvation. Both are connected with avenging the death of the saints. And both have the Lamb overcoming the

enemy and Jesus declared as king of the nations. When we get to those chapters we will be seeing that there are a lot more things that identify the harlot Babylon as Jerusalem.

With so many striking parallels to supplement our other arguments, I think it is a slam dunk that the great city of this chapter is the same great city of the later chapters. John intended this first mention principle to help us to interpret the rest of the book. Everything gets messed up if we do not hold tightly to this interpretive clue that John has given us. The principle of first mention mandates it.

E. This shows that Jerusalem has left its proper identity and become united with the spiritual enemy

So, what are the practical ramifications of this? The rest of the points draw those out. That Jerusalem is compared to Sodom and Egypt shows that Jerusalem has left its proper identity and has become united with the spiritual enemy. This has happened to many other godly nations. In fact, as many commentaries point out, Jerusalem had become a hub of evil influence throughout the empire. As we will see in later chapters, she controlled Rome to a great degree - especially through her international banking. Rome eventually got fed up with her, and the Beast consumed her. But the point of this book is that Israel had become just as hostile to God, to God's laws, and to God's people as the Romans were. To speak of a Judeo/Christian consensus is naive and wrong-headed.

F. This reminds us that the right to the names Jew, Jerusalem, Israel is based on union with Jesus (John 8:39,44; Rev. 2:9; 3:9) and does not apply to those who claim the name without the reality (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6)

In fact, I agree with the majority of Reformed people when they say that the names Jew, Jerusalem, Israel, holy people, saints, etc cannot be properly used to describe the Talmudists. In John 8 the Jews claimed to be children of Abraham, but Jesus denied it and said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham... You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." (vv. 39,44). In Revelation 2:9 John said about the Talmudists of his own day, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." He repeats that thought in chapter 3:9. Indeed, when we get to the Beast from the land in chapter 13, we will be seeing that it is the Jewish leadership of John's day. Chapter 13 is saying that Israel had become just as demonically controlled as

Rome was. Here is what Paul says in Romans:

Rom. 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. Rom. 9:6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

This does not mean that you need to be mean-spirited towards Talmudists. Far from it. You should love them enough to see that they are far from God, in need of salvation, and call them to repentance and the forgiveness of Christ's atonement. But the heresy of evangelical Judaizers like John Hagee, who treats Jews as if they are saved without the Gospel is an insult to Christ, a gross disservice to the Talmudists themselves, and actually shows a hatred for their souls since it is insulating them from the true Gospel. John wants us to look at the nation of Israel and so-called Jews in our land through spiritual eyes. And spiritually they are Sodom and Egypt, in desperate need of God's grace and the saving work of the Holy Spirit. And this book will go on to say that God is able to save them. Now, I am not saying that you can't call them Jews in an outward sense. Just realize that apart from union with Christ, they are no different than Sodom or Egypt. Of course, Scripture prophesies that Egypt and Israel will be saved in the future, but that's another topic.

G. This prepares us for John also calling Jerusalem other names that show this spiritual apostasy (Beast from the land, harlot, Babylon, Rome)

I've already touched on the next point - that this prepares us to properly interpret the rest of this book. This is where even many preterists like Bahnsen and Moses Stuart have gone wrong - they have failed to recognize the importance of the principle of first reference, and it has led them astray in the second half of the book. They are good men, but all it takes when you are traveling from America to England is a slight deviation off course and your ship will miss England by hundreds of miles. Well, the same is true in interpreting this book.

IV. It must be during a time period in which Rome is still warring against Jerusalem (vv. 7-8)

So chapters 11-19 are not dealing with the Second Coming at the end of history. They are dealing with the spiritual coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven in AD 70. The issues surrounding the great city must be during a time when Rome is still warring against Jerusalem.

A. Since Rome kills the two prophets at the end of the three and a half years of prophesying (v. 7 with v. 3), it cannot be any earlier than AD 70.

And the terminus of this chapter cannot be any later than AD 70. And we know that even from other facts in this chapter - such as the fact that the killing of the prophets is at the end of the three and a half year period of Titus's war against Jerusalem. Verse 3 says clearly, "And I will give authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." And verse 7 says, "When they finish their witness, the Beast of prey that comes up out of the Abyss will make war with them, overcome them and kill them." Verses 8-10 indicates that it has to be in a part of the war when Rome has penetrated the city, yet the Jews are still quite optimistic. The resurrection of the prophets is 3.5 days later, which ties in with the first resurrection that happens in verses 15-19. I believe the date for that is Ab 9 of AD 70. And we will look at verses 8-10 next week. For now it is enough that we have established the timing, the identity of the witnesses, the identity of the Beast, and identity of the great city.

Conclusion

But let me end by quickly reviewing and applying verses 7-8. We've gotten so bogged down in technical arguments that it is easy to miss the application. Verse seven says, "When they finish their witness..." Everyone has a work to do on earth, and until that work is finished, we cannot die. But the flip side of the coin is that we should be passionate to finish the work that God has given to us.

But the next phrase indicates that God's people are called to spiritual warfare. Satan is a real enemy who must be taken seriously. "...the Beast of prey that comes up out of the Abyss will make war with them, overcome them and kill them..." Later we will see that though Satan may win individual battles, he does not win the war. And the labors of these two Christians was not in vain. It was a part of God's overall plan for them to witness in Jerusalem and for them to die in Jerusalem. Missionaries who die on the field have not wasted their efforts. It may look like Satan has won, but our losses are part of God's overall strategy of winning the war.

Verse 8: "and leave their corpses in the street..." For a Jew, this was an incredible shame. To not bury the body was an incredible indignity. They treated their bodies with care, even in death. And we should care for our bodies as if they were the property of the Lord. Even in death, we honor God by honoring the bodies of His saints. That's why we believe in burial. And

you need to listen to Rodney's sermon against cremation if you do not think so. But when our bodies happen to be mistreated by others after our death, it is not the end. As we will see in the future, we will be raised.

The next phrase says, "...of the great city." Jerusalem was the capitol city of Israel, and Satan often tries to control the capitols of states and countries. They are strategic leverage points in society.

He goes on: "...which is called Sodom and Egypt..." Josephus tells us that the Jewish leaders of that time (as wicked as they were) actually thought that God would bless Israel and that He would never allow the temple to be destroyed. Like our modern politicians, they would probably have sung our national anthem, or something similar - "God bless our Is-ra-el, land of the free." But if they had stopped to think for a moment about what God thought of the nation, that illusion would have evaporated. And the same is true in America - we, like Israel, have become like Sodom and Egypt, and as such we are fit for judgment.

It goes on: "...spiritually speaking..." Whatever people may call society, God has His own spiritual evaluation. Americans may think our nation is free; God would say otherwise. We are in bondage; we are under tyranny. When the Pharisees told Jesus that they were not under bondage, Jesus made clear that they were under the bondage of Satan and of sin. Americans may call our nation "one nation under God"; God would say otherwise. It is important that our labels and our language conform to Scriptural and spiritual thinking.

It goes on to say, "even where their Lord..." They served a Lord - the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter how important you may be - you may be as important as these two amazing prophets - you are still a bondsman of Jesus and are called to submit to His will, not vice versa. Our prayers are not to get our will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. Always see yourself as having a Lord whom you must answer to - the Lord Jesus Christ. Him we must serve.

It ends by saying, "...where their Lord was crucified." If crucifixion was part of the plan of God's only begotten Son, death to self should be considered to be part of God's plan for us. And if Christ's death was the means of his victory, then it should not surprise us that chapter 12 will indicate that even our deaths can be used by God for the victory of Christ's kingdom. It is Christ's kingdom and His righteousness which we are called to seek, after all. And if we are seeking His kingdom and His righteousness and are willing to sacrifice our own agendas, then we can trust Him to provide us with everything we need in life and in eternity. All the things that the

Gentiles seek are things that should not consume our lives. God will richly provide those things when we are sold out to His kingdom. May we entrust ourselves to His care as these two prophets did. Amen.