

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 11

AS WE READ REVELATION 10, WE TOOK A PAUSE TO REMEMBER THE RELIABILITY OF GOD'S WORD AND PROMISES AND BE REFRESHED BY THE TRUE AND SURE HOPE OF GOD'S WILL BEING DONE ON THE EARTH IN THE END, AND JESUS THE MESSIAH COMING BACK. IN HIS GOOD WISDOM AND LOVE, GOD KNOWS WHAT WE NEEDED AT THIS STAGE IN OUR JOURNEY THROUGH REVELATION, NAMELY A REMINDER OF THOSE TRUTHS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE JUDGMENTS WE HAVE READ ABOUT AND THE DELAY IN THE RETURN OF THE KING.

THIS ENCOURAGEMENT CAME IS JUST THE RIGHT TIME TOO, BECAUSE AS WE CONTINUE TO READ REVELATION, THINGS ARE GOING TO ACCELERATE IN THEIR INTENSITY, BEFORE THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMES.

REVELATION 11 IS ANOTHER CHAPTER WHICH HAS HAD MUCH DISCUSSION OVER THE YEARS, AND ESPECIALLY IN THE LAST 3 DECADES IN THE AMERICAN CHURCH. BEFORE WE TRY AND MAKE SOME CONCLUSION ABOUT THE WHEN'S, WHO'S, AND WHAT'S - LETS PRAYERFULLY READ THE TEXT AND JOIN JOHN IN WHAT HE SEES.

WHAT WE READ IN REVELATION 10 AND WHAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO READ IN 11 IS STILL PART OF THIS BRIEF INTERLUDE OF THE SOUNDING OF THE TRUMPETS. THE LAST TRUMPET THAT SOUNDED WAS THE 6TH ONE (REVELATION 9:13) AND THE 7TH TRUMPET ISN'T GOING TO BE BLOWN UNTIL **REVELATION 11:15**. ONE FINAL THING TO REMEMBER FROM CHAPTER 10, JOHN IS BEING CALLED INTO A PROPHETIC ROLE AXIN TO EZEKIEL AND WHAT WE READ NEXT IS BITTERSWEET. WHAT WE ARE READING IN THIS INTERLUDE ARE THINGS WHICH GOD WANTS JOHN TO SEE AS HE WAITS FOR THE FINAL TRUMPET TO BE BLOWN.

REVELATION 11:1-2 - JOHN CALLED TO MEASURE

WE NEED TO GET SOME OT BACKGROUND. AFTER YEARS OF PROPHETIC WARNING AND EXTENSION AFTER EXTENSION OF GOD'S MERCY, THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH (CENTERED IN JERUSALEM) WAS DESTROYED BY NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE. THE TEMPLE BUILT BY SOLOMON WAS RANSACKED AND DESTROYED AND THE CITIZENS OF JUDAH WERE DRAGGED TO BABYLON TO LIVE AS EXILES. TO THE OUTSIDE OBSERVER, IT SEEMED THAT THE END OF THE ABRAHAMIC STORY HAD COME AT LAST. AND YET, EVEN IN EXILE AFTER JUDGMENT HAS COME, GOD CALLS A PROPHET TO RISE UP AND SPEAK FOR HIM. THIS PROPHET WAS EZEKIEL WHO LITERALLY WAS CALLED TO BE A PROPHET WHILE HE LIVED IN BABYLON AS AN EXILE!

IN THE 25TH YEAR OF THE EXILE, GOD SHOWS EZEKIEL A VISION AND IN THE VISION HE IS TOLD TO TAKE MEASUREMENTS, RECORD THE DETAILS AND TELL THE EXILES ABOUT WHAT HE SAW. THE MAIN TASK RECORDED IN MULTIPLE CHAPTERS (STARTING IN EZEKIEL 40) WAS TO TAKE MEASUREMENTS OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD. WHY? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS, BUT ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS WAS TO GIVE HOPE TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN EXILE THAT THEY WOULD RETURN AGAIN TO WORSHIP GOD. THEY WERE STRANGERS IN BABYLON, CUT OFF FROM THEIR HOMES, THEIR LAND AND THE PROMISES OF GOD. YET GOD HAS EZEKIEL SPEND EXTENDED TIME RECORDING PLANS FOR A MAJESTIC HOUSE FOR THE LORD - PUTTING A VISION BEFORE HIS EXILED CHILDREN THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD NOT BEEN FAITHFUL TO

GOD'S PROMISES, HE WAS STILL FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES. SURE ENOUGH, A NEW TEMPLE WAS REBUILT AFTER 70 YEARS OF EXILE AND THE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH RESUMED IN HIS HOLY PLACE.

WHEN JOHN IS WRITING REVELATION (C. 90 AD) THE TEMPLE THAT WAS REBUILT AFTER THE BABYLONIAN EXILE IS IN RUINS (DESTROYED BY ROME IN 70 AD). SIMILAR TO EZEKIEL, JOHN IS RECORDING SOMETHING THAT IS *TO COME*, PERHAPS TO GIVE HOPE THAT THE WORSHIP OF GOD WILL AGAIN BE RESTORED. YET, IN JOHN'S VISION HE IS TOLD NOT JUST TO MEASURE THE TEMPLE AND THE ALTAR BUT "**THOSE WHO WORSHIP THERE**" - AN EMPHASIS WHICH IS NOT ONLY ON THE *WORSHIP OF GOD*, BUT THE *WORSHIPERS OF GOD*. AT THIS POINT IN THE BIBLICAL STORY, THE PEOPLE OF GOD THEMSELVES WERE THE EARTHLY DWELLING PLACE OF GOD, NOT ONLY A SPECIFIC PHYSICAL LOCATION.

JOHN IS ALSO TOLD THAT THE TEMPLE AREA OUTSIDE OF THE SANCTUARY AS WELL AS THE HOLY CITY IN GENERAL IS BEING "TRAMPLED" (11:2, NLT) FOR 42 MONTHS. YET, JOHN RECORDS THAT SAFE INSIDE THE INNER SANCTUARY OF GOD'S HOUSE, THOSE THAT WORSHIP THE LORD ARE THERE, NOT ONLY RECORDED/MEASURED, BUT SAFE. BIBLICAL PROPHECY IS FILLED WITH NUMBERS AND WORDS TO INDICATE TIME. HERE WE ARE TOLD THAT THE TRAMPLING BY THE NATIONS WILL BE 42 MONTHS WHICH DESPITE THE EXACT PLACEMENT OF THOSE MONTHS IN THE TIMELINE OF HISTORY, INDICATES A SHORT TIME.

WHILE GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SYMBOLICALLY SAFE FROM THE CHAOS OF THE CITY OUTSIDE, SOMETHING ELSE APPEARS IN THE CITY WHICH GARNERS JOHN'S ATTENTION.

REVELATION 11:3-6 - TWO WITNESSES

JOHN NEXT SEES TWO WITNESSES THAT APPEAR AND ARE QUITE THE CHARACTERS! THEY ARE CLOTHED IN SACKCLOTH (THE GARMENTS OF REPENTANCE), POWERFUL IN PREACHING AND AGAINST THEIR OPPOSITION. THEIR MINISTRY ALIGNS WITH THE TIME THE HOLY CITY AND TEMPLE COURT ARE BEING TRAMPLED (1260 DAYS IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO 42 MONTHS OF A 30 DAY MONTH WHICH IS COMPARABLE TO 3 1/2 YEARS.). MUCH OF THEIR DESCRIPTORS POINT US TO MOSES AND ELIJAH, TWO OF THE GREATEST PROPHETS IN THE BIBLE - AND TWO PROPHETS WHO BOTH STOOD UP TO THE EVIL POWERS OF THEIR GENERATION (PHAROAH & AHAB/JEZEBEL).

THERE ARE VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MEANING OF THESE TWO WITNESSES, BUT TWO MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT. THE FIRST IS THAT IN THE FUTURE, BEFORE THE END OF THE AGE AND THE RETURN OF CHRIST, THERE WILL BE THE APPEARANCE OF TWO REMARKABLE PROPHETIC FIGURES WHO WILL PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WITH POWER AND GIVE A FINAL CALL FOR REPENTANCE. THESE TWO FIGURES WILL BE POWERFUL AND THE WORLD WILL TAKE NOTICE OF THEM (FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE). THEY WILL MOVE IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH AND MOSES - IN WORD AND WONDERS. THEY WILL BE LITERAL PROPHETS WHO WILL PREACH IN JERUSALEM.

THE SECOND MAJOR INTERPRETATION IS THAT THESE TWO FIGURES REPRESENT THE WORK OF THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE AGE. THE CHURCH IS NOT JUST CALLED TO WAIT, SAFE IN THE INNER SANCTUARY OF GOD'S PRESENCE, BUT ALSO FUNCTION AS A PROPHETIC WITNESS IN THE WORLD - IN WORD AND DEED TO CALL THE NATIONS TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND BACK TO THEIR CREATOR. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE POWER OF THESE TWO WITNESSES, ACCORDING TO THIS INTERPRETATION, ARE NOT SO MUCH LITERAL (FIRE COMING FROM HEAVEN) BUT SYMBOLIC OF THE CHURCH BEING ENDOWED WITH THE POWER OF GOD AND AUTHORITY OF CHRIST. THE CHURCH, LIKE THESE FIGURES WILL BE A COMPELLING FORCE IN THE WORLD, AND ALSO DESPISED BY THE WORLD.

HERE IS WHAT WE KNOW:

THIS CHAPTER IS RICH WITH OLD TESTAMENT SYMBOLISM AND OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE. HERE IS A SAMPLING OF THOSE THINGS, JUST AS I OBSERVED:

- THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE IS FOUND IN EZEKIEL 40-42.
- 42 MONTHS/1260 DAYS (AKA 3 1/2 YEARS) IS MENTIONED IN DANIEL 7:25 & 12:7
- 2 OLIVE TREES AND TWO LAMPSTANDS ARE FROM ZECHARIAH 4 WHICH SYMBOLIZED THE ANOINTED HIGH PRIEST AND GOVERNMENTAL LEADER WHO WOULD LEAD GOD'S PEOPLE.
- THE "FIRE...DEVOURING THEIR ENEMIES" AND "POWER TO SHUT UP THE SKY" IS PARALLEL TO THE PROPHET ELIJAH (2 KINGS 1:10-12, 1 KINGS 17)
- THE POWER OVER THE WATERS TO "TURN THEM INTO BLOOD AND STRIKE THE EARTH WITH EVERY PLAGUE" IS PARALLEL TO MOSES (EXODUS 7)

ALSO, THE CONCEPT OF "TWO WITNESSES" COMES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW WHICH REQUIRED AT LEAST TWO WITNESSES TO TESTIFY TO A MATTER IN ORDER FOR TRUE JUDGMENT TO BE METED OUT.

DEUTERONOMY 19:15 (NIV) - ONE WITNESS IS NOT ENOUGH TO CONVICT ANYONE ACCUSED OF ANY CRIME OR OFFENSE THEY MAY HAVE COMMITTED. A MATTER MUST BE ESTABLISHED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.

MY POINT IN HIGHLIGHTING THE MASSIVE AMOUNT OF OLD TESTAMENT ALLUSION HERE IS BECAUSE I THINK THERE'S MORE TO THE STORY THAN JUST WHAT WE READ ON THE SURFACE - AND NOT MORE TO THE STORY BECAUSE WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND DEEP, PROPHETIC, MYSTERIOUS THINGS OF THE END OF DAYS. I THINK TO MORE FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS SECTION ABOUT THE FUTURE IS ABOUT, WE NEED TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN RECORDED.

REVELATION 11:7-10 - THE TWO WITNESSES ARE KILLED

THESE VERSES LIKELY MAKE US SAY "WOW!" AND "WHAT?!" AND "WHOA!" AFTER 3 1/2 YEARS OF PROPHETIC WITNESS, THE PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN/UNMENTIONED "BEAST THAT COMES UP OUT OF THE ABYSS" WILL MAKE WAR WITH THE TWO WITNESSES" AND SADLY, "OVERCOME THEM AND KILL THEM". AS POWERFUL AS THESE TWO WITNESSES ARE, THEY ARE OVERCOME BY THIS "BEAST." WE ARE GOING TO READ OF A NUMBER OF "BEASTS" IN THE CHAPTERS TO COME, BUT THIS IS OUR FIRST REFERENCE TO ONE.

WE DON'T KNOW A TON ABOUT THIS BEAST (AT LEAST FROM THIS POINT IN REVELATION, THERE ARE CLUES IN DANIEL) BUT WE DO KNOW TWO THINGS THAT ARE HELPFUL. FIRST, WE ARE TOLD THAT IT COMES FROM THE **ABYSS**, WHICH WE KNOW IS WHERE EVIL EMANATES FROM AND IS BANISHED TO THROUGHOUT REVELATION. SECONDLY, WE LEARN THAT THIS BEAST IS CLEARLY IN OPPOSITION TO GOD AND HIS PEOPLE, SPECIFICALLY THE TWO WITNESSES.

AND HOW DO WE SEE THIS OPPOSITION? THE BEAST WARS AGAINST THE WITNESSES AND KILLS THEM. AS A RESULT, THEIR BODIES "WILL LIE ON THE STREET OF THE GREAT CITY..." WHERE MANY PEOPLE "WILL LOOK AT THEIR DEAD BODIES FOR THREE AND A HALF DAYS." THEIR BODIES WILL NOT BE BURIED DURING THIS TIME AS PEOPLE LOOK AT THEIR DEAD BODIES. THIS WOULD BE AN ACT OF TREMENDOUS DISRESPECT.

CLEARLY THESE TWO WITNESSES HAVE TORMENTED THE EVIL PEOPLE OF THE EARTH AND THEIR DEFEAT IS INTERPRETED AS A VICTORY FOR THEM. THE REACTION OF THE WORLD IS JOY AND CELEBRATION - ALMOST AS IF A WORLDWIDE HOLIDAY IS CALLED IN HONOR OF THEIR DEATH.

IF THE TWO WITNESSES ARE TWO LITERAL END TIME PROPHETS, THEIR DEATH WOULD BE CELEBRATED BY THE WORLD. SURELY THEIR MINISTRY IMPACT WAS GREAT AND WIDESPREAD AND THEIR PREACHING CAUSED ANGER IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO REFUSE TO REPENT. IF THESE TWO WITNESSES ARE SYMBOLIC OF THE CHURCH GENERALLY, THE DEFEAT OR APPARENT DEATH OF THE CHURCH WOULD ALSO BE CELEBRATED BY A WORLD AT ODDS WITH CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

THE BEAST VIEWS THESE WITNESSES AS A THREAT TO BE ELIMINATED AND THAT IS WHAT HAPPENS... THAT IS UNTIL THREE DAYS AND A HALF DAYS LATER...

SIDE NOTE: "THE GREAT CITY" OF REVELATION 11:8 - THIS IS TALKING ABOUT JERUSALEM. "MYSTICALLY" OR SPIRITUALLY SODOM AND EGYPT REPRESENT THE PINNACLE OF HUMAN EFFORTS AND HUMAN EVIL (THE THIRD CITY WE WILL READ MORE ABOUT LATER IS BABYLON). THE TEXT IS REFERRING TO JERUSALEM, (AKA "THE GREAT CITY" AKA "WHERE ALSO THEIR LORD WAS CRUCIFIED") NOW IN THE SAME WAY THE BIBLE HAS REFERENCED SODOM AND EGYPT - SURELY BECAUSE JERUSALEM, ONCE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD AND THE CENTERPLACE OF THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD HAS REJECTED THE MESSIAH (AS WELL AS THESE "TWO WITNESSES") AND IS NOW NO DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHER PAGAN CITIES OF THIS EVIL AGE.

AND AS AN ADDITIONAL SIDE NOTE, AS MUCH AS TIME HAS TEMPTED US TO SHIFT OUR FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT WHOS AND WHERE'S OF THE BIBLE - THE BIBLE KEEPS COMING BACK TO THE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM AND DAVID AND THE CITY OF JERUSALEM IS A CENTERPIECE OF GOD'S STORY THAT REMAINS. MANY WILL TRY TO REDEFINE PROPHECY TO MAKE SENSE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, THE EUROPEAN UNION OR WHATEVER THE LATEST VERSION OF THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD MIGHT BE, BUT SCRIPTURE MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, KEEPS US CENTERED ON JERUSALEM.

REVELATION 11:11-13, 14 - SURPRISE!

WHILE THE WORLD REJOICES OVER THE DEATH AND EMBARRASSMENT OF THE TWO WITNESSES, SUDDENLY BREATH RETURNS TO THEIR DEAD BODY LYING IN THE STREET AND GOD RAISES THEM FROM THE DEAD, STANDING THEM UP ON THEIR FEET!! WOW!! THE WATCHING WORLD IS IN FEAR-SATURATED SHOCK (V. 11). AND THEN THEY RESPOND TO THE LOUD VOICE FROM HEAVEN CALLING THEM TO "COME UP HERE" AND THEY "WENT UP TO HEAVEN IN A CLOUD" (ALA JESUS' ASCENSION!)

THEY ARE VINDICATED BEFORE THE VERY ONES WHO CELEBRATED THEIR APPARENT DEMISE.

SOON AFTER, THERE'S A "GREAT EARTHQUAKE" (11:13) WHICH LEADS TO 1/10 OF THE CITY FALLING AND THE DEATH OF 7000 PEOPLE. AS A REFERENCE, THE 1994 EARTHQUAKE THAT AFFECTED LOS ANGELES KILLED AROUND 60 PEOPLE. THE 2011 EARTHQUAKE THAT CAUSED THE NUCLEAR ACCIDENT AT THE FUKUSHIMA POWER PLANT IN JAPAN RESULTED IN AROUND 19,000 DEATHS - HOWEVER, OVER 93% OF THAT NUMBER WAS A RESULT OF THE TSUNAMI THAT WAS TRIGGERED BY THE EARTHQUAKE, PUTTING THE EARTH-QUAKE RELATED DEATHS CLOSER TO 1000. THE POINT IS, THIS IS INDEED A GREAT EARTHQUAKE IF IT CAUSES 7,000 DEATHS.

THIS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS CAUSES GREAT TERROR BUT ALSO A SMALL BUT NOTABLE GESTURE FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE REGION AS THEY "GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN."

IT SEEMS LIKE GOD IS USING THE NOTORIETY OF THE TWO WITNESSES, INCLUDING THEIR DEATH, TO GET PEOPLE'S ATTENTION. THINK ABOUT THIS: AS A RESULT OF THEIR 3 1/2 YEAR MINISTRY, THEIR DEATH, THEIR DEAD BODIES BEING ON DISPLAY FOR 3 1/2 DAYS AND THEN CERTAINLY THEIR RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION - THE WORLD HAD BEEN WATCHING. NOW FOLLOWING THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE, THE HEARTS OF MEN AND WOMEN ARE UNSETTLED. AS A RESULT, SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TERRIFIED, "GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN (11:13)". AT LAST, SOME PEOPLE GET IT. AND YET IT WAS THROUGH THE TRIALS AND SUFFERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE (WHETHER JUST TWO WITNESSES OR THE GENERAL CHURCH) THAT HELPED GET TO THE PEOPLE WHERE PEOPLE GAVE GLORY TO GOD. IT WASN'T THROUGH THEIR MIRACLES, KINDNESS, PROSPERITY, OR SOMETHING ELSE - IN THIS CASE, THE WORLD TOOK NOTICE HOW GOD'S PEOPLE ENDURED THEIR TRIALS AND IT WOKE THEM UP TO WHAT LIFE WAS ABOUT (GIVING GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN). THERE'S A LESSON FOR US IN THIS I THINK.

THIS WHOLE SECTION IS A REMARKABLE RECORD AND THERE IS MUCH TO TRY AND GRASP - AND WE DIDN'T EVEN GET TO THE END OF THE CHAPTER! BUT BEFORE WE MOVE ON, LET'S NOT MISS AN IMPORTANT LESSON ABOUT TIMING. HERE'S WHAT I MEAN. THE WITNESSES HAVE A POWERFUL SEASON OF TESTIFYING TO GOD'S WORD - THE TEXT REFERENCES 3 1/2 YEARS. THEIR MINISTRY TIME APPEARS TO END IN DEFEAT - THEY ARE DEAD FOR 3 1/2 DAYS. BUT AFTER THE 3 1/2 DAYS, LIFE IS RESTORED AND THEY ASCEND TO HEAVEN JUST BEFORE THE FINAL TRUMPET SOUNDS.

WHY DO I SAY WE NEED TO LEARN THE LESSON OF TIMING? BECAUSE A SHORT, SEEMINGLY DEVASTATING OR EVEN EMBARRASSING DEFEAT IS MINOR COMPARED TO YEARS OF FAITHFULNESS AND ULTIMATE AND ETERNAL VICTORY.

DO GOD'S PEOPLE SUFFER AND ENDURE HARD TIMES IN THIS AGE? YES. THE DEVIL APPEARS AT TIMES TO HAVE SOME VICTORIES AS WELL. BUT THOSE SUFFERINGS, HARD TIMES AND MINOR VICTORIES FOR THE EVIL ONE ARE SHORT LIVED AND FLEETING COMPARED TO A LIFE OF FAITHFUL DEVOTION TO GOD AND THE GLORY THAT IS TO BE REVEALED.

3 1/2 DAYS IS GREATER THAN 3 1/2 DAYS. AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS GREATER THAN THE MOMENTARY AFFLICTION OF THIS LIFE.

SO WE GET PERSPECTIVE. WE SEE AND FEEL AND EXPERIENCE THE BATTLE, BUT KNOW THE END IS COMING. WE PUSH THROUGH AND HOLD ON, KNOWING THAT THE FUTURE IS CERTAIN. THESE TRUTHS ARE DESIGNED TO FREE US FROM THE FEAR THAT COMES WHEN ALL WE HAVE TO LIVE FOR IS THE HERE AND NOW.

IF THE TWO WITNESSES OF THE FINAL DAYS KNOW ALREADY THAT AFTER 3 1/2 DAYS THEY ARE RESURRECTED AGAIN, EVEN IF THEY ARE OVERCOME AND KILLED BY THE BEAST ONE DAY, IF THEY ALREADY KNOW THAT THEY CAN **BOLDLY** AND **FREELY** TAKE RISK AND SPEAK AND SACRIFICE AND OBEY AND LOVE AND CONFRONT AND TRUST AND FACE AND STEP OUT IN FAITH - LEAVING IT ALL ON THE FIELD BY GIVING THEIR ALL. THEY ARE DANGEROUS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.

WHAT IF WE LIVED LIKE WE HAD NOTHING TO LOSE?

IF ONLY WE COULD BE SURE THAT OUR FUTURE IS SECURE AND THAT EVEN IF WE DIE, WE'LL BE RESURRECTED AND OVERCOME ALL OF OUR ENEMIES. IF ONLY WE COULD TRUST THAT EVEN IF THE DEVIL DEFEATS US, HE DOES NOT HAVE VICTORY OVER US. IF ONLY THERE WAS SOMEONE WE COULD COUNT ON TO GET US THROUGH, EVEN THE VALLEY OF DEATH SO THAT WHEN WE FACED THE SHADOWS, WE COULD STILL BE CONFIDENT BECAUSE WE KNOW WE ARE GUARANTEED TO GET THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE.

IF SOMEHOW WE COULD KNOW THE END OF OUR STORY, LIKE THE TWO WITNESSES DID, IF ONLY WE COULD KNOW THE FUTURE - SURE, NOT EVERY SINGLE DAY OR DETAIL - BUT JUST THE BIG PICTURE OF THE END OF OUR STORY - IF ONLY WE COULD KNOW THAT IN THE END, NO MATTER WHAT, ALL THINGS ARE GOING TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD...

IF ONLY...

BECAUSE IF SOMEHOW WE COULD BE CONFIDENT IN THE FACE OF 3 1/2 DAYS OR YEARS OF THE WORST THINGS EVER, IF WE COULD KNOW THAT THOSE THINGS AREN'T THE END, WE TOO COULD BE BOLD AND FREE TO TAKE RISK AND SPEAK AND SACRIFICE AND OBEY AND LOVE AND CONFRONT AND TRUST AND FACE AND LIVE BY FAITH - LEAVING IT ALL ON THE FIELD BY GIVING OUR ALL - THEN WE TOO, WOULD BE DANGEROUS MEN AND WOMEN FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD BECAUSE WE TOO, WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE...