

The Two Witnesses And The Seventh Trumpet

(Revelation 11:1-19)

Scripture: 11:1 And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. 2 "And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

3 "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. 6 These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. 7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. 11 And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

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

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four

elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying,

“We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign. 18 “And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Intro

Chap. 11 continues the parenthetical section begun in chapter 10:1, which runs through chapter 14, verse 22. This is the longest of the four parenthetical sections in Revelation. This parenthetical interlude provides information on several events and personalities that will play a key role in the coming Tribulation period. While previous chapters have presented some things difficult to understand, the material recorded in this chapter is perhaps the most difficult in the entire book. A review of several of the more popular commentaries on the Book of Revelation reveals an amazing variation of interpretations of this eleventh chapter. Many of the more popular liberal commentators spiritualize and allegorize the events and personages recorded here, which leads to utter confusion.

For the purpose of our investigation we will, as always use a literal hermeneutic, which understands the terms, times, people, and events presented in a plain and normal sense. Adherence to this principle will show that a literal temple will be built and operating during the Tribulation, the two witnesses are actual prophets of God, who preach in the great city identified as Jerusalem. The time periods of 42 months (v. 2), 1,260 days (v. 3), and three and one-half days (vv. 9, 11) again are understood as literal. The earthquake that kills 7,000 individuals, and the two witnesses who are killed, desecrated, resurrected to life, and translated to heaven should be considered as actually taking place.

There are a couple of other things we need to keep in mind. **First, *John is presenting prophetic truth here.*** He is recording future end-time events. This

chapter is not to be understood historically. Remember at the time John is writing (A.D. 95-96) there is no temple in existence. The temple had been destroyed in A.D. 70 by Titus and his Roman legions. This chapter anticipates a time in the future when the Jews will be worshipping in a newly built temple.

We also need to remember *this passage is Jewish in nature*. David Jeremiah says, “We can see that the discussion in this chapter centers not on the church, but on a time in the future when the Jews will be back in the center of God’s plan. “This is evident in the references to the Holy City, the temple” [the altar, and those, presumably orthodox Jews, who worship in it] (*Escape The Coming Night: Messages From The Book Of Revelation*, vol. 2, 120).

Alright with this brief introduction look with me first of all at the Tribulation Temple in verses 1-2,

I. The Tribulation Temple (vv. 1-2)

1 John recounts that he was given a measuring rod like a staff; and someone (Jesus) told him to rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. The measuring rod, literally “reed” in Greek, is a reference to the long and straight cane reeds that grow along the banks of the Jordan River. Though its length is not stated, the common measuring rod was nine to ten feet long. The prophet Ezekiel, you recall, used a reed measuring 6 cubits, roughly nine feet, to measure the future Millennial Temple to be built and occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ (Ezek. 40:5).

John was commanded to measure the temple (*naos*, the inner sanctuary of God, the Holy of Holies), the altar, probably the altar of incense that resides in front of the veil in the Holy place, and the worshipers who worship in it.

There are two fairly common interpretations to John’s measuring of the future Tribulation temple, altar, and worshipers. **The first view** is that God rejects the religious system of the end-times because it will be a product of an apostate Jewish nation in league with Satan’s false messiah, the Anti-christ. **The second view held by Dr. Charles Ryrie** understands “The measuring itself . . . as an act of knowing, claiming, or staking out. In this act of John, God is giving assurance that He will take note of those who faithfully worship Him in the Tribulation days” (*Revelation*, 71).

In a certain sense both views contain elements of truth. God in His

sovereignty knows who has accepted Christ by faith. All believers, those who heed the message preached by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and these two witnesses, while suffering persecution and martyrdom, will be saved. Everyone who accepts God's gracious offer of salvation will be found to *measure up* to God's righteous standard. Those who reject God's gracious pardon *do not measure up*, and they will incur His wrath and indignation.

In the course of his measuring John is commanded in verse 2 to leave out the court which is outside the temple, and not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

The outer court refers to the court of the Gentiles. The Greek text literally reads "the court, the outer one of the temple, cast without and do not measure." While God made gracious provision in Old Testament times for the Gentiles to worship at His temple, here He excludes them. The Gentiles will follow Antichrist in his diabolical rebellion against God and His people. The Gentile nations will tread the holy city and people of God under foot for forty-two months (1,260 days or 3 ½ years). As we shall see, this all out persecution against the Jews will occur during the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation period, often referred to as the Great Tribulation.

II. The Two Witnesses (11:3-14)

A. Their identity (vv. 3-4)

In verse 3 John introduces us to two witnesses. These two men are real persons, as is supported by the fact that they will die, be resurrected, and ascend up into heaven. God brings these men forth and empowers them to serve as His witnesses for 1,260 days or 3 ½ years. Numerous and varied interpretations have been given concerning these two witnesses. The two most common views are these men are Elijah and Moses, or Elijah and Enoch. The most widely held interpretation is that they are Elijah and Moses. First, the judgments inflicted by Elijah and Moses in the Old Testament are similar to those of these two witnesses. Further support is given to this view because both Elijah and Moses appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, which foreshadows Christ's second coming (Matthew 17:3). The prophet Malachi predicted that the prophet Elijah would appear "before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes" (Malachi 3:1-3 and 4:5-6).

While Elijah is widely accepted as the first witness, others point to Enoch as the second witness. The reason for this is that Enoch like Elijah never died. Enoch supporters point to Hebrews 9:27 “It is appointed unto a man once to die and then comes judgment.” This a rather weak argument for as we know, all believers who are raptured will not taste death. So this is a baseless argument.

The description of the two witnesses in verse 4 as olive trees and lamp-stands “that stand before the Lord of the earth” is brought over from the two servants of the Lord in the Book of Zechariah. Just as Joshua, the High Priest, and Zerubbabel, the civil governor stood for the truth of God in their day (Zech. 4:1-14), so these two future witnesses will stand for God during the Tribulation. The olive tree symbolizes the oil provided by the Holy Spirit that empowers believers to witness, symbolized as letting their light shine for Christ. The question is “Is our light shining?”

While we can’t be dogmatic on the identification of these two witnesses, their miraculous powers recorded in verses 5 and 6 further suggest that they may be Elijah and Moses.

B. Their miraculous powers (vv. 5-6)

John records that the ministry of these two witnesses is characterized by four miraculous powers. (1) They can kill their enemies with fire, which proceeds out of their mouths; (2) They can withhold rain for 3 1/2; (3) They can turn water into blood; (4) They can bring plagues upon the earth. While the first two miracles remind us of Elijah, the third and fourth miracles remind us of Moses.

The important thing to take away from the ministry of the two witnesses, is that God graciously sends them forth, and like the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, protects them so they can preach a message of salvation and hope. They will warn the Jews that the Antichrist is a false messiah, who has deceived them and will break his seven year covenant after 3 1/2 years (Daniel 9:24-27). They will also describe how the Jews’ false messiah will eventually desecrate the newly built temple, declare himself to be God, and seek to destroy any and all who reject him.

While one cannot be dogmatic on the timing of the two witnesses ministry, a study of the various scriptures relating to the events surrounding

the future Tribulation period best locates the two witnesses ministry in the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. This will be a relatively peaceful time, or at least Antichrist will enforce a pseudo-peace. It is not until the mid-point of the Tribulation that Antichrist will turn against the Jews desecrate the temple, and demand to be worshipped as God (Rev. 13).

In any event the two witnesses ministry will not be terminated until they have finished their testimony, v. 7

C. The termination of their ministry (vv. 7-10)

1. Their death (v. 7)

7 And when ***they have finished their testimony*** the beast who comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them (cf. Rev. 13).

The beast mentioned here is identified as the Antichrist. This is the first of 36 references to the beast that will occur from this point on in the book of Revelation. Notice that not until the witnesses ministry for God is completed will Satan be granted permission to overcome and kill them. The same holds true for you and me. Satan is powerless unless granted permission by God to touch one of His own (Job 1 and 2).

2. Their desecration (vv. 8-10)

8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. The great city referred to symbolically as Sodom and Egypt, perhaps because of the peoples' apostasy and deplorable wickedness, is identified as the city where their Lord was crucified. This is a clear reference to Jerusalem. ***Here is a great example of symbols being identified in the immediate context.***

Notice the peoples' reaction to the two witnesses' death, vv. 9-10

9 And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

The lost people of the earth, who vehemently rejected and cursed God's faithful witnesses for preaching truth to them, will look at—*make a public spectacle*—of their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be buried. The savagery and brutality of mankind during these days is expressed by this shocking rejection of the conventions of normal decency. In Israel a body was, and still is, to be buried on the day of one's death.

Not only will the lost people of earth desecrate the two witnesses bodies, we read in v. 10 they will rejoice over the two witnesses death, and make merry, and they will send gift to one another.

Many commentators surmise that modern technology, with satellites and global broadcasting networks, will provide the means for all the peoples' of the world to join in this demented celebration—watch by T.V.

The worlds' 3 ½ day celebration is brought to a sudden and shocking end as God restores His two witnesses to life, and translates them to heaven, vv. 11-13

D. Their restoration and translation (vv. 11-12)

1) Their restoration to life (v. 11)

And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.

After 3 ½ days the breath of God, a reference to God's Spirit, came into the two dead witnesses, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. Although struck by fear, the lost people of this time refuse to come to faith in God.

2) Their translation to heaven (v. 12)

12 And they, the two witnesses, heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. This is reminiscent of Christ's ascension from the Mount of Olives recorded in Acts 1, where His disciples witnessed His being received up in a cloud. **What a spectacular sight!**

E. The resulting judgment of God (vv. 13-14)

13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Shortly after the two witnesses' ascension to heaven, the city of Jerusalem is rocked by a catastrophic earthquake, which results in the death of seven thousand people. Those who live through the earthquake, presumably Jews, give glory to God. This may be part of the final remnant of Jews who will be saved, and enter Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

According to verse 14 these events conclude the second woe, leaving only the seventh trumpet, which will signal the **third woe**—culminating in the final seven bowl judgments to be poured out in rapid succession.

III. The Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying,

"We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign. 18 "And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

The sounding of the seventh trumpet provides a panoramic overview of the rest of the Tribulation. Dr. Ryrie explains "The sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the heavenly proclamations mean that the kingdoms of this world have been taken over by Christ. "Though some additional events have to transpire before all is realized, the end is near now and the announcements can be made" (*Revelation*, 75). Dr. Pentecost likewise surmises that this heavenly "hymn of praise anticipates the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His rule on earth" ("Revelation," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, vol. 2, 957).

The kingdoms of this earth, which Satan has held in his dominion ever since Adam sinned, will shortly become those of the Lord Jesus Christ. At this point the seven bowl judgments have yet to be poured out, but they comprise the seventh trumpet and will now fall in rapid succession. That they make up the seventh trumpet is clear from the fact that it is the last, the 7th trumpet, that anticipates the establishment of Christ's rule on earth.

Whereas this chapter *opened with the apostate temple on earth, it closes with the adoration of God in His glorious temple in heaven*, v. 19

19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

This marvelous scene of God's temple in heaven, and the revelation of His holiness is similar to what Isaiah witnessed and recorded in Isaiah 6. The violation of God's holiness is the primary cause of God's wrath (Heb. 1:13). The flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder, and earthquake and great hailstorm are all symbols of God's fearful judgment.

Remember, this earthly apostate temple is desecrated by the beast, but he cannot touch the heavenly temple which reflects God's perfect holiness, righteousness, majesty, and justice. The beast, the false religious prophet, and Satan, along with all the wicked dead will be judged.

To God be the glory, and power, and dominion forever, Amen and Amen!

Evangelistic appeal and closing prayer:

Closing song: ***We Believe***

Closing benediction: