

Revelation Chapter 11

Verses 1-2: Revelation chapter 11 continues the parenthesis that began in chapter 10. John is told to “measure the temple of God”, which may be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation period. Or more likely the prophesied millennial temple (compare Ezek. chapters 40 and 42).

The “rod” is a surveyor's instrument (compare Zechariah 2:1-5). The measuring anticipates the building of a new temple on earth during the Millennium. The outer “court” represents the control of Jerusalem and Israel by “Gentiles” during the last half of the Tribulation period.

The holy city is the earthly Jerusalem (compare Dan. 9:24; 11:45; Zech. 13:8-9; 14:2).

The “forty and two months” show that Jerusalem will be under Gentile control for three and one half years, probably the last half of the seven year Tribulation period, where the period of the Great Tribulation is seen as the Seventieth Week, or seven year period, in God's postexilic program for Israel.

Revelation 11:1 "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."

“Unto a rod”: This was a hollow, bamboo-like cane plant that grew in the Jordan Valley. Because of its light weight and rigidity, it was commonly used as a measuring rod (compare Ezek. 40:3, 5). Measuring the temple signified God's ownership of it (compare 21:15; Zech. 2:1-5).

This angel is telling John to take a measurement of the temple and the people. We read (in Ezekiel 40:5), that this reed is nine feet long (six cubits). This seems to be a similar message in Ezekiel to the one here in Revelation.

“The temple of God”: Refers to the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, not the entire temple complex (compare verse 2). A rebuilt temple will exist during the time of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4).

This statement about the "temple ... and them that worship therein." is speaking of the true believers who collectively make up the temple (body of Christ).

“Altar”: The reference to worshipers suggests this is the bronze altar in the courtyard, not the incense altar in the Holy Place, since only the priests were permitted inside the Holy Place (compare Luke 1:8-10).

Revelation 11:2 "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."

“Court which is without”: The court of the Gentiles, separated from the inner court in the Herodian temple by a low wall. Gentiles were forbidden to enter the inner court on penalty of death. That John is instructed not to measure the outer court symbolizes God’s rejection of the unbelieving Gentiles who have oppressed His covenant people.

The outer court for the Gentiles means just this, the believer who is a Christian in name only, not in deed. This outer court is not the place for believers to be. The terrible thing in all of this is that among the outer court (the unsaved) are many nominal Christians, who are believing that they will be saved. The faithless portion of the church that we read about in (2 Timothy):

2 Tim. 3:5 "has a form of godliness but denies the power".

The terrible thing in all of this is that among the outer court (the unsaved), are many nominal Christians, who believe that they will be saved. This seems to be just asked of John to make him aware of the multitude of true believers who will be in the very presence of God. It is also, to remind him of those so-called Christians that have brought compromise and pleasing of the flesh into God's church.

“The holy city shall they tread under foot”: Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome all oppressed Jerusalem in ancient times (compare 2 Kings 25:8-10; Psalm 79:1; Isa. 63:18; Lam. 1:10). This verses refers to the future devastation destruction and oppression of Jerusalem by the forces of the Antichrist.

“Forty and two months”: The three and a half period covers the second half of the Tribulation and coincides with the visibly evil career of the Antichrist (verse 3; 12:6; 13:5). During this same time, the Jews will be sheltered by God in the wilderness (12:6, 14).

I would like to say again here that the Bible (and especially Revelation), must be understood by its signs and symbols through the spirit, and cannot be understood literally. As any dream or vision has to be interpreted, so does Revelation.

The outer court represents the control of Jerusalem and Israel by Gentiles during the first half of the Tribulation period. In other words, it is too worldly for God. He is saying (throw them out), they are not part of the elect. They are not part of the body of Christ. The inner court makes up the body of believers.

We see here in this forty-two months that the holy city is trodden down; that the believers in Jesus "holy city" will go through 3-1/2 years of trials and tribulations. All through Revelation, the "holy city" is symbolic of the body of believers.

The holy city is the earthly Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24; Zech. 13:8-9; 14:2). The forty and two months show that Jerusalem will be under Gentile control for three-and-a-half years, probably the first half of the seven-year Tribulation period (Dan. 9:24-27), where the period of the Tribulation is seen as the Seventieth Week, or seven year period in God's postexilic program for Israel.

Verses 3-6: Next "A Powerful Proclamation to the World". Christ is certainly not saying that this gospel must be preached to every person. Millions have already died without hearing it. Rather it must be proclaimed "in all the world for a witness to all nations." That phrase sounds as though the day is coming when not only individuals but all the nations of the world will be powerfully confronted by the gospel and the consequences of rejecting it. John seems to have been shown such a time in his vision in (Rev. 11:3-6).

Verses 3-4: God's two witnesses" will "prophesy" or preach in Israel for 1260 "days" (three and a half years), based on prophetic years of (360 days each). Again, this will probably occur during the first half of the Tribulation period, while invading Gentile forces are in control of Jerusalem. The "sackcloth" symbolizes mourning, confessing and repentance. The "witnesses" will proclaim a message of judgment and the need for repentance. They bear similarities to John the Baptist, and will be the ultimate fulfillment of the promised return of Elijah (compare Mal. 4:5-6: John 1:21). They are also identified as "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks". These symbols relate to (Zechariah 4:2-6), where Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest are pictured as two olive trees furnishing oil for a lampstand (Israel). They provided help and power for Israel in a time of need. These two witnesses will be for Israel in the future what Zerubbabel and Joshua were in the past: the channels of God's power and message to Israel during the Tribulation period.

Revelation 11:3 "And I will give [power] unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."

Two of the most colorful characters in all biblical prophecy may be the supernatural prophets that burst on the scene during the first half of the Tribulation. According to (chapter 11 of Revelation), these two dress in sackcloth, prophesy, dispense astonishing miracles and witness to the grace of God in the vilest culture known to mankind.

Though some believe Elijah and Enoch are the two witnesses, most Bible scholars consider them to be Moses and Elijah. Proponents of the Moses and Elijah argument point out these two Old Testament characters were the most influential Hebrew men of their respective times. Moses introduced God's written Law to Israel, and Elijah was the first of the writing prophets and even started the school for the prophets. In fact, whenever the Jews said "Moses and Elijah", they usually meant "the law and the prophets".

Together with the 144,000 witnesses, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will have awesome power and impact in producing the enormous soul harvest of the first 42 months of the Tribulation described (in Revelation chapter 7). They will provide the millions of Jews in the Holy Land a spiritual bridge to the Christian gospel. God will demonstrate His mighty power and existence through these two prophets over whom the Antichrist will have no power until the God-appointed time. Before that designated time, the two witnesses will be untouchable, and anyone who threatens them will be killed (Rev. 11:5).

These two witnesses of Revelation 11 will have awesome power and impact, together with the 144,000 witnesses, in producing the enormous soul harvest. They will provide the millions of Jews in the Holy Land a theological and spiritual bridge to the Christian gospel. Many of the souls harvested at that time will be the sons and daughters of Abraham.

“A thousand two hundred and threescore days”: Forty-two months or 3-1/2 years (compare 12:6; 13:5; see note on verse 2).

“Sackcloth”: Coarse, rough cloth made from goat or camel hair. Wearing garments made from it expressed penitence, humility, and mourning (compare Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Kings 6:30; 19:1; Esther 4:1; Isa. 22:12; Jer. 6:26; Matt. 11:21). The witnesses are mourning because of the wretched wickedness of the world, God’s judgment on it, and the desecration of the temple and the holy city by the Antichrist.

Revelation 11:4 "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth."

This imagery is drawn from Zech. chapters 3 and 4 (see notes there). Zechariah’s vision had both a near fulfillment (the rebuilding of the temple by Joshua and Zerubbabel), and a far future fulfillment (the two witnesses, whose ministry points toward Israel’s final restoration in the Millennium).

“Two olive trees, and the two candlesticks”: Olive oil was commonly used in lamps; together the olive trees and lampstands symbolize the light of spiritual revival. The two witnesses’ preaching will spark a revival, just as Joshua’s and Zerubbabel’s did in Israel after the Babylonian captivity.

What a dynamic and compelling message from God these two amazing witnesses will bring to "all nations!" No one can write them off as crazies, for they display incredible supernatural powers and defy the Antichrist and his underlings to stop them. No doubt they will be seen daily on international television in every corner of the earth as they warn mankind of God's coming judgment.

Verses 5-6: They will perform miracles similar to those performed by Moses (compare Exodus 7:14-20; 8:12), and Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:10-12; Luke 4:25; James 5:17). They are protected from harm for three and a half years. Their miraculous powers are apparently for the purpose of authenticating their divine message (as in the case of Jesus and His apostles). Their message will be twofold:

- (1) Jesus is the Lamb of God (Savior); and
- (2) Jesus is the King (Ruler).

The miracles show that the King is coming again to set up His kingdom, and therefore Israel must repent.

Revelation 11:5 "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed."

“Fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth”: Probably this refers to literal fire. These two will be invincible during their ministry, protected by supernatural power. The false prophet will counterfeit this sign (13:3).

The world police and even the military will be powerless to silence them. Anyone who attempts to stop them from preaching is instantly destroyed. Even Antichrist's satanic powers are no match for these two fearless and God empowered preachers of truth. There can be no doubt that these two witnesses will have the attention of the entire world! Their message will be a declaration to all the nations on this earth to repent and to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the world's rightful ruler.

Revelation 11:6 "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will".

“Power to shut heaven”: Miracles have often authenticated God’s messengers. Here, bringing a 3-1/2 year drought (as did Elijah before them), will add immeasurable torment to those experiencing the worldwide disasters of the Tribulation, and exacerbate their hatred of the two witnesses.

“Power over waters to turn them to blood”: The earth’s water, already devastated by the effects of the second and third trumpets, will become undrinkable, adding immensely to the suffering caused by the drought.

Who Are They? Some try to identify one of the witnesses with Enoch (because he never died; Gen. 5:24), and the other with either Elijah (who also never died; 2 Kings 2:11-12), or Moses. For three reasons Tim LaHaye is inclined to think they are Moses and Elijah.

- (1) Moses and Elijah are the two most influential men in the history of the Jews. Moses introduced God's written law to Israel and wrote the first five books of the Old Testament. Elijah was the first of the writing prophets and started the school of the prophets. Whenever the Jews said, "Moses and Elijah," they usually meant "the law and the prophets."
- (2) Moses and Elijah accompanied Jesus and the 3 disciples when He was "transfigured before them", on the mount and where He discussed His impending sacrifice on the cross (Matt. chapter 17).
- (3) The 2 witnesses are said to reproduce the very miracles that Moses and Elijah performed while on this earth. John said of them, "And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire" (Rev. 11:5-6).

Elijah is famous for calling down fire from heaven. The most famous instance occurs (in 1 Kings 18), in the account of the contest between the prophets of Baal and Elijah. The Lord sent fire on Elijah's altar on Mt. Carmel in response to his simple prayer:

1 Kings 18:36-38 "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your Word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."

Elijah is connected to divinely caused drought as well as to judgments of fire. In fact, the very first time he is mentioned in the Scriptures he is heard saying to wicked King Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (1 Kings 17:1). And there wasn't; God honored the prophet's word.

Moses, of course, is intimately connected with the ten plagues that struck Egypt just before the Exodus (Exodus chapters 7-12). In the very first plague God turned the waters of Egypt into blood, including the Nile, all streams, rivers, ponds, pools, and even the water in buckets of wood and stone. The water turned to blood, killed the land's fish and caused the water to stink, and conditions did not return to normal for a week.

How fitting that Moses and Elijah would return to Jerusalem to commence these last 7 years of the Tribulation to "witness, testify and prophesy."

The Bible says in John chapter 14, that true believers in Christ can do even greater miracles than Jesus did when He was on the earth, when we do it through His power and in His name.

John 14:12 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

Verses 7-10: The "beast" from the "bottomless pit" is apparently the same as the "beast" from the sea (in 13:1), the Antichrist or false messiah. His place of origin shows his demonic character and the control of Satan. At the end of the three and a half years of preaching, the witnesses will finally be killed by the beast in the "great city", identified as the place "where also our Lord was crucified". This must be a reference to Jerusalem, which at this time is under Antichrist's control. As such it is called "Sodom", referring to uncleanness and immorality, and "Egypt", depicting oppression and bondage. Not allowing their "dead bodies" to be buried is the ultimate indignity. The unbelievers of the "earth", having submitted to the authority of the Beast, will "rejoice", because they hate the plagues and the message of the "two prophets" (compare 1 Kings 18:17; John 16:20).

Revelation 11:7 "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."

"The beast": The first of 36 references to this person in Revelation, who is none other than the Antichrist (see chapter 13). That he will ascend out of the bottomless pit indicates that his power is satanic.

The beast that comes up from the Abyss refers to the beast described (in Rev. 13:1-7), and is an expression used here for the first time. The fact that he will come up out of the Abyss is a reference to the death and resurrection of the Antichrist. However, let me interject something here. Satan indwelt two people in the bible. Do you know who they were? If you said Judas and the Antichrist you are correct.

“Kill them”: With the ministry of the two witnesses completed, God will withdraw the two witnesses’ supernatural protection. The beast will then be able to accomplish what many had died trying to do.

The beast or Antichrist, the man of sin, will hate the two witnesses, make war against them, and kill them. However, note that he will have no power over them until "they have finished their testimony." In other words, they will be "immortal until their work is done", which can be said of all God's servants who walk in obedience to His will.

The completely degenerate and inhuman characteristics of people living during the Tribulation period is seen (in Rev. 11:8), which informs us that the bodies of the two witnesses will be left open in the streets of Jerusalem.

The Holy City will be so degenerate spiritually that she will be called Sodom and Egypt, Sodom being a symbol of immorality and Egypt a symbol of materialism. The lives of the people going back to occupy the Holy Land today are anything but Holy. They seldom even attend synagogues on the Sabbath.

Revelation 11:8 "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."

“Bodies shall lie in the street”: Refusing to bury one’s enemies was a way to dishonor and show contempt for them (compare Acts 14:19). The Old Testament expressly forbids this practice (Deut. 21:22-23).

“The great city”: Identifying Jerusalem as a city like Sodom and Egypt stresses the city’s wickedness. Its Jewish population will apparently be the focus of the witnesses’ ministry, leading to the conversions (of verse 13).

Revelation 11:9 "And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves."

“Three days and a half”: The entire world will watch (undoubtedly on the latest form of visual media), and glorify the Antichrist as the bodies of the dead prophets who have been killed begin to decay.

These bodies lying in the street shows great scorn and contempt, even rejection.

The most supernatural event of those times will be televised instantly around the world, "to the people, tribes, tongues, and nations." Among other things, this will be a loving gesture by God Almighty, not only to resurrect and take to heaven His two prophets, but also to make known His existence and power around the world. We have no doubt that millions of souls to whom the 144,000 Jewish witnesses will be speaking and whom the Holy Spirit will be convicting will see this demonstration of the divine and respond to the Savior.

And then the unsaved people of the world that hate the witnesses so much will comment an incredibly evil deed. They refuse them a decent burial, leaving their dead bodies to decay in the streets of Jerusalem. They even make a Christmas like celebration out of their murders by sending and receiving gifts "in honor" of the occasion. Then an even more incredible thing happens. John prophesies that "those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three and a half days" (Rev. 11:9). How could the whole world see their dead bodies? Not many years ago, it was impossible to fulfill that prophecy, but today it could happen at any moment. We are the first generation ever to have that televising capability through Satellite transmission technology!

Revelation Chapter 11 Questions

1. What was the reed like unto?
2. What was John told to do?
3. How long is this reed?
4. What is the terrible thing about the outer court?
5. Who are the temple?
6. Who is the Holy City?
7. How long shall they face great tribulation?
8. Who will He give power to?
9. How long will they prophesy?
10. What or who are the two witnesses?
11. What will the witnesses be wearing?
12. Why?
13. What proceedeth out of their mouth?
14. What do these have power to do in the days of their prophecy?

15. Why do many believe the two are Moses and Elijah?
16. What Scripture in Jesus' words promises that we can do even greater works?
17. Sodom and Egypt mean what?
18. What two things do the bodies in the street indicate?
19. How long will they see the dead bodies?
20. What is your opinion of the lesson here?
21. Do you believe in the 7 year tribulation that Christians will be raptured before the 7 years, in the middle of the 7 years, or at the end of the 7 years?
22. Why?