

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 9TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 11 records a prophecy of "two witnesses" in the end times and their ministry and the sounding of the 7th Trumpet.

MEASURING THE TEMPLE (11:1-2)

During this part of his vision, John's location is the same but the scene has shifted.

- John was given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple, its altar, and to count its worshippers.

THERE ARE TWO VIEWS ON WHAT THIS "TEMPLE" IS

1. Solomon's temple that will be reconstructed.
2. Symbolic of the "new" temple, God's people, not yet fully glorified (1 Cor. 6:19)

John's measuring doesn't seem to be an effort to determine physical dimensions.

- Measuring shows ownership, defining the parameters of God's possessions (Zech. 2:1-5).
- The measured temple and numbered worshippers may indicate that the church and its people will be under divine spiritual protection during the end times.

John is not allowed to measure the "outer court" of the temple because it had been "given to the nations" (people who oppose God) to trample the holy city for forty-two months.

- The "outer court" in the temple marked the boundary where Gentiles were forbidden to go.
- Anyone could walk in the outer court, but only a Jew could go into the temple.

Whether this is a literal rebuilt Jerusalem or the symbolic people of God, this prophecy is saying that for a period of time (42 months), there will be intense persecution against the people of God.

- God will spiritually protect His people from His wrath, however He will allow many of them to be "trampled by the nations", becoming martyrs for His sake.

TWO WITNESSES (11:3-6)

John's focus moves from the temple to "two witnesses"

THERE ARE 3 MAIN WAYS TO VIEW THESE 2 WITNESSES OF REV. 11

1. Literally two prophets sent to preach the gospel during the last half of the tribulation.
2. Symbolic of the dual revelation of the OT & NT
3. The Church in part or in whole as being "prophetic" to the earth in the last days.

2 Witnesses always affirm truth

- God chooses 2 at a time to further show validity (Matt. 18:16, 1Tim. 5:19)
- Witness in Greek is "martyr" and is where we get "martyr" from
- We will see soon enough that these two are "witnesses" in the truest form
- This begs the question, are we truly witnesses ready to give our life for truth?

Sackcloth symbolizes humility.

- "Fire from their mouth" can be the power of the Word of God or literal fire.
- "Killed in this way" is the rejection of the Gospel and the "second death," and "hell"
- Or, in a literal approach God will also kill whoever tries to kill them during the 42 months.
- More plagues will be inflicted with extreme draught and polluted water

THE LITERAL APPROACH

- This will be 2 men sent by God, possibly Moses and Elijah sent back for this specific duty.
- They are called "olive branches" and "lampstands", which is a description drawn from Zech. 4:1-14 referring to the Spirit of the Lord in them.
- They come in humility and power and great signs/wonders accompany their bold proclamation of the gospel (vs. 6)

THE FIGURATIVE APPROACH

- In chapters 1-3 only 2 churches had full approval from God, and from this approach, a portion of Christianity will be the "2 witnesses" for a specified 1,260 days (42 months) of intense persecution (this idea is supported by the reference to lampstands in v4).
- Churches boldly proclaiming truth and speaking against sin empowered by God's spirit.

BLOOD ON THE STREET (11:7-10)

Remember the bitter/sweet calling? For 42 months (3 ½ years) these prophets proclaim God's Word, experience signs/wonders, and are supernaturally protected- but in the end they are killed in the streets.

- God is sovereign in all this- He will allow His people to finish what they started.
- We must be reminded that this life is temporary and God is in control the whole time.

What eventually overwhelms them is the "beast" from the abyss.

- This is the 1st of 36 references in Revelation to the "beast", who we will find out is a world ruler called Antichrist who imitates the true Christ and demands to be worshipped.

- The "beast will make war" can mean against that Antichrist will destroy churches and Christians, or kill the 2 literal witnesses.

The beast will succeed for a time- from the figurative approach many Christians worldwide will be killed in Godless cities (figuratively called "Sodom and Egypt")

- Literally, it could be the 2 men being killed in one city, the new Babylon (or Jerusalem?).
- In a sign of contempt, the entire world will watch their dead bodies lie in the street for 3 ½ days (which is very possible in our day and age).

The location this takes place is often debated.

- The city is called the "great city" and stands as an epicenter against God and morality.
- This could be literal (a new Babylon) or figurative (all people that oppose God) for an ideology.
- Some suggest this is Jerusalem ("Where they crucified the Lord") but others say this isn't literal but a metaphorical reference to killing Jesus spiritually.

People around the world will rejoice and celebrate as the Antichrist finally overcomes the two witnesses and kills these two irritating preachers.

- They'll send gifts to one another and make merry
- There is a hatred of truth, Christians, and God's Word that many in the world possess.

RISING UP (11:11-14)

As the whole earth is partying and giving gifts for "Dead Witnesses Day", their celebration is suddenly halted by a shocking event.

- The "breath of life from God" enters into these two witnesses and suddenly they ascend into heaven as the whole world watches in awe and horror.
- This is reminiscent of the ascension of Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and the burial of Moses (Deut. 34:5-6).

Following this resurrection is a great earthquake where 7,000 people will be killed.

- The rest, "were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven" - either meaning that many turned to God as a result or many simply confessed that God was God as a result.
- If one believes the 2 witnesses are figurative of churches, this ascension/resurrection is referring to something big.

If the figurative approach is taken, this is the rapture of the church.

- Some also believe that this is a special honor just to martyrs, and still another idea is that all martyrs will be given a special resurrection shortly before a rapture in the middle of the tribulation.
- Whatever the case may be, God will be glorified and His prophets will be honored!

THE END? (11:15-19)

The sounding of the 7th trumpet marks a significant milestone in the book of Revelation.

- It will set into motion the final events leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly millennial kingdom.
- This isn't a single event- within the sounding will come the final fury of God's judgments (16:1-21), the final harvest of judgment (16:19), the Lamb's defeat of the kings of the earth (17:12-18), and the battle of Armageddon (19:11-21).

There is an interpretive idea that the 7th event (7th seal, 7th trumpet, 7th bowl) in each series is the same, and it makes great sense here.

- The 7th Bowl in chapter 16 is almost identical to the 7th Trumpet (similar to the 7th Seal).
- Moving forward, we can view chapters 12-18 as a flashback- if one reads chapters 12-18 simultaneously with Rev. 11:1-14, the storyline seems much clearer.

John's vantage point returns to heaven as he now will see the plan for all creation come to fulfillment on earth.

- The 1st line of the song of the elders shows a change of ownership- since the fall of man, earth has "belonged" to Satan, but now that is coming to an end.
- The second line shows God's tenure as ruler will be permanent.

The Elders fall on their faces as their posture changes to one of complete awe that the time has finally come.

- The time for judging has begun as the saints of God will be rewarded and evil will be repaid destroyed.
- Picture the scene- John knows the end of things has come, and all of heaven is worshipping in a poetic, glorious musical overture.

As the music of the elders' song swells to a crescendo, John sees the Holy of Holies open in heaven and the Ark of the Covenant.

- Nothing was more sacred to Israel than the Ark- and the Ark had been lost.
- As he sees what no-one has seen for 600 years, lightning, thunder, rumblings, earthquakes, and hail begin.