

Revelation 11 – The Two Witnesses

I. The Measuring of the Temple (1-2)

A. John is Commanded to Measure the Sanctuary (1)

1. Fulfilling the Old Testament Prophets

- a. In Zech. 2:1-5, the measuring of the city of Jerusalem is pronounced to show God's promise of protection and presence there
- b. In Ezekiel 40-48, the measuring of the Temple promises God's presence will be re-established forever there

2. The Spiritual Reality of the Vision

a. The Picture is of the Inner Sanctuary (Ναός)

- i. In the next verse, the outer court will be excluded
- ii. This is where the Holy Place, the Altar, and the Ark of the Covenant were
- iii. Only the Priests had access to minister within

b. The Picture Symbolizes the Preservation of True Worship

- i. Every other use of the word Ναός in the book of Revelation refers to the present heavenly Temple
 - The earthly Temple was just a copy of the heavenly reality. See Heb. 8:5; 9:24
 - The earthly Temple in the OT was the link between heaven and earth, where God's presence dwelled and worship took place
- ii. We know it is symbolic because John is told to measure the worshippers there as well
- iii. The True Temple is Preserved and Protected
 - In John 2:19-22, Jesus says His body is the true temple – and this is why there is no temple seen in the new Jerusalem in Rev. 21:22
 - In 1 Co. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Co. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22, we are shown that the church, the body of Christ, the people of God are the Temple of God (Jew and Gentile)

B. John is Told to Cast Out the Outer Court (2)

1. The Outer Court will Be Given to the Gentiles

- a. John is told to “cast out” (ἐκβαλε) the outer court
 - i. Most English translations say “leave out” as if John is called to ignore it
 - ii. The idea is that the outer court is to be rejected
- b. The picture is of the outer court of the Gentiles. Only the covenant people of God were allowed passed this point

2. The Gentiles will trample the city for 42 months
 - a. Notice the Language shift – The outer court is given to the Gentiles and they will trample the “holy city”
 - i. In the explanation, John himself equates the “outer court” with the holy city itself
 - This shows that the protection of the true Temple is not the protection of the physical Temple
 - It is not just the court that will be trampled, the whole city, including the Temple will be destroyed
 - Jesus uses the same language to describe the destruction of Jerusalem – Luke 21:23 – “Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”
 - Also notice that Jesus culminates this section in Luke with Luke 21:32 saying, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.”
 - ii. This shows the mixture of the Physical and Spiritual symbols
 - The true Temple protected is not the physical sanctuary, but the true worship of God – The people in Christ may worry that the destruction of Jerusalem, the mother of the church signals their destruction as well. This is not the case
 - The externalities of the Judaic religion will be trampled and destroyed by the Gentile (Romans)
 - b. Why 42 Months?
 - i. This is Referring to Daniel’s Prophecy
 - 42 months is exactly 3 ½ years
 - This corresponds with Daniels “time, times, and half a time” in Daniel 12:7 - And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.

- Daniel's prophecy is specific about an attack on the temple and its fulfillment is generally seen in Antiochus IV Epiphanes profaning of the temple which led to the Maccabean revolt
 - But Jesus applies this prophecy to a coming destruction of Jerusalem in Matt. 24:15-16 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."
 - Luke, writing of the same reference explains the Abomination of Desolation to his Gentile readers – Luke 21:20-21 – "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
 - We will also see this period of time "time, times, and half a time" as John sees the protection of true Israel for this period of time
- ii. There may be a correlation in the Jewish War
- In the Fall of 66 A.D. the Jews in Jerusalem revolted against Gessius Florus the procurator of Jerusalem
 - Then the Governor of the Syrian province Cestius Gallus attacks the city and withdraws for some unknown reason
 - The Jews give chase and capture some of the Roman supplies, inspiring them that God would fight for them
 - In the Spring of 67 A.D. Nero commissions Vespasian to mount a full scale war against Judea and Jerusalem
 - By August / September of 70 A.D, the city and the temple were utterly destroyed – exactly 42 months after Nero commissioned the war against Judea.

II. The Two Witnesses (3-13)

A. The Necessity of Two Witnesses

1. Remember we are seeing a prophecy of covenant judgment
 - a. We have a throne, and angel swearing an oath of testimony, we have witnesses (the word martyr means witness)
 - b. To establish any legal matter, two or three witnesses are required to give testimony
 - i. See Numbers 35:30
 - ii. See Deuteronomy 17:6
 2. These Witnesses are giving legal testimony in God's lawsuit against His covenant people
- B. The Debate Over the Two Witnesses
1. Four Basic Views of the Witnesses
 - a. They are literal individuals
 - i. The futurists and some preterists take this view
 - ii. The futurist see these as supernatural end time witnesses (perhaps Enoch and Elijah returned)
 - iii. Some preterists see them as individuals pronouncing judgment during the Jewish siege of Jerusalem – others see them as Peter and Paul
 - b. They symbolically represent the ministry of the church
 - i. The Idealists see these witnesses as the church's proclamation of the gospel throughout the church age
 - ii. Some see them as representing the ministry of the church during the end time events
 - c. They symbolically represent the Old Testament witness to the Covenant (pronouncing the covenant judgments to the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem)
 - d. They symbolically represent the political and religious restraints among the people in the city that are cast off during the siege of Jerusalem
 2. The Witnesses must be understood based upon the Old Testament symbols which John uses to describe them
- C. The Identity of the Two Witnesses (3-6) (A highly debated topic)
1. Their Authority (3)
 - a. They are given authority to prophesy – which means to speak the words of God
 - b. They will prophecy for 1260 days –
 - i. Based on the 30 day lunar calendar used in the first century, 1260 days equals 42 months
 - ii. This is the same period of time the holy city will be trampled by the Gentiles
 - c. They will be clothed in sackcloth
 - i. This is the traditional clothing representing mourning and repentance

- See Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 1 Ki. 21:27; 1 Chr. 21:16; Neh 9:1; Jer. 4:8

- ii. They prophesy the word of God in mourning for the judgments they are pronouncing

2. Their Characteristics (4)

- a. They are the two olive trees and two lampstands
 - i. This is a reference to Zechariah 4:3, 11, 14
 - ii. In Zechariah's vision, he saw the seven bowled lampstand and two olive trees beside it – He asks the angel what these two olive trees are
 - iii. He is told in v. 14 – “Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.”
- b. Zechariah 4 tells us that these two anointed ones are Zerubbabel and Joshua
 - i. Zerubbabel led the people back to Jerusalem after the exile and oversaw the rebuilding of the city
 - ii. Joshua was the high priest who spiritually led the people as they rebuilt the city after the exile
- c. The point of Zechariah's vision is to assure the people that the Temple of God will be rebuilt
 - i. Here the two witnesses, the anointed ones are seen as those overseeing the re-establishing the true temple as they prophesy the covenant judgments
 - ii. The purpose statement of Zechariah's vision is in Zechariah 4:6 – “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts” – this is how the task will be accomplished

3. Their Powers (5-6)

- a. Fire Pours from their Mouths and Consumes Enemies (5)
 - i. This is an allusion to Jeremiah 5:14 -Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, “Because you have spoken this word, Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire And this people wood, and it will consume them.
 - ii. Possibly an allusion from Jeremiah 23:28-29 – “The prophet who has a dream may relate *his* dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have *in common* with grain?” declares the Lord. “Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?

- iii. Notice in Revelation 11:3, 6 – the main activity of the witnesses is to prophesy. We will see that they are speaking forth the judgment of God (and His command to repent) – we have extensive evidence in Josephus that the city, the Temple, and various parts of the land were encompassed by fire (which was the judgment of God as the Romans burned everything)
 - b. The Power to Call A Drought (6a)
 - i. This is an allusion to Elijah's activity in 1 Kings 17:1 – Elijah commanded the rain to stop for 3 ½ years – the same amount of time as the two witnesses' prophesying
 - See also Luke 4:25; James 5:17
 - ii. Shutting up the rains was also a covenant curse promised in Deut. 11:16-17 if the people did not keep the covenant.
 - c. The Power to Turn Water to Blood and call forth plagues (6b)
 - i. This is a clear allusion to Moses' activity in Exodus – see Ex. 7:17
- 4. The Evidence Considered
 - a. They witnesses prophesy as legal witnesses
 - b. They are the anointed ones who operate by the Spirit
 - c. Their power is likened to Moses and Elijah, who are often Old Testament symbols of the Law and the Prophets
 - i. See Luke 9:31 and Mark 9:4-7
 - ii. Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus at the mount of transfiguration showing the testimony of the Law and the Prophets to Jesus
 - iii. See also Luke 16:29 – Moses and the Prophets (meaning the Scriptures) testify to the reality of God's covenant stipulations
 - d. These two witness are the testimony of the Old Covenant (Law and the Prophets) who testify to the coming Messiah Jesus, and pronounce covenant judgments upon those who reject Him
 - i. Notice that Jesus Himself says that the Old Testament Scriptures testify of Him
 - ii. See John 5:39; Deut. 18:15 (Moses foretells Jesus)
 - iii. Luke 24:27 - Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

- iv. The Sacrifices, the Temple, the Altar, the Tabernacle, the High Priest, the ceremonial law all pointed forward to Jesus
 - e. Although it is certain that the Law and the Prophets are embodied in the witnesses, it is possible that they are two literal individuals or groups testifying in the city during the Roman seige
- D. The Triumph of the Two Witnesses (7-13)
 - 1. The Supposed Defeat of The Two Witnesses (7-10)
 - a. The Death of the Two (7-8)
 - i. The Two Witnesses are Killed (7)
 - Notice that nothing can harm the witnesses until their testimony is complete
 - The Beast from the Abyss – who is Apollyon – remember the demons came from the pit and infested the people causing them to act insanely
 - They covenant testimony of the Law and the prophets (their pointing to Christ and their pronouncement of judgment) was disregarded and laid waste by the people
 - Their testimony was attacked and denied (possibly those who pronounced it were attacked as well)
 - ii. Their Bodies Lie Exposed in Jerusalem (8)
 - Notice that their bodies lie in the city of Jerusalem –
 - Notice that “body” is singular here and in the first part of v. 9 – in v.9 it will switch to plural
 - This shows a singular testimony as well as a figurative understanding of the witnesses
 - The testimony of the Law and Prophets is disgraced and humiliated in the streets of Jerusalem which is now characterized as Egypt and Sodom
 - Jerusalem is called Sodom in Isa. 1:10 and Ezekiel 16:48-50
 - Israel is compared to Egypt in Ezekiel 23:8
 - Jerusalem has now become the object of God’s judgment
 - The witnesses sent to testify in the covenant lawsuit are killed by the accused

- This is nothing new – Matt. 23:37 - Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!
- See also Stephen's speech in Acts 7:51-52
You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. 52 "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

b. The Humiliation of the Two (9-10)

i. The Two Witnesses are Refused Burial (9)

- People from many Nations looked on
 - Notice that it says people FROM tribes, nations and tongues – these are all those who came into Jerusalem for the Passover festival from the diaspora and were trapped as Rome laid siege to the city (see F. F. Bruce's *Israel and the Nation*, p. 225)
 - We see the same thing in Acts 2:9-11
 - However there may be a greater truth here, the world has received the prophetic testimony as the gospel has gone forth for forty years
- The Testimony of God is forsaken and shamed – it looks like it has been defeated
 - To remain unburied is to be under a curse – see Ps. 79:1-5; 1 Kings 13:20-22; Jer. 8:1-2, 14:16, 16:3-4
 - The desire to be buried in the promised land was a coveted honor that many of the patriarchs longed for

ii. Their Death Brings Joy to those who Dwell on the Land (10)

- Those who dwell on the land is often used describing Israel – Hos. 4:1; Joel 1:2, 14, 2:1; Jer. 6:12, 10:18

- Those who dwell on the land (promised land) rejoiced because they believed they had freed themselves from the yoke of God's law and covenant stipulations
- They rejected the idea that God's judgment was coming upon them
- They were tormented by the truth of the gospel which pronounces both salvation and judgment on those who reject it

2. The Vindication of the Two Witnesses (11-13)

a. The Two Are Resurrected After 3 ½ Days (11)

i. God will not allow his testimony to perish so easily

- This is similar to Ezekiel 37:1-14 and the resurrection of the dry bones
- There is also a parallel with Jesus resurrection after 3 days
- Jesus fulfilled the testimony of the OT and He has been vindicated by the Father

ii. The Testimony of God is vindicated as they prophets are proved right and judgment indeed falls upon the land

- Here Christianity itself (which is the testimony and fulfillment of the Old Covenant) looks like it is being proven false and the mother city Jerusalem is being judged
- But Christianity is vindicated in the resurrection and ascension

b. The Two Ascend Into Heaven (12)

i. Now the Testimony of the truth is taken from the land

ii. The witnesses calling for repentance are removed and all that remains is judgment

E. The Revelation of Judgment (13)

1. An Earthquake Destroys Part of the City

- a. Judgment is actually beginning to rain down upon the city
- b. The earthquake reminds us of Jesus' death
- c. Josephus records a massive earthquake as Gallus attacks and withdraws from the city
- d. Some see the 7000 dead as a reversal of the 7000 who did not bow the knee and were faithful to God in Elijah's day

2. The Survivors Recognize God's Sovereignty

- a. This is not a reference to the people's repentance and faith
- b. "Give glory to God" does not always indicated true repentance but a simple acknowledgement of God's sovereignty and power (see. Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5)
 - i. They were terrified – not repentant
- c. The phrase "God in Heaven" in the OT is always used in reference to God's sovereignty over events on earth

III. The Revelation of the Kingdom of Christ (14-19)

A. The Proclamation of the Kingdom (14-18)

1. The Heavenly Voices Proclaim the Kingdom (14-15)

- a. The Seventh Trumpet Sounds (14-15a)
 - i. This is not the final trumpet in 1 Co. 15:52
 - ii. This doesn't signal the end of history but the revelation of God's covenant judgment
- b. The World Has Become God's Kingdom (15b)
 - i. A new nation of God is revealed – the whole world here is a reference to Jew and Gentile (remember the mystery of God from chapter 10)
 - Now the kingdom of God is not just relegated to Israel
 - Now the kingdom is the world
 - The destruction of Jerusalem and the falling of covenant judgment marked the full and final separation of Judaism and Christianity
 - The whole Old Covenant system, centered around the temple and the sacrifices was destroyed, signaling the fulfillment of the new covenant
 - ii. Jesus spoke of this in Matt. 21:43 - "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.

2. The 24 Elders Proclaim the Kingdom (16-18)

- a. The Elders Worship God, Giving Thanks (16)
- b. The Elders Give Thanks for Christ's Kingdom (17)
 - i. Notice that the phrase "who is to come" is no longer present. Jesus has come in judgment upon the covenant people
 - ii. He came, was crucified, resurrected, and ascended but he was rejected by the covenant people – now he has been vindicated and is judging those who murdered him
 - iii. He has begun to reign over all men forever separating the old from the new

- c. The Elders Give Thanks For His Wrath (18a)
 - i. The nations rage against the old covenant people and the elders are thankful for it
 - ii. Judgment has finally come
 - iii. The dead to be judged is not the final judgment but the vindication of those killed for the name of Christ. At long last, the prayers of the martyrs we saw in chapter 6 are answered
- d. The Elders Give Thanks For The Vindication of His People (18b)
 - i. The people who have trusted Christ and believed the testimony are vindicated in their trust
- e. The Elders Give Thanks For Destroying the Destroyers (18c)
 - i. Those who have corrupted the land will also be destroyed
 - ii. This could refer to the Romans who definitely destroyed the land, or the Jews who corrupted the land in defiance of God's command in the covenant stipulations

B. The Opening of The True Temple (19)

1. The True Temple is now opened to those in Christ.
2. The Ark, which symbolizes God's presence is there
 - a. The presence of God is no longer in Jerusalem
 - b. Jews held out hope that the ark would return to the temple – it was taken when Babylon destroyed the city
3. The phenomena associated with the presence of God is now associated with the heavenly temple
 - a. Heb. 12:26-29 - And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This *expression*, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;
 - b. Heb. 9:24 - For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
4. We are seeing the fulfillment of the gospel and the true kingdom of God as the remnants of the old covenant are wiped away in judgment