

Witnesses, Warfare and Worshipers: Part 1

Revelation 11:1-13

STEVE AND THERESA MANCHESTER

We serve at a [Tenwek Hospital](#) satellite clinic in the village of Kaboson, [Kenya](#), improving the health of the community through quality primary care. We remain connected to Tenwek through ministry to orphans, hospice, and the Family

1:00



BIBLE PASSAGE

[Rev 11:1-19 NKJV] 1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. 2 "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. 3 "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. 6 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. 7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies

will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. 11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. 13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

APPLICATION

Some Bible scholars and commentators note Revelation 11 as one of the most difficult passages in the book to understand and interpret.

- I attest that it is difficult to summarize the amount of information contained in this rapid-fire passage.
- In these several verses we see:
 - A new temple on earth
 - Two witnesses
 - A beast from the Abyss
 - A great earthquake in Jerusalem
 - The seventh trumpet
 - Declaration of Christ's kingdom and judgment
 - Worship in heaven
 - The temple in Heaven opened
- All of these have significant meanings and possible interpretations as well as their place within the timeline of what are most likely the final 3 1/2 years of this world's history.

There are many ways people attempt to interpret this chapter. I believe the safest is to take literal what is obvious literal.

- In other words, it's safer to believe there is an actual temple with actual measurements, a literal earthquake that kills 7000 people, two literal prophets who

have supernatural gifts (as some did in the OT), so on and so forth...

OVERVIEW

If I could sum up Revelation in two short truths, they would be this:

- **The enemy relentlessly wars. Jesus inevitably wins.**

We once again see God's gracious attempt to give humanity the opportunity to bear witness to His power and choose to turn to him. Unlike previous judgments, at the end of the two witnesses, there are some who give honor to God... that doesn't necessarily mean they trust him or choose to worship Him, but at least they finally acknowledge Him... **but it doesn't come without a fight from a world bent on waring against the truth of God.**

We aren't necessarily going to go verse by verse instead, we'll bring out the big picture in this chapter.

1 The Temples

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Rev 11:1-19 NKJV] 1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. 2 "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

CONTEXT

There are two temples in chapter 11. One is in Jerusalem, and the other in Heaven.

- The temple typically represents God's presence and God's people on earth. Right now, the church is the spiritual temple of God. God's presence dwells in and among His church, and we are His people.
- In ancient times, there were two temples: **Solomon built the first in Jerusalem** to replace the portable tabernacle and establish God's name in Jerusalem, which also signified the dwelling place of God's people. The Babylonians destroyed that temple.
- Joshua and Zerubbabel built **the second temple after the exile, and it was later beautified by Herod the Great**. This was the temple that Jesus would have walked in, and prayed in, and turned over tables in. The Romans ultimately destroyed this temple when Titus swept through Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - Interesting fact, both the first and second temples were destroyed on the same day on the Jewish calendar (10th of Av).
- There will be a **fourth temple that is absolutely massive** that many believe will be established in Jerusalem during the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. This is the temple that Ezekiel saw in His vision in Ezekiel 40-48.

Here, we see that during the tribulation period, there will be a third temple. We don't know much about its dimensions or exact location in Jerusalem other than that it has a court outside of the temple property that is under the control of Gentiles (non-Jews).

John is told to measure the temple, the altar, and not the worshippers. In other instances of "measuring," like Ezekiel measuring the Millennial temple, or the vision of Zechariah when the old city is measured, we see that God is marking His territory. The measured portion is what God is interested in protecting, the unmeasured protection are outside His protection.

- Since the temple's destruction, Mount Moriah has housed a temple to Jupiter, a 4th-century church, and to this day, several Muslim Holy sites, including the **Dome of the Rock** that represents what Muslims claim was Muhammed's ascension on a hoarse into heaven. It will be a shock when the only rider coming back to earth on a horse is Jesus. While in Jerusalem, it is under the official control of the country of Jordan. Israel polices the area, but the Muslims control all religious practices, forbidding Christians to carry bibles or pray or sing from the top of the platform.
- It wouldn't be out of the realm of possibility that sometime before the tribulation starts, or at the very beginning of the Anti-Christ's rule, an agreement is reached that allows the Jewish temple and the Islamic Dome to share a singular property. While the temple grounds and the altar would be considered "Temple territory," the shared court would be controlled by Islamic forces or possibly a European peace-keeping force.

Interesting fact: historically, it has been believed that the Dome of the Rock sits directly over the place where the Holy of Holies was. But recent discoveries and reading of ancient Jewish tradition lead many to believe that the Holy of Holies was actually over another spot. Today, you go to a small Gazebo on the temple mount. The Muslims call it the **Dome of the Spirits**. Underneath this small structure is exposed original bedrock from the temple mount. For the Jews, this is an opportunity. The temple can't be built anywhere; it has to be built in the spot David purchased and designated. There have been talks with the Jewish Knesset (legislature) that they would be willing to share the temple mount if they could build over the Dome of the Spirits, putting the Muslim territory directly in the outer court area.

For those who might say, "Well, there's no temple now, so the end must not be near," recognize that the temple is not a prerequisite for the rapture to happen, and it might not even be built until after the church has been taken from the earth.

- However, let's not ignore the compelling evidence that we are on the cusp of a third temple being built within most of our lifetimes.
- There is a significant third temple movement among politicians and Rabbis that has gained steam in the last decade.
 - Temple elements and utensils are already being prepared.
 - The temple Menorah has been built.
 - Stones are being cut for the temple's foundation.
 - Architectural models are being drawn and built.
 - Last year, in September, five Red Heifer cows were inspected by Rabbis and transferred from Texas to Israel. The Red Heifer sacrifice is essential for there to be a functional priesthood and temple worship. It hasn't been until now that a fully pure red heifer has been bred that meets biblical requirements. An orthodox group has already purchased land on the mount of Olives for this sacrifice to take place.

Former Nazi hunter, Zev Golan, speaking on behalf of the Temple Institute, commented, ***"Our task is to advance the cause of the Temple and to prepare for its establishment, not just talk about it... We believe all of our hopes and all of our attempts... will cause some activity in the heavens, and with God's help, the day will come soon when we will build the Temple."*** He also said, ***"No one can say how, and no one wants to do it by force. But sooner or later, in a week or in a century, it will be done. And we will be ready for it."***

Historian, Israel Eldad, stresses the urgency Jews feel to build a Temple. "From David's liberation of Jerusalem until the construction of the Temple by Solomon, only one generation passes. So it is with us." When asked what will become of the mosque, Eldad replied, "Who knows? Perhaps, an earthquake."

APPLICATION

So Jewish worship will be resumed for at least the first 3 1/2 years before the antichrist, according to Daniel and Paul, stands in the Holiest place of the temple, declaring himself to be God and putting an end to sacrifices.

[2Th 2:4 NKJV] 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

At some point during these happenings, God raises up two powerful figures to testify to God's power and gospel.

2 The Witnesses

BIBLE PASSAGE

3 "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. 6 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.

A. THEIR JOB DESCRIPTION

This dynamic duo will be very "Old Testament" in their ministry of preaching the New Covenant:

- They are designated to prophesy for 3 1/2 years (most likely in the latter half of the tribulation period, but it's uncertain.)
- Like Moses, these two will have the power to call plagues down upon the nations of the earth. Like Elijah, these two have the ability to change weather patterns and cause droughts.
- I found it interesting that these two are like missions special-ops. Right now, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are his diplomats. As James and John found out the hard way, we aren't called to call the fire of God's judgment down on people but rather preach to them reconciliation in Christ and call them to repentance and faith.
- Well, that's in this season of grace, but a season is coming when God's witnesses will no longer withhold the penal consequences of rebellion against God. They will be calling fire down, causing droughts, and bringing forth traumatic plagues. This is God's latch ditch effort to wake up any remaining humanity that might turn from their sin in the final moments before the ultimate judgment.
- I know some people who might like to volunteer for this job! But we need to remember that here and now, this is not God's heart for people. There is a right time for divine judgment, and when that time comes, God will be just. But until that time comes, we are to vessels of his hope. Yes, we are to stand boldly against unrighteousness and the idols of our day, much like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But we are not to hope for anyone's destruction. We are not to wish people to be annihilated from the earth or desire them to spend eternity in hell.

B. THEIR IDENTITY

Who are these witnesses? (This Rambo and Rocky!)

- Well, John does not tell us specifically, but when we read of their ministry and their message, we can make some educated guesses.
- Most people would agree that the two witnesses are most likely two of the following three people: **Moses, Elijah, or Enoch**. The other possibility is that they are not previous prophets but two people God chooses in the last days.

Remember the two characters we saw at the Mount of transfiguration? Moses – the Law, and Elijah – the prophets.

- In 2 Kings chapter 2, Elijah had his own personal rapture. Many believe that because Elijah never officially died that he is going to come back and finish his ministry during this time. Elijah stopped the rain as these two witnesses do.
- The book of Jude tells us that after Moses died, Michael (the archangel) and Satan fought over his body. Why? For two reasons:
 - If Satan could have resurrected the body of Moses, he could have started a whole new level of Idolatry in Israel.
 - Secondly, perhaps Moses' body will be resurrected to be one of these witnesses against the world in these last days.
- Another thought is that the other witness could possibly be Enoch. Enoch ministered as a prophet against the world before the flood. Enoch was the other person in the Bible who did not die. He was translated to heaven. We are told that Enoch walked with God, and he was not because God took him.
- It's interesting because Enoch had a son. His son's name was Methuselah.
- What was so famous about Methuselah? Well, he was the oldest man ever to live. He lived 969 years, but here is what is so significant about this.
- Methuselah means – his death shall bring. Enoch, according to Jude, prophesied about the coming of God's judgment, he names his son "his death shall bring," and then Methuselah has a son named Lamech; Lamech has a son named Noah, and the year Methuselah died, guess what happened? God judges the world with a flood.

On a little side note, check this out!

Take the genealogy from Adam to Noah and take the Hebrew roots and translate them into English:

- ***Adam - Man***
- ***Seth - Appointed***
- ***Enosh - Mortal***
- ***Kenan - Sorrow***
- ***Mahalalel – Blessed God***
- ***Jared – Shall descend (or come down)***
- ***Enoch - Teaching***
- ***Methuselah – His death shall bring***
- ***Lamech – despair or powerful***
- ***Noah – relief***

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Zec 4:11-14 NKJV] 11 Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive trees-- at the right of the lampstand and at its left?" 12 And I further answered and said to him, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?" 13 Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 14 So he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."

APPLICATION

These two witnesses are fueled by the oil of the Holy Spirit.

- All Christian witness is to be fueled by the power of the Spirit. We must be those who bear witness here and now, but we too need the power of His Spirit!

C. THEIR END

7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. 11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

The beast (antichrist or the devil) can finally kill these two witnesses. And when they do, it's a global holiday, the ultimate Anti-Christmas. You could imagine videos and images of

the deaths of these two and their corpses being blasted on every live-stream social media platform and every news network.

The dead bodies of these two witnesses will lie in the same streets through which they carried Jesus' dead body. This city is God's "holy city" - Jerusalem! Yet what strange nicknames for a supposedly holy city. "Sodom" was notorious for immorality and sexual perversion. "Egypt" was the hotbed for idolatry and spiritual perversion... Jerusalem is holy in name only

- People are celebrating the end of these two nuisances that have been wreaking havoc and reigning on their pagan parade.
- The world will gloat to the degree that they don't allow anyone to bury them, but rather desecrate their bodies (leads me to believe that these two witnesses are Jewish). They are mocking God and His people.
- for a moment, the world sees themselves as having triumphed over God, triumphed over Jesus... they have finally accomplished their age-long pursuit of annihilating Christendom from the face of the earth.

The French Philosopher Voltaire, an ardent enemy of Christianity, predicted in 1776, "One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible on earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity-seeker." Within 50 years of his death, the house he used to write in was a storehouse for Bibles.

Well, the world rejoices for 3 1/2 days, then God shows up and proves that in the end, He still wins.

After everyone watches the resurrected witnesses called and drawn up to heaven, ascending from their site, immediately it's followed by a sign of judgment. A great earthquake rocks Jerusalem and kills 7000 people in the affected area.

13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Whether this means the rest of the world finally gave glory to God or just those in Israel, I'm not sure.

- This could be the turning point for Israel as a nation. The Jews might finally recognize at this point the error of their trust in the false messiah, the antichrist. They could finally recognize God's hand in all of this and turn again to the Lord, finally resulting in their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. In the end, Paul tells us in Romans that "all Israel will be saved."

APPLICATION

The seventh trumpet is about to sound following an incredible worship time in heaven. The seventh trumpet will release seven final judgments upon the earth, poured out from bowls in heaven. So certain is the outcome that Christ's kingship and governance over the earth are declared.

This is going to be an exciting sermon next week. But for today, consider a final thought. As you see the world as you know it, rest assured it will not always be this way. Prophecy is God's plan, and God's plan will not be thwarted and deterred. A temple will be built in preparation for the antichrist, religious deception, and, ultimately, the events we read will come to pass as they are written. We should be reminded that our Savior could appear for us at any time, and we ought to consider that now is the time Christ has called and commissioned US to be His witnesses. The world may persecute us, revile us, and perhaps even kill us, but Jesus will resurrect us to eternal life with Him. Let us consider the future and resign ourselves to obedience to Christ and the mission of His kingdom!