

The Two Witnesses – 11:1-14

- *Measuring the Temple 11:1-2*

- *I was given* – John keeps our focus fixed on the fact that he doesn't take anything for himself in these visions, but merely does what he is told, and receives that which he is given.

- *a reed like a measuring rod* – Once again we have a picture right out of Ezekiel (ch.40-48) where the temple was measured with a reed as well. The picture both there and here is essentially the "sizing up" of God's Church...which is the reason that certain parts are excluded...



- *Go and measure the temple of God and the altar* – There is a standard, or rule within the Church of God, and that is his Word. It is with that Word that we measure our own teaching and make sure that we are in alignment. The temple itself and specifically the altar both receive this scrutinizing measurement, indicating that how we worship, and specifically how we use the Sacraments are to be in accord and in line with God's will and Word.

- *and count the worshipers there. (But exclude the outer court; do not measure it)* – There is a difference between what God considers the Church (with a capital "C") and what people see as church (lowercase "c") are two different things. God is concerned with his company of believers, those who are gathered as worshipers. But intermingled with them is an unspecified number of those in the outer court. These are those who are nominally associated with the body of Christ, but have no part in him...essentially they are hypocrites, but since they do not believe in Christ, they are not a part of God's Church and are not to be counted by John.

- *Gentiles* – The reason John uses this particular word to describe the unbelievers in the temple is simultaneously both clear and unclear: Clear, because that was the common perception and association of Jewish believers who attended the temple "Yeah, the Gentiles can come here, but are they REALLY part of our faith and culture?" At the same time it is unclear, since the majority of those who were addressed in these seven letters WERE Gentile believers! Seems a bit offensive to call them out for the exact opposite of what they were...doesn't it?

The bottom line in all this is that although hypocrites and believers may appear to be the same at first glance to us, they are perfectly known by our God [Remember the "*synagogue of Satan*" in 2:9 and 3:9? ...It's back] and he will separate all of us according to that status on the Last Day [Matthew 25:31-46].

- *They will trample the holy city* – Here is further proof that those who were not measured are not actually a part of God's church...they abuse the gifts that God has given to us there and they try to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible...but here their truly "wolfish" qualities are revealed for their true nature [Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:17-18].

- *42 months* – Quick math (12 + 24 + 6) shows that this is a year, two years, and half a year, or a synonymous period of time to the "1260 days" (360 + 720 + 180) and "time, times, and half a time" that we will see several more times in upcoming chapters [11:9, 11; 12:6, 14; 13:15].

The Book of Revelation – Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet (Vision 3 of 7) concluded

- *The Witnesses' Testimony* 11:3-6

- ***I will give power***– The two witnesses come from God. As we saw with the little scroll in the previous chapters, even with the seemingly insurmountable opposition of 200 million, God gives powerful servants who will remain for the same duration as the hosts of hell, and will oppose them in God's name and for his saints.

- ***my two witnesses*** – This is the requirement for a valid and admissible testimony in court

[Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15, Matthew 18:6, 2

Corinthians 13:1]. Essentially God is showing that he is not leaving us "without a case," but will continue to preserve his Church to the end with faithful witnesses.

At the same time, however, two against 200,000,000 are hardly good odds. We are assured that being in the minority is not necessarily a bad thing. Even when the odds seem impossible, we have the assurance that Christ will keep us on the narrow path.

- ***they will prophesy*** – How will these witnesses preserve us in God's truth? ...By continuing to proclaim the Truth of God's Word. As 1) God's prophets of old did, 2) his apostles continued, and 3) pastors and teachers still do today, we hear God's Word from his people for his people. But as we've seen in recent days and years (Mark Driscoll and Tullian Tchividjian, just to name a couple), the fact that someone is serving as God's representative does not give them a "free pass." We must be on constant guard against sin, and as the Bereans [Acts 17:11] return to God's Word to make sure that our message and God's message are in alignment (hence the measuring rod in v.1).

- ***1260 days*** – As was mentioned above, this is the same period of time that we will see is the New Testament era. 3 ½ is half of 7 (the number of God's covenant), so it would make sense that all of these references to 3 ½ are pointing to one half of the time of God's covenant interaction with his people. If the first half of that time was the Old Testament, then it makes perfect sense to understand these as the New Testament era. Further evidence will be seen in subsequent chapters.

- ***clothed in sackcloth*** – Sackcloth was the universal marker for repentance. The imagery began as a symbol for mourners [Genesis 37:34; 2 Samuel 3:31; Esther 4:1; Job 16:15], and after John the Baptist, Jesus applied it especially to those who (should have) mourned for the results of their sins [Matthew 21:11]. These servants of God are clothed in this way because that is the main content of the message that they brought. Just as Jonah to the Ninevites [Jonah 3:1-10] and John the Baptist (camel's hair was coarse like sackcloth) [Matthew 3:1-4] these men come with a message of repentance, of turning from sinful ways and returning to God.

- ***the two olive trees and the two lampstands (that stand before the Lord of the earth)*** – Both of these appear to be references #1 to the Holy Spirit, and #2 to the Old Testament. We saw the lampstands in the introduction of the book, and there they were clarified as being the seven churches to whom this letter was sent [1:20]. The olive trees are definitely a reference to



Zechariah 4. That vision shows that two servants of God were sent with the oil of anointing (specifically there Zerubbabel as the ruler of the people and Joshua as the high priest []). This was olive oil and was used for marking people for a specific purpose [**kings** – 1 Samuel 10:1, 2 Kings 9:6, Psalm 23:5, 45:7; **priests** – Exodus 30:30, Leviticus 8:12; **prophets** – 1 Kings 19:16, Isaiah 61:1-11; **worship materials** – Exodus 25:6, Leviticus 8:30, Numbers 4:16]

- *if anyone tries to harm them* – Opposition to the preaching of the Word is nothing new, and it will also endure for as long as there are faithful preachers. What God is setting up here is a defense for them, that we don't need to change our message or "adjust to the times" because the message does not change (so neither should we). Rather, we stick to the message and leave the protecting in God's hands, which incidentally are more than capable!

- *fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies* – Fire is a symbol of God's consuming wrath, especially of false religious leaders [Leviticus 10:1-2, 2 Kings 1:1-10, Luke 3:7-9, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10] and of the Holy Spirit (who carries out that wrath) [Matthew 3:11, Acts 2 (Pentecost)]. Jeremiah was given this same assurance [Jeremiah 5:14ff, 23:29-32] that the Word the LORD gave him to preach would be a consuming fire for those who refused to listen or repent. In a similar way to how fire both **consumes dross** and *purifies gold* [Job 23:10, Proverbs 17:3, 1 Peter 1:7], the preaching of God's Word is a *fragrance of life for some* and the **smell of death** for others [2 Corinthians 2:14-16].

- *This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die* – The way that this is phrased in the Greek makes it clear that this is the necessary result every time this kind of opposition occurs. It's basically a promise from God that whenever his servants are harmed, he will harm the offending party with his cleansing, consuming fire. As Becker put it: "When God's word condemns a sinner to death, that word is just as effective as the creative word he spoke at the beginning" (Becker, 168).

- *power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying* – Elijah was the first one allowed to perform this miraculous sign (interestingly enough for a period of 3 ½ years...) [1 Kings 17, Luke 4:24-26, James 5:17-18]. Elijah served at a time when the followers of God were at an extreme minority (just like the two witnesses), yet he was able to be of immense comfort to them, because the words he was given to speak controlled the destiny of the entire nation!

- *power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague* – Moses comes up next as the one who had the power of the plagues that struck the land of Egypt (and to which we referred several times with the other trumpet calls). Between these two witnesses, God gave supernatural power that went along with the message from God that they spoke. God backs up his Word and those whom he sends to speak it, so don't be afraid to speak God's Word because his own hand will protect you and guide you.

- *as often as they want* – Unlike Moses and Elijah who were given these miraculous signs to accompany one-time messages, these enduring servants will be given continuing signs and miracles "*as often as they want.*" And if that sounds too good to be true, it probably is...just understand that these miracles are the fruit of the Spirit [listed in Galatians 5:22-23] and you'll have some idea about how often these miraculous signs really occur.



- *The Beast's Temporary*

Triumph 11:7-10

- *when they have finished their testimony* – Christ testified in Matthew 24:14 that this message from God—the Gospel—would be preached to the ends of the earth before the earth would end. So this brief time of victory for Satan will come after that testimony has reached its finish and the time of grace for the world itself will have come to an end.

- *the beast that comes up from the Abyss* – This is a picture specifically of Satan, though some of his more powerful servants (“Christian” heresies, world religions, any anti-Christian movement). For a time it will seem as though Satan has been victorious, much like that brief period from Friday evening to Sunday morning nearly 2000 years ago.

- *will (1) attack them, and (2) overpower them and (3) kill them* – This is the unexpected victory that God allows Satan to have. Finally after all his years of struggling and striving against both God and his servants, he is finally able to overpower the last of them (us). This victory triggers celebration among the rest of the inhabitants who had long since rejected the message the witnesses brought, and so comes the “little season” of Satan’s reign that we will see in chapter 20:3.

- *Their bodies will lie in the street* – No one will bother to bury the ones they saw as their enemies. Rather the sight gives them occasion for further celebration and rejoicing. Later we hear their indignation more completely as they 1) *gaze on their bodies*, 2) *refuse them burial*, 3) *gloat over them*, and if all that were not enough they also 4) *celebrate by sending each other gifts*...treating the death of these servants as a public holiday is just one of many signs of the rightly-earned names this people have earned for their city...

- *of the great city (which is figuratively [a better translation is “spiritually”] called Sodom and Egypt) where also their Lord was crucified* – Sodom and Egypt are chosen for their specific sins, while the “great city...where also their Lord was crucified” points us back to Jerusalem. Even in the birthplace of Christianity the greatest of rejection and depravity will be exemplified in those final days. Not that Jerusalem is an earthly example of morality today, but this would be like Vegas on steroids... “Sin City” in the most literal sense possible!

- *three and a half days* – Once again we have the 3 ½ numbering, but this time in a rather more negative and perhaps less hopeful sense. Again, as with the other occurrences of this (and similar) numbers, this time is temporary...it will end, and it will end soon.

- *men from every (1) people, (2) tribe, (3) language, and (4) nation* – Another set of four to emphasize how this is a worldwide celebration, not a specific enemy of God’s people, but EVERYone else stands in opposition to God’s servants.

- *these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth* – The perception of those who are rebuked is “torture or torment,” though what they were really given was Truth.

The Book of Revelation – Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet (Vision 3 of 7) concluded

- *The Witnesses Return 11:11-12*

- *after three and a half days* – We are so close to the end now, in fact, with the dead being raised, I might be tempted to see this as the very end...that and the seventh trumpet is about to be sounded...

- *a breath of life from God entered them and they stood on their feet* — One of the things that will happen on the Last Day is that the dead will be raised. Paul tells us that what was perishable will be raised imperishable [1 Corinthians

15:42-44] and he also tells us that the dead in Christ will rise first (in other words, those who are still alive and are not in Christ will be able to see them rise) [1 Thessalonians 4:16].

- *terror struck those who saw them* – What had been joy for the 3 ½ days is now flipped on its head and becomes crippling terror and fear. Now I don't know if you've watched any zombie movies recently, but watching someone who has died stand up, it's a pretty disconcerting sight! Now granted...in the zombie movies that's less about them standing up and more about their frightening appearance...but now imagine that instead of a zombie trying to "eat your brains" you NOW have to worry about a vengeful divine authority...aka God...bringing judgment against you because oh yeah, those two witnesses were actually right! That's why they're afraid...

- *they heard a loud voice from heaven* – God himself now bears witness, no longer are his servants needed to bear witness, because their work is done...now comes the end, now the voice of God speaks as he did at the very beginning.

- *Come up here...they went up into heaven in a cloud* – This is the assurance that John wanted to give to those living through the persecutions all around them, seeing the victory dances of the seemingly countless masses of people...this is the victory that has been promised to the faithful, not because of their faithfulness, but because of their (and our) Savior Jesus!



- *The End of the Second Woe 11:13-14*

- *At that very hour* – Time's up. That day and hour that only the Father himself knows has finally come, the second woe has come to an end and now is the seventh trumpet, now is the end of the age.

- *a severe earthquake* – Hebrews 12:26-29 contrasts the impermanence of the earth (and the fact that it CAN be shaken) with the unshakable kingdom of our God. Our world is temporary, but God is preparing a new heaven and new earth (ch. 21-22) that will be so far superior to what we have now that it is "not even worth comparing" [Romans 8:18]

- *a tenth of the city collapsed* – Since the city was a symbol for the earthly church (see above) this tenth part of the city is most probably the hidden hypocrites who live among the ranks of God's believers...their affiliation will not spare them, only belief in Christ does that.



The Book of Revelation – Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet (Vision 3 of 7) concluded

- *Seven thousand people were killed by the earthquake* – In the Greek text, the words say (literally) “seven thousand names of men were killed in the earthquake.” This number is best understood as $7 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$...in other words God’s covenant with people...complete, complete, complete. God’s covenant activity will be completed when the last of his elect is brought into the fold, and then will come the time of separation and judgment.
- *the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven* – Even the magicians of Egypt glorified God when they were no longer able to replicate the signs of the plagues [Exodus 8:19], but this alone is not proof of repentance or belief. Along with Philippians 2:11, when “*every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father*” this shows that even unbelievers will be forced to acknowledge that God is the true God, even if they still reject his saving grace or refuse to admit their need for it.
- *The second woe has passed, the third woe is coming soon* – The moment is here...time for the seventh trumpet, time for the end.

Sounding The Seventh Trumpet – 11:15-19

- *The Seventh Trumpet 11:15-18*
- *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet* – As with the other visions, when we reach the seventh part we are at Judgment Day. This replay focuses a lot more on heaven’s triumphant reaction than the silent reverence at the opening of the seventh seal.
- *there were loud voices in heaven* – Celebration is marked by exuberant voices, shouting, and singing...this is the greatest celebration in history and it is marked by no less than the most jubilant of voices!
- *the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ* – When Christ told Pilate “*my kingdom is not of this world*” [John 18:36] he was proving a point to the governor that he was not coming as a usurper (and not without authority either). But on this day, at this time when Christ returns, no one will be able to deny that the kingdom belongs to him, wholly, entirely, perfectly...(by the way, is anyone else hearing the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah* in their head right now?)
- *he will reign forever and ever* – Christ’s reign began with his defeat of sin, death, and Satan (even though he had been the ruler of the universe from before the universe existed), but now that exaltation is no longer hidden under the cross, which is how we must live. Now the true reign of Jesus is unimpeded and unending...there is no more illusion of false-victory that Satan can hold onto, his defeat is complete...Christ has come, Christ has won!
- *the twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones* – Remember them? (24 = 12 Old Testament x 12 New Testament) The whole Church of God gathered together in heaven joins to worship him in one unified song of praise! And I thought Easter was a cool worship service...
- *fell on their faces and worshiped God* – Just like we 4:4ff except that now these 24 elders include the entire Church of God, not just a part in contrast to those on the earth. Now all of the elect are together in heaven...and it will remain that way forever!



The Book of Revelation – Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet (Vision 3 of 7) concluded

- *We give thanks to you* – Sometimes I get the feeling that ‘praise bands’ just try to fit as many words like “praise” and “worthy” and “great” into their songs as possible...but real praise and worship of God is saying “thank you” to him for all the unimaginable things he has done for us...not how creatively we can worship him.
- *Lord God Almighty* – Threefold naming, indicative of our three-in-one God being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one God.
- *you have taken your great power and have begun to reign* – Once again, it’s not as though God wasn’t reigning before, but now that reign is both complete and completely evident to all those who denied it before. The song is sung, not so much for God’s benefit as for us and for the many nations still on the earth, still fooling themselves into thinking they have a better way than God’s way.
- *The nations were angry* – As was mentioned in reference to the two witnesses being raised to life, the anger of the nations is not justified, but it is completely understandable: They’ve been proven wrong and there’s no way to argue, bribe, or coerce their way out of the inevitable defeat...the end has come...their end has come.
- *your wrath has come* – Finally, after holding back, after restraining, after bit-by-bit and piece-by-piece allowing partial answer to the prayers of those martyrs under the altar (ch.5) and all the saints in heaven, now God’s wrath against sin brings judgment to the earth.
- *The time has come*
 - + *for judging the dead* – Here we have Judgment bookending three phrases of reward. This first judgment seems to be for those who had already died in unbelief at the time of the Last Day. They are also raised to life and reunited with their bodies (just like believers are), but they face the judgment of God for rejecting the gift of his free grace.
 - + *for rewarding your servants the prophets* – Those who speak God’s Word to his people are rewarded first, this is not a special or more valuable reward, but is simply what Christ told his disciples they would receive, and that we as Christians “*have only done our duty*” [Luke 17:10].
 - + *(for rewarding) your saints* – Next to receive are not a special group in the Catholic church, but ALL those who have called on the name of the Lord and believed in him as Savior. In reality, there isn’t a distinction between this group and the one listed next... both describe the whole body of believers, both show the gift of God, given as a reward to those who trust in Christ as Savior from sin.
 - + *(for rewarding) those who reverence your name, both small and great* – What this adds is not a distinct group, but clarifies that the previous group, the “saints,” is composed of a remarkable variety of people from all walks of life. In Christ there is no distinction of class, ethnicity, culture, or gender, but all are one body with him [Galatians 3:27-28].
 - + *for destroying things those who destroy the earth* – Now finally comes the recompense for those who still rejected the message of the witnesses even to the end... those who saw their bodies rotting in the streets...who mocked and celebrated their end ...now they “meet their Maker” and their end is assured.

The Book of Revelation – Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet (Vision 3 of 7) concluded

- *The Temple Opened at the Trumpet's Sound 11:19*

- *God's temple in heaven was opened* – Later on in the book we hear that there is no Temple in heaven, since we will always be in God's presence and so have no need for a special place to designate that presence [21:22]. This does not disagree with that, but shows from the picture that John's readers would understand (the Ark was found in the temple), and transfers that imagery to heaven.

- *within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant* – The Ark had always been the symbol of God's presence with his people, and so with this vision of the ark appearing to all the earth (no longer separated by either of the two veils), he was showing that his presence was now open and no longer needed to be sheltered. As people perfected by the blood of the Lamb, we are pure and holy and able to stand in the presence of God himself...and live! ...forever!

- *there came* – All of the images that follow have been seen before (and will see again [16:18-21]), many were seen when God made his presence known at Mount Sinai [Exodus 19:16ff] and a number of them relate back to the plagues we saw in the other trumpets. Truly the end has come, but the only shelter that will keep us safe through the tumult is the blood of Christ which he shed to turn away the wrath of God from us.

+ *flashes of lightning*

+ *rumblings*

+ *peals of thunder*

+ *an earthquake*

+ *a great hailstorm* – Just a quick note here that in a few chapters [16:21], we will have devastating hailstones weighing a hundred pounds each!

