

The Church of the Servant King

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PROPHECY SERIES

(Proph21K_Revelation_chp11A_The Two Witnesses)

As we have seen, chapter 10 and the first half of chapter 11 are simply a continuation of the narrative that is sequentially related to the sixth trumpet judgment (the second “woe”). It is not until 11:14 that John indicates the conclusion of the “second woe.” The descent of another “mighty angel” (10:1) is, as we have seen, the announcement that the possession of the earth is about to be passed to the King of Kings – before the actual occupation takes place. The actual occupation or possession of the earth by Jesus is not described until Revelation 19. However, we will see it celebrated beginning in 11:15.

The two witnesses that are described in 11:1-12 are additional agents of the throne and the coming Messianic Kingdom. Their presence and witness is additional testimony that the end is near and that the period of delay is over (cf. 10:7). The two witnesses complete the judgment associated with the sixth Trumpet and second Woe. The seventh trumpet which follows beginning in 11:15 is expanded into and consists of the seven Vials of wrath which very quickly prove that there is no more delay and which eventuate in the Second Coming of Christ, the Messiah (Rev 19).

A number of allegorized or spiritualized interpretations have been offered in regard to this chapter. However, consistent with the historico-grammatical hermeneutic, we should not interpret a passage in any way other than literally unless there is evidence in the passage or its context that the author intended it to be figurative language. If that is the case, we interpret the figurative language as literally figurative.

Accordingly, we should understand that a literal temple will be in existence during the Great Tribulation. A literal city of Jerusalem will exist. The time period of 42 months should be understood to consist of 42 lunar calendar months (i.e. the Jewish calendar) consisting of 30 days. Thus, 42 X 30 = 1,260 days. The 3 ½ days are literally 3 ½ days. The earthquake will kill 7,000 individuals. These numbers and references are no more figurative than the 1000 year reign of Christ (Rev 20:4).

The Two Witnesses Introduced (Rev 11:1-6)

And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. 2 And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. 3 And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. 6 These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

Verse	Phrase	Notes
1	“...measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it ...”	The Greek word translated “temple” here is <i>naos</i> (Gr. <i>ναος</i>). This Greek word is a reference to the holy place, not the temple-building as a whole. John is specifically

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		<p>instructed to not measure the outer court (v. 2). While others could enter the outer court, only priests could enter the temple rooms. The explanation for this is that Gentiles will control the city for 42 months and “trample” the outer court.</p> <p>The Temple will need to be reconstructed in Jerusalem for these prophecies to be fulfilled. During the first half of the seven year Tribulation period (42 months), Jews will offer sacrifices. The kingdom Gospel will be preached during the Tribulation. However, at the middle of the seven year Tribulation period, the sacrifices will be stopped and the temple will be desecrated and become a shrine for the Anti-Christ. His cohort, the Dictator of Palestine, will erect his statue in the Holy of Holies and the Anti-Christ will claim to be Christ and God. This is the abomination of desolation prophesied by Daniel and which is referenced by Jesus (cf. Dan 9:27; 12:11; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:14-15).</p> <p>Why would John be instructed to measure the temple? The act of measuring probably signifies that the temple is God's possession. One carefully measures what is his own property (cf. 2 Sam. 8:2; Ezek. 40:3 – 42:20).</p> <p>The "altar" probably refers to the brazen altar of sacrifice outside the sanctuary to which non-priests will have access. John was to measure (in the sense of quantifying) the worshippers too. This probably means that God will know or perhaps preserve them. These worshippers evidently represent godly Jews who will worship God in this Tribulation temple (cf. Ezek. 14:22; Rom. 11:4-5, 26).</p> <p>The command to measure the worshippers carries the idea of possession as well. Among the worshippers will be the surviving 144,000 Jewish evangelists of Revelation 7:1-8.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>“And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”</p>	<p>This 1260 day period is the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, a.k.a. the “great Tribulation.” It is the period during which anti-Jewish sentiment will peak and during which Jerusalem will be trodden by the Gentiles.</p> <p>The two witnesses are described with the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothed in sackcloth (v. 3) • The two olive trees (v. 4) • The two lampstands (v. 4) • Fire comes out of their mouths to devour their enemies (v. 5) • Empowered to stop the rain (v. 6) • Empowered to turn water to blood (v. 6) • Empowered to smite the earth with plagues as often as they desire (v. 6) <p>One of the most common interpretations of the identity of these two witnesses is that they are Moses and Elijah because the judgments inflicted upon unbelievers by these two men in the Age of Israel are so similar. Other arguments in support of this interpretation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malachi prophesied that Elijah would precede the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Mal 4:5). • Both Moses and Elijah were seen with Jesus during the Transfiguration (Matt 17:3) – a preview

		<p>of the 2nd Advent of Christ.</p> <p>The problem with this interpretation is that these two witnesses actually die and are resurrected – something rather strange for men who have already died (or at least who have been transported to heaven in the case of Elijah). Furthermore, Jesus allows for someone different than the literal Moses and Elijah to fulfill this prophecy for he indicates that John the Baptist was the Elijah (Matt 17:10-13).</p> <p>In my opinion, it is best to recognize that these two witnesses are individuals who live during the period of the Tribulation and who will have ministries with characteristics similar to Moses and Elijah. This interpretation is more consistent with the literal method and avoids so many problems introduced otherwise.</p> <p>The two witnesses will wear "sackcloth," the dress that in biblical times signified approaching judgment and the need for repentance (cf. Isa. 22:12; Jer. 4:8; 6:26; Jon. 3:5, 6, 8; Matt. 11:21).</p> <p>The reference to the two olive trees and the lampstands alludes to Zechariah 4:2-14. The ministry of these two witnesses resembles that of Zerubbabel and Joshua who sought to restore Israel after the Babylonian exile (Zech. 4:2, 3, 11- 14). There is only one lampstand in the Zechariah passage, but there are two here representing each of the two witnesses.</p> <p>In the Zechariah passage it is the Holy Spirit who empowered Zerubbabel and Joshua (Zech. 4:14), and the comparison indicates that these latter-day witnesses will also receive power from Him (cf. 1:4). They will be God's anointed servants who bear the light of His truth.</p> <p>They are given extraordinary power to execute judgmental acts upon unbelievers who oppose them. This is no doubt the reason that so many will celebrate their death.</p>
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The Witnesses Killed (Rev 11:7-10)

7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Verse	Phrase	Notes
7	"...the beast that comes up out of the abyss..."	The account of the rise of the Beast is not provided until chapter 13. The book of Revelation is not always chronological for here in v. 7 we have a reference to him.

		This is the Anti-Christ. He is mentioned nine other times in Revelation (13:1; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3, 13; 19:20; 20:10). His power comes from the abyss, the temporary abode of Satan and his demons (9:1-3, 11).
8	"...dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified..."	<p>The beast will add insult to injury by allowing the corpses of the two witnesses to lie in the street unburied. This was the worst indignity that someone could perpetrate on a person in biblical times (cf. Ps. 79:2-3).</p> <p>"Mystically" (Gr. <i>pneumatikos</i>, "spiritually") indicates a comparative rather than a literal meaning. The city will be similar to Sodom and Egypt in that it will be extremely wicked, morally degraded, antagonistic toward God, and oppressive toward God's people because of Antichrist's influence.</p> <p>The place of Jesus Christ's crucifixion identifies this city as Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 22:8).</p> <p>These events fulfill Psalm 9:9; 10:1, 79</p>

The Witnesses Resurrected (Rev 11:11-14)

11 And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

Those who will not die will give glory to God. This does not necessarily mean that they will become believers (even though it is possible that some might), but they will acknowledge God's hand in these events at least. These unbelievers give glory to God as the demons gave glory to Jesus when He confronted them during His earthly ministry (Lu 8:28 cf. Josh 7:19).