

**Suburban Bethlehem Lutheran Church & School**  
**Revelation Bible Study**  
**Chapter 11**

**Introduction (1:1 - 3:22)**

(Including Seven Letters to the Seven Churches - preparation / call for repentance)

**The Inaugural Vision of Heaven, Introducing the Message (4:1 - 5:14)**

**The Prophecy (6:1 - 16:21)**

1. First Sevenfold Vision of History from the Cross to the End - Seven Seals (6:1 - 8:5)
2. Second Sevenfold Vision of History from the Cross to the End - Disorders in nature accompanied by sufferings of evil afflict humanity - Seven Trumpets (8:6 - 11:19)
  - A. Trumpets One through Four - upheavals in nature (8:6 - 13)
  - B. Trumpets Five and Six - Demons from the Abyss and the Last Bible (9:1-21)
  - C. First Scene of the Interlude - The Mighty Angel from Heaven Commissions John (10:1-11)
  - D. Second Scene of the Interlude - The Temple measured and the Two Witnesses (11:1-14)
  - E. Seventh Trumpet - The End and its Joy (11:15-19)
3. Interlude - The Cosmic War between Christ and Satan, between God's saints and the forces of evil (12:1 - 14:20)
4. Third Sevenfold Vision of History from the Cross to the End: Plagues of God's Wrath as God's Judgment is poured out on the human race (15:1 - 16:21)

**The Conclusion: The End and the New Heaven and New Earth (17:1 - 22:5)**

**Epilogue (22:6-21)**

**First Thoughts**

- Beginning with chapter 10 John is no longer a passive witness of the events unfolding before him. Now he becomes an active participant. In chapter 10 he ate the scroll, here in chapter 11 he is to measure the temple, the altar, and count the worshipers.

**11:1-2) Measuring of the Temple**

- The command is to measure the temple, the altar and count the worshipers there. The "outer court" - the "court of the Gentiles" is not to be measured.
- Throughout Revelation the temple / holy city are terms used for the Church (see Revelation 20:8-9 among others)
- Ezekiel was commanded to measure the temple - before it was rebuilt - to symbolize God's promise to return His people from exile (Ezekiel 40-42). Zephaniah saw a vision where an angel measured Jerusalem (Zephaniah 2). The "measuring" was always a sign that the Lord would protect His people.
- Putting this together, the picture of John measuring the temple / altar / counting the worshipers is to remind the Lord's people will have the Lord's protection as they carry out their mission (remember John's commission at the end of Revelation 10 and the two witnesses here in chapter 11).
- What difference does it make that we have the Lord's protection? Look no farther

than what the "Gentiles" will do to outer court, the holy city and the two witnesses.

- Interesting to note no final measurement of the temple, nor its worshipers, is given. (Ezekiel had numbers in his measuring.)

11:2-3) 42 months / 1,260 days / [3 1/2 years] ~ See also Daniel's "time, times, and half a time" (Daniel 7:25 ; 12:7) ~ Also interesting to note that Jesus Himself identifies the length of time of the drought during Elijah's life as "three years and six months" (Luke 4:25), the OT writers were never moved by the Spirit to record the length of time (compare Jesus in Luke 4:25 with 1 Kings 17:1 and 18:1)

- This is the time for the Gentiles to trample upon the holy city and for the two witnesses to prophesy. What do you think could be the meaning / significance that two different numbering systems are used - but both come out to the same period of time? (42 months for the Gentiles to trample the holy city and 1260 days for the two witnesses to prophesy)
- Similar to the "thirds" we have previously seen in Revelation (chapters 8 and 9), this time frame that is 1/2 of "7" suggests only a portion of the total time period between Christ's ascension and His return.
- Another suggestion is that one "3 1/2" is assigned to the era of the Messiah (beginning at Christ's first coming and culminating at His return) and the other "3 1/2" is the era of the OT prophets.

11:3-6) The two witnesses prophesy

- Symbolic stature of the two witnesses: two olive trees and two lampstands before the Lord
  - o Lampstands - they hold forth the Light of the World, Jesus Christ (John 8:12) - see also Jesus in Matthew 5:14-16
  - o Olive trees - symbolic of the growth God gives His church through the message of His servants (see Psalm 52:8)
- Protection of the two witnesses: fire comes from their mouths to devour their enemies
  - o See Elijah being protected by the Lord in such fashion in 2 Kings 1:10-12
- Power of the two witnesses: shut up the sky, turn waters to blood, strike the earth with any kind of plague
  - o Remember Elijah being used by God to "shut up the sky" in 1 Kings 17:1)
  - o Remember the Lord using Moses to bring about all sorts of plagues (Exodus 7 as an example)

- Dressed in sackcloth (see these great "dressed in sackcloth" passages: Genesis 37:34 [Jacob at the false report of Joseph's death]; 1 Chronicles 21:16 [King David and the elders of Israel dressed in sackcloth after David's sin of taking the census of his army]; Esther 4:1-2 [Mordecai at hearing of the king's plan to kill the Jews]; Job 16:15 and Isaiah 22:12). Could this sackcloth be the clue to understanding the nature of the witnesses' prophecy? Call people to repentance!
- Identity of the two witnesses?
  - o Moses and Elijah are two leading candidates from the Scriptures. Both were present at the Transfiguration of Our Lord (Matthew 17:3)
  - o It could also be symbolic for the church in her witness to Jesus Christ in every generation, in every manner possible. Remember the basic definition of the word "witness" is "one who tells what they have seen and heard" - it was the word from which we get "martyr," one who pays the consequences for sharing / telling what they have seen and heard (see also Acts 4:20)

#### 11:7-10) Two witnesses are killed

- While the church is active in God's mission, the fury of the enemy and its opposition never slackens, and finally, when the church has completed the mission, this fury of the enemy will be unleashed to destroy the witness of the church.
- This passage alone sets the stage that, even though we are called to spread the Gospel message so that individuals will come to faith in Jesus Christ, the world as a whole continues its course to the dead end of Christ's return. We continue to do all that we can do so that individuals repent and come to faith in Jesus Christ. We shouldn't be surprised when the world, society, etc. become more and more hostile toward the message of Christ crucified and risen (see 1 Corinthians 1 for more!)
- The bodies of the witnesses are left in the city street - most likely to incite the people of the city for pride at the conquest of the witnesses
- Sodom / Egypt / Jerusalem - Every place where the witnesses carry the message of redemption becomes, for the time of their prophetic ministry, a holy place, like the holy city of Jerusalem. But when the inhabitants of that place reject their witness, the place of their ministry becomes like apostate Jerusalem, that is, like Sodom and Egypt.

#### 11:11-12) Two witnesses come back to life

- Here and there the voice of the witness of the church is stilled, but after a period of time (the three and a half days) the church comes back to life to continue her witness. Just when the enemy thinks the church's witness to Christ is silence, God raises up the church again, giving to her new life by which she begins again to shout out the Gospel of Christ.
- Think of Eastern Europe within the last century. If the Lord tarries long enough on His

return, think of the future of America. God will raise up His church again! [Think also of how the Anglican Church of Africa has basically viewed the American Anglican - Episcopal - church as apostate and has sent their own missionaries to the US!]

- Make no mistake about the power source of the church's witness again being raised: the Spirit of the Lord!
- The Lord, when the time of prophecy is complete, calls the witnesses home to heaven.
- Great fear grips those seeing these events unfolding before them.

#### 11:13) Great earthquake

- In Scripture, earthquakes often accompany God's mighty acts - earthquakes are mentioned seven times in Revelation: 6:12; 8:5; 11:13 (twice); 11:19; and 16:18 (twice).

#### 11:14) Completion of Second Woe and announcement of Third Woe

- Remember the three Woes of Revelation 8:13
- Transitions from Revelation 9:13-21 and the Third Woe / Seventh Trumpet now following.
- The interlude of Revelation 7 gave us the picture that the church militant and the church triumphant are united together in the protection that is ours through Jesus Christ. This interlude of Revelation 10-11 gave us the importance that the Church will continually be about the mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ. The Christian Church - composed of faithful individual Christians - is always living in witness, dying for that witness, and being raised again for further witness.

#### 11:15-19) The seventh angel / trumpet

- Compared to the seventh part of the third series of prophetic visions (seventh bowl - Revelation 16:17-21), this picture of the end of this world seems to be portrayed just with the Christian in view. It is reminiscent of Jesus' words in Luke 21:28 (His call for Christians to rejoice at the signs of the end of time). Jesus wins! Jesus is victorious! The victory of Easter is now measured out in full form! (Up until that day we just have a foretaste of the feast yet to come. The Last Day ushers in that full and final triumph!)

#### 11:15) Victory Song of the great voices

- At the end in the final display of the victory of Christ, God will openly claim all of His creation as His own.
- Can you hear Handel's Messiah in these verses?

- See 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 as the Apostle Paul's inspired description of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

#### 11:16-18) The song of celebration

- The cry of God's saints in 6:10 has been answered!
- Judgment Day has arrived - see Revelation 20:11-15 for a quick glimpse!

#### 11:19) Ark of the Covenant

- Legend of Jeremiah hiding the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Maccabees 2:1-8

○ <sup>NRS</sup> **2 Maccabees 2:1-8** One finds in the records that the prophet Jeremiah ordered those who were being deported to take some of the fire, as has been mentioned, <sup>2</sup> and that the prophet, after giving them the law, instructed those who were being deported not to forget the commandments of the Lord, or to be led astray in their thoughts on seeing the gold and silver statues and their adornment. <sup>3</sup> And with other similar words he exhorted them that the law should not depart from their hearts. <sup>4</sup> It was also in the same document that the prophet, having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. <sup>5</sup> Jeremiah came and found a cave-dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance. <sup>6</sup> Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the way, but could not find it. <sup>7</sup> When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: "The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. <sup>8</sup> Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated."

- But Jeremiah prophesied - in the canonical Scriptures - that the Ark would be forever lost and another one would never be made (Jeremiah 3:16)
- The saints of God, in resurrected and glorified bodies, now see God and His Ark face to face. The Ark, the OT symbol of God's presence among His people, is now in plain view of all. What had begun on Good Friday (Matthew 27:51) is now completed at the Return of Jesus Christ.
- Lightning, thunder, earthquake - One commentator speaks of these as "the solemn salvos, so to speak, of the artillery of heaven" (Alford)
- **Amen, come Lord Jesus!** (Revelation 22:20)

#### Reminder:

- 1) Email your questions to Pastor Bill: [billm@deeplyrootedtogrow.org](mailto:billm@deeplyrootedtogrow.org)
- 2) You can access these study guides on the church website. Navigate under "Ministries" to "Bible Studies" to the download page for the Revelation study.