

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11

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The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:1-6

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.

v1 - What is being measured?

To measure is symbolism for "evaluate for judgment." ...Israel and God's people are being evaluated

What is the temple of God?

In historical context, this is the building the Jews used to worship God.

What Temples are presented in the Bible?

There are six distinct temples addressed in Scripture...

(1) Solomon's Temple - Built 966 B.C. Destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.

(2) Zerubbabel's Temple - Built after the Babylonian Captivity. The Syrian, King Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated, pillaged and then consecrated the Temple to the god Jupiter in 168 BC.

(3) Herod's Temple - Magnificent Temple during the time of Christ Destroyed by General Titus in 70 A.D.

(4) In the Church age, this is our bodies because the Holy Spirit indwells us...

1 Cor 6:19 - *do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*

Given that the bodies of believers are temples, what then is the altar?

Our lives...

Romans 12:1 - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

(5) The Tribulation Temple - Ready to be built now. Will be desecrated by the Antichrist when he proclaims himself to be God

(6) The Millennial Temple - Described in Ezekiel 40-43, to be built by the Jews. The glory of God will return to this Temple (Ezek 40:1-5)

(Note:) No Temple in Eternity - New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem. No Temple in the New Jerusalem (Lord God Almighty and Christ are its Temple) (Rev 21:22)

Why did the Jews need a temple?

- They needed a place for sacrifices that God instituted in Leviticus 1-7... it was a more permanent form of the Tabernacle
- It is considered part of their national identity and this perspective is building in our day.
- Orthodox Jews believe a Temple is necessary for the Messiah to come.

Why did God require animal sacrifices?

- The animal sacrifices taught the Israelites that the gruesome penalty for sin was death
- The sacrifices demonstrated that God was "gracious" in allowing substitutes to pay that terrible penalty
- The sacrificial system was a "type", a foreshadowing of God's ultimate sacrifice for sin, Jesus the Messiah (Gal 3:24; Col 2:16)

How do we know there will be a Temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation?

In Matthew 24:15 Jesus spoke of the "abomination of desolation" occurring in the "holy place" that Daniel addressed when talking about the Tribulation that precedes His coming.

v2 - Why is the court outside the temple not included in the measuring?

- The judgment of Gentiles is separate from that of Israel.
- The time of the Gentiles is given free reign... their time of judgment will be the consequences of their actions during the time of Jacob's Trouble.

What is the Holy City?

Jerusalem

How long will the Gentiles be given to tread Jerusalem under foot?

42 months... 3.5 years

What is the significance of that time period?

It is the rest (second half) of the Tribulation

v3 - Who are the two witnesses?

- Elijah is to return before that great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6)
- Enoch existed before the flood and the Law (Gen 4:17; 5:18)

Hebrews 9:27 - "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

...but exceptions: the raptured church, 144,000 and Tribulation survivors

- Moses to represent the Law... Elijah represents the Prophets. ...the type of miracles the two witnesses perform are like those associated with Moses
Also, it was Moses and Elijah who appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. (witnesses by Peter, James, and John, Matt 17:1-8)

What will the two witnesses do?

- Perform miracles (see verse 6)
- Prophecy (speak for God) 1,260 days... divide by 360 = 3.5 years

What is significant about this time period?

Probably first half of the Tribulation

What does their appearance tell us about them?

Clothed in sackcloth... they are not of the 21st Century

Why are the witnesses called olive trees and lamp stands?

- The lamp stand represents God's witness to the world
- The Olive Tree is a symbol of Israel and also source for olive oil which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit

v4-6 - What miracles do the two witnesses perform?

- Fire from mouth to consume those who threaten them
- Cause drought
- Turn water to blood
- Strike the earth plagues

What is the purpose of the miracles?

They will be a sign to the people that these two witnesses are speaking for God.

Why would God send these two witnesses?

- To fulfill prophecy
- Out of His mercy... some will hear their message and repent.

The Witnesses Killed

Revelation 11:7-10

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 ^[cl] 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.

v7 - What becomes of the two witnesses?

God will allow the Antichrist to kill them when their testimony is complete.

v8 - Where will this take place?

In Jerusalem

Why is Jerusalem referred to as Sodom and Egypt?

- Sodom because of its "SIN"
- Egypt because of its "WORLDLINESS"

v9 - Who will see the two witnesses of God who were killed?

All people on earth... it will no-doubt be broadcast on all the news channels

Why aren't they allowed to be buried 3.5 days?

So that the Antichrist may boast of his power to overcome God's spokesmen.

- No one else will be able to kill them, only the great world leader himself... this is likely the development that prompts the Antichrist to commit the Abomination of Desolation.

v10 - How do the people of earth receive the news of the Antichrist killing God's spokesmen?

They rejoice and declare a holiday.

What does the term "those who dwell on the earth" tell us about the revelers?

They are materialists...their worldview gives no thought to heaven or spiritual matters

The Witnesses Resurrected

Revelation 11:11-14

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. ¹⁴ The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

v11-12 - What happens to the two witnesses of God?

They are resurrected and called back to heaven.

What is the significance of the timeframe given before they are resurrected?

- It was a half-day longer than Jesus was in the grave
- It reinforces the remaining 3.5 years remaining.

What is seen on CNN?

The world witnesses their resurrection and ascension to heaven.

How do the earth-dwellers respond?

They will be afraid and will give glory to God (v. 13)

Since they gave glory to God, does this mean they believe Him?

No, they just recognized that God was responsible for their torment.

Why did the resurrection of the two witnesses cause the earth dwellers to be afraid?

- They don't know how to process supernatural events. Materialists have no concept of God so when the supernatural occurs, it is pretty unsettling.
- They also realize that have committed themselves to the wrong authorities

Does this mean they will repent and be saved?

Some will but for most their pride will keep them from being aligned with God...

- The only logical conclusion is that they are on the wrong side and that is too painful to contemplate
- They convince themselves that there must be some other explanation other than the supernatural intervention by the Creator-God.
- they will be hoping against hope that they will still get lucky and not suffer God's wrath (Good luck with that).

v13 - What else happened when God recalled His two witnesses?

A great earthquake destroyed 10% of Jerusalem with 7,000 casualties.

Why would unbelievers give glory to God?

They don't have a choice at this point... truth has a way of eventually becoming manifest

- God said in Isaiah 45:23, *"to Me every knee shall bow"*
- Romans 14:11 - *every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess to God*

v14 - What is the second woe?

Destruction in Jerusalem, 10% of the city collapsed with 7,000 people killed...

probably Jews which would be people of distinction with the survivors being terrified.

Why is this event called a woe?

It is a significant prophetic development calling earth-dwellers to repentance. In other words, it was a major opportunity to repent.

What were the other woes?

- First: Rev 8:13, the 4th Trumpet when a third of the heavenly bodies were darkened and an angel declared woe, woe, woe because of the remaining trumpet judgments
- Third: coming quickly, the 7th Trumpet judgment which is a prelude to the bowl judgments and likely includes the proclamations of the three angels in Revelation 6-13 preaching the gospel, declaring the

end of the Antichrist's regime, and warning about taking the Mark of the Beast.

- Note: the third woe may be the last opportunity to repent before the eternal fate of every one on earth is sealed.

Seventh Trumpet: The Kingdom Proclaimed

Revelation 11:15-19

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying:

"We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

¹⁹ Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

v15 — What happens when the seventh angel blows his trumpet?

Loud voices declared that the Lord is taking over the kingdoms of the world . . . He is preparing to reign.

What are these loud voices?

Worship leaders, maybe angels?

v16 - What did the church do in response to these loud voices?

Fell prostrate on their faces and worshiped God.

v17-18 - What was included in the worship by the church?

- A prayer of thanksgiving . . . Also remembering that He is eternal and promised to return to earth
- Recognition of God's Actions... God is about to take a "just revenge" upon His enemies and non-believers
- This is also the time when He will reward His faithful people for their service and suffering

Who were the nations angry at?

They were angry at God for putting limits on them with the Law (Psalm 2)

Why was it the time of the dead?

There was a lot of people dying and judgment of the spiritually dead was coming with the return of the Lord.

How is it that those God will destroy would be destroying the earth?

- Their weapons of mass destruction pollute the earth.
- They abused and destroyed God's people.

How can those who worship nature as naturalists pollute the earth?

They are consummate hypocrites...

- "you have to break some eggs to make an omelet" (the end justifies the means)

It never ceases to amaze how often the policies of the godless end up bringing about the very thing they seek to avoid . . . no wonder they always have a sour disposition (God loves irony)

v19 — What was seen in heaven?

The Ark of the Covenant

What was the Ark of the Covenant?

A token of the presence of God as a reminder that He will fulfill His promises

Why is seeing this encouraging?

It reminds us:

- God is still in control
- God is still unchanging
- God will still provide for His own
- God is implementing His plan
- God will reacquire that which is His

What do you think the message of the two witnesses was that applies to us today?

- For unbelievers: repent while you can
- For believers: work while you can...
John 9:4 – I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work