

Revelation Chapter 11

Bible verses are from the New American Standard Bible and are highlighted in blue and italics.

Verse 1 & 2

¹Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.

²"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.

These 2 verses parallel the physical temple buildings and structures and courts on the temple mount in Jerusalem with the spiritual temple, I mean that group of all saved believers during this tribulation period. They are spiritual building in which the spirit of God dwells. We'll refer to a scripture in Ephesians after a while that expands on the parallel between the physical temple and the spiritual.

Of course, there is no physical temple in Jerusalem, now. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. But, there will exist a new one during this tribulation period.

John was given a measuring "Reed". Reeds of this type were sometimes used as a walking stick or staff and sometimes they were used as a measuring rod.

John is to use this reed to measure the "Temple of God". The word is not "temple"; the word is "sanctuary." John is not to measure the entire complex, only the sanctuary and altar and the worshippers in the sanctuary.

In the strictest sense, the sanctuary consisted of the building housing the Holy place and the Holy of Holies. The altar of sacrifices and offerings stood just outside the entrance to this sanctuary. There is a broader sense of the sanctuary that's evidently meant in these scriptures, however.

Surrounding the building that housed the Holy place and Holy of Holies was the court of Israelite Priests. Only priests could enter this court. Surrounding that was the court of Israelite Men, and only they could enter that court. Adjacent to these courts was the court of Israelite Women. These courts were called the inner courts. These evidently make up the broader sanctuary meant here. Beyond these courts was the court of Gentiles. Gentiles could come here, but could not come into any of the inner courts.

To measure the physical sanctuary, and altar of sacrifice and offering and the people of God in these physical and inner courts parallels the fact that God knows and measures His spiritual sanctuary. The people in whom He dwells in this time are greatly oppressed. But God knows them all and the aroma from the altar of their prayers is in His nostrils. They're called upon to be faithful until death, but they are a spiritual sanctuary that the gentle rebels, the confirmed lost who are joined to their sins, cannot enter.

In verse 2, the words are not more literally "Leave out the court", but "Throw out the court." The confirmed lost is the outer, spiritual court of the gentiles that are not measured by God. He does not know them. He simply throws them out. They are outside the spiritual sanctuary in which He dwells.

Everything outside that sanctuary is given to the nations of the world, and they subjugate – (tread under foot) the city of Jerusalem; for 42 months – the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation period and before the coming of Christ.

Scripture elsewhere says that the anti-christ will enter the physical Holy of Holies in the temple sanctuary at the beginning of this 3 ½ years and there proclaim Himself God. Scripture calls that the "abomination of desolation." Jesus said when it happens, flee Jerusalem, and don't even go back in your house to get your coat. It's about to be trodden down by gentile armies.

Anti-christ will enter the physical Holy of Holies, and the world will worship him when he proclaims himself God. But he is forever outside the spiritual sanctuary.

These 2 verses emphasize that God knows those who are His as this last 3 ½ year great tribulation unfolds.

Verse 3 & 4

³"And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

1260 days, 42 months. The Jewish calendar was a lunar calendar. 30 days per month, 12 months a year. So 360 days per year, not 365 ¼ days per year.

So 1260 days same as 42 months and the same as 3 ½ years. It's the "time, times and ½ a time" of Daniel's prophecy. These 2 witnesses prophesy during the last ½ of the 7 year tribulation just before the return of Jesus Christ.

Their clothing of sackcloth was an outward, visible symbol, part of their prophetic ministry to this rebellious world at this time.

Repent, mourn over your sin in humility you who have not repented of your murders, not of your sorceries, nor of your immoralities, not of your thefts. You have not repented of your relentless persecution of God's people to death.

You have not repented of your relentless persecution of God's people to death. You have not repented for accepting the anti-christ as he commits what scripture calls "abomination of desolation." They've accepted him as God as he shows himself as God in the Holy of Holies in the temple.

Who are these 2 witnesses? There's been much said and written to try to identify who they are and there is a lot of controversy about their identify.

Verse 4 is meant to be a direct reference to the book of Zechariah, especially chapters 3 and 4. There the exact same terminology is used to refer to two individual men. The two individuals in Zechariah are Zerubbabel, the governor in charge of rebuilding the temple after 70 year Babylon captivity, and Joshua, who the high priest at that time.

The reason I bring this up is to show that the Zechariah reference that Revelation 11:4 is meant to point to, speaks of 2 individual, flesh and blood men, born of a Mom and Dad.

That is why I understand verse 4 intends for us to see these 2 witnesses as 2 individual flesh and blood men. They are not a symbol for anything like the Holy Spirit and the Church or some corporate entity like that.

Verse 4 calls them olive trees: Frequently in scripture olive oil is used as a poetic symbol for the Holy Spirit. Often in scripture, an individual tree will represent an individual person, or sometimes an individual nation. Sometimes a forest of trees will symbolize a nation. A "great tree" will symbolize the king over a nation or empire. These are 2 olive trees; 2 strong, individual men full of the Holy Spirit.

They are 2 lampstands. A lampstand was not the flame of fire itself, but it bore the flame of fire. You put olive oil on the lampstand and the flame burns brightly. These 2 individual men are filled with the Holy Spirit, in whom the flame of the Holy Spirit burns brightly.

Verse 5

⁵And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

The word of the Lord at this time is a word of judgment. We've been studying the terrible judgments the Lord has been bringing on the earth. Right now we're between the 6th and 7th trumpet judgments.

These 2 men are bearing witness to unrepentant men that they must repent or else even greater, more catastrophic judgment will fall. Repent or else. These two bear their witness in very great power from God, and they are invulnerable until they have completed their witness. They cannot be killed. But when their mission is complete, they will be killed.

The world at this time is full of enemies of God, who persecute God's people to death. The two witnesses are not immune from this hatred, but during their ministry they have a defense.

I understand this fire as the word of God to men. As the Holy Spirit is pictured as fire in scripture, so is the word of the Holy Spirit from these men.

*"It's not my word like fire, and like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces.
(Jeremiah 23:29)*

"Behold, I am making my words in your mouth like fire and this people wood, and it will consume them." (Jeremiah 5:14)

The active enemies of the Lord's word from these two men are wood to be consumed by the fire of the word they fight against. The Lord simply kills them.

This is not the Lord speaking in a still, small voice. This is the Lord of Judgment doing His strange and alien work. Chapter 11 closes with flashes of lightning and sounds of peaks of thunder and an earthquake and a great hail, all upon willfully unregenerate man who actively fights against God.

Verse 6

⁶These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

Remember how Elijah did this very thing?

²⁵But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land (Luke 4:25)

¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. (James 5:17)

He shut up the sky so it wouldn't rain for 3 ½ years. These two witnesses, interestingly enough, prophesy for 3 ½ years (the last 3 ½ of the 7 year tribulation period preceding the 2nd coming of Christ.

Remember how Moses (and Aaron) turned the waters of Ancient Egypt into blood?

Scripture here intends to show us that these 2 men have come in spirit and power of Elijah and Moses. In fact, some commentators say they are in fact the very men Elijah and Moses. I do not believe they are the very men Elijah and Moses, but they are 2 human men with ministry like that of Elijah and Moses.

You remember how Jesus said that John the Baptist was the Elijah prophesied in the Old Testament, who would come as a forerunner and preparer for the Lord's coming. John the Baptist was not the very man Elijah, he was a man born of Zechariah and Elizabeth, not Elijah, with very similar ministry, and so he was in that sense prophesied Elijah.

It is the same way with these 2 men. They are not the very men Elijah and Moses, but are men prophesied here, yet to come in the future, with the same ministries.

The last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi Chapter 4 is the Old Testament scripture that prophesied Elijah.

It is very instructive that John the Baptist only fulfilled some of that Malachi prophecy. He didn't fulfill all of it. This Elijah we see in Revelation 11 will fulfill the rest of the Malachi prophecy. It's also very instructive that both Moses and Elijah are spoken in that of Malachi prophecy.

This is very much like the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus did not fulfill them all at his first coming. He only fulfilled some of them then, He will fulfill the rest of them at his second coming.

In a parallel way, the Elijah prophecy in Malachi was fulfilled in part just prior to and at the first coming of Christ. The rest will be fulfilled just prior to and at His second coming.

Verse 7

⁷When 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.

The first reference in the Book of Revelation to a personality called "The Beast." There are several references in Revelation to "The Beast." A major portion of the rest of the book talks about the beast. There is more than one beast.

Great red dragon called the Devil and Satan has been called the beast.
A person separate from that, namely anti-christ has been called the beast.
Another person, a real physical man, who is the false prophet, has been called the beast and he is a forerunner of the anti-christ. He is a false anti-John the Baptist.

Anti means against and it means a "counterfeit replacement for."

So we have an anti-god figure in great red dragon, Satan.
An anti-christ in the world ruler of the last days.
Anti-John the Baptist in this false prophet.

We also have another creature who's called the beast out of the abyss. In Chapter 17, he's identified as the demonic spirit that energizes all the kingdoms of the ages that have manifested the spirit of anti-christ that bubbles up through all history.

He is the demonic spirit of anti-christ that indwells the human man anti-christ. He is a false anti-Holy Spirit.

He is the beast who is referenced here in verse 7. When you see this spirit of anti-christ from the Abyss spoken of in scripture, and the human man anti-christ spoken of in scripture, it's hard to tell the difference between the two. That is because one indwells the other.

The beast we are talking about in verse 7 is this anti-Holy Spirit who's been energizing spirit behind some of the anti-christ kingdoms of history. This is his introduction in scripture. I'm getting a little ahead of myself talking about these anti-christ kingdoms, we'll talk further of them in future lessons.

He makes war with these two prophets of God. He overcomes them and kills them, but he is not allowed to do that until they have finished their testimony.

Verse 8

⁸And 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.

City of Jerusalem, because that's where the Lord was crucified. Yet it is called Sodom - Moral degradation, Egypt - Oppression and bondage. Not what Jesus is to be, city of peace never been city of peace, but will be when Prince of Peace returns, and rules over the earth from that place.

Their dead bodies lie in the street for 3 ½ days. Paralleling 3 ½ years of their prophetic ministry. For a dead body to lie unburied in the time of ancient Israel, or at any time really is a great humiliating indignity. It is a great contemptuous insult to a person and to his life. You're not worthy even to be buried. They lay dead in the streets of Jerusalem.

Verse 9

⁹Those 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.

How can people and tribes and tongues and nations look at 2 men? How can the world look at 2 men?

When we were born, that was impossible, now it happens everyday, satellite TV - no problem. We saw men walk on the moon, on live TV - 30 plus years ago. I can sit in my easy chair in my living room and watch an Olympic footrace run live on other side of the earth.

There are some amazing things that prophesied in scripture that would have seemed like fantasy at the time they were written, but it is the Lord who ordains and knows the end from the beginning.

Verse 10

¹⁰And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Dwellers on Earth

Whole mind, heart, soul and desire are for the things of this world and this present age. They hate the things of the Lord. They love the darkness rather than the light and all they see is judgment from the Lord. These 2 prophets had wrought judgment upon them, and they are so happy that these 2 men are dead, it's like Christmas. They celebrate and send gifts to one another.

Verse 11 and 12

¹¹But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

¹²And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here" Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

What a witness from God is this. Can you imagine? "Here world, watch someone being resurrected from the dead. Watch them being taken up, ascended into Heaven on CNN or Fox news, or something."

Not a still, small voice. Not come in and let us reason together. But direct, in-your-face hear it is people repent or else.

And it is amazing - they don't repent. Why? Because they're joined to their sins and they love this present evil age. They're dwellers on the earth and not citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom.

This astonishing hard heartedness is like Pharaoh. Pharaoh saw all these judgments fall on Egypt, knew they must have been from God, but scripture says "the Lord hardened his heart."

God is hitting these people in the face, but really, he knows they are not going to. It's a clear demonstration to them and us, and all created intelligence, what these people are. No matter what God does to try to save them, they won't do it.

¹²And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here" Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

A direct loud voice from Heaven, and they heard it, and they watch the ascension of these 2 witnesses with their own eyes.

These dwellers on earth will not repent. Now many people will be saved during this tribulation period, but scripture here is not talking about them. It's talking about "dwellers on the earth" here. Broadcast to the world on satellite tv.

Verse 13

¹³And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

This is not dwellers on earth turning around and giving glory to God out of a pure heart of faith. Psalm 66:3 – Passage is prophecy of millennial kingdom

*Say to God, "How awesome are Your works!
Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned
obedience to You. (Psalm 66:3)*

That is exactly what's happening here. His enemies are giving him feigned obedience, feigned praise because they were terrified. They don't mean it; it may be that they have the mark of the beast by this time.

That's the end of the interlude between the 6th and 7th trumpet judgments, that's what chapter 14 says.

Verse 14

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

1st, 2nd and 3rd woes are identical with the 5th, 6th and 7th trumpets. Scripture here takes up where it left off at the end of chapter 9 (7th trumpet judgment).

Quickly not only means soon, but it means fast. With the snap of the fingers the 3rd woe is upon you.

Verses 15, 16, 17

¹⁵Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

¹⁷saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign."

Now is the time for Jesus Christ to come back and become the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in fulfillment of His own example prayer. "Thy kingdom come they will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." That's why all this praise is being elicited from the 24 elders.

*Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,
For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
And His glory will be before His elders. (Isaiah 24:23)*

Verse 18

Enraged at two witnesses at all who would not take the mark of the beast but turned to the Lord. Martyrdom at the hands of the rebellious is common practice at this time. That's a spirit that's latent at all times, but held in check by the Lord until fullness of time.

Then the latent spirit of the Anti-christ, spirit of murder, will occur on earth.

The nations are enraged at God himself, and will combine the armies to fight Christ as He returns at Armageddon. The nations may be enraged, but it's the Lord's wrath that comes to pass.

¹⁸"And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

The dead here refers to the resurrection of those of God's people who were killed during the tribulation and to the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. We'll see that when we get to chapter 20. This is not a resurrection of wicked dead, that will happen 1000 years after and we'll see it in chapter 20.

Verse 18 refers to the sheep/goat judgment. This 1st thing Christ will do after He receives His earthy kingdom at His second coming is to execute the sheep/goat judgment.

He'll separate the godly who survived the great tribulation to His right hand (the sheep) and tell them to "enter into the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The ungodly who survived the great tribulation are the goats separated to His left.

Matthew 25:31-34, 41

³¹"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

³²"All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

⁴¹"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels

Verse 19

Chapter 11 is bookended by references to the temple. Actually, the Greek word here is sanctuary, especially the Holy of Holies, not the entire temple complex. Also inner courts where only people of God could go.

¹⁹And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18-22)

Paul is paralleling the physical temple/sanctuary/Holy of Holies with the spiritual temple which is the church.

You remember what the Holy of Holies was, and the Ark of the Covenant in ancient Israel. In Solomon's temple, the spirit of the Lord, God himself, dwelt over the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies. No one could enter the Holy of Holies except the High Priest once a year to make a sacrifice for sins of the people.

The Ark of the Covenant was lost long before Jesus' day, so it was not in the 2nd temple, the Holy of Holies of that temple. But the concepts of the Holy of Holies were the same.

Paul parallels that physical Holy of Holies with the church, the spiritual Holy of Holies.

²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:20-21)

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant. Like Abraham, we believe (have faith) in God, and it is counted to us as righteousness through blood of Christ. Christ is the Ark, in that sense, of this new covenant.

As with Paul's parallel in Ephesians, so Revelation 11:19 has the same parallel between physical and spiritual arks and sanctuaries. In verse 19, we have the 2nd coming of Christ, and the judgments on the day He comes, the final "Day of the Lord".