

Revelation 11:1-19

Revelation 11 completes the third cycle (Rev 8-11). As with the second cycle, the passage concludes with the seventh trumpet which issues in times of woe and the glories of Christ's return.

[1] Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,

John is told like Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-42) to measure the temple (sanctuary of God). In other passages, the measuring denotes rebuilding (Zephaniah 1:16; 2:1-5) or testing as Amos' plumb line (Amos 7:7-9).

In Revelation 11, the measuring prepares the way of preservation. Those who worship in the temple and at the altar are to be kept safe.

This is, of course, a vision. The literal temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans in AD70. Like in Hebrews, John used the earthly temple as the temple (Sanctuary) of God in heaven.

[2] but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.

The court outside the temple (there were several) was not to be measured. It was given over to the "nations", that is, the pagans who opposed God.

Jesus had used this language about the temple being "trodden down by the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

This trampling will only last 42 months (3.5 years / 1260 days) which is a symbol of a cut-off, limited time. It is one-half of seven.

Daniel (12:6-7) used "for a time, two times, and a half a time" (3.5 years).

This prepares us for the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3)

[3] And I will grant my two witnesses' power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

The two witnesses will "prophesy" for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Using the number 1,260 instead of months or years shows that prophesying is day by day.

Even when God's holiness (think of the temple) is being desecrated, He does not leave Himself without witness in the earth.

Why two witnesses? Jesus sent out His disciples two by two (Luke 10:1) and under the law two witnesses were required to affirm truthfulness.

What is this time? Daniel 12:7 describes a time "when the power of the holy people" will be shattered and all things will be finished.

Is this symbolic of the gospel age when the church proclaims Christ to the world?

"Sackcloth" is associated with repentance and hardship.

[4] These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth.

Who are these witnesses?

They have similarities with Elijah and Moses (Revelation 12:6). They symbolize the law and the prophets and the church's witness. Also compare Malachi 4:4-6 and Matthew 17:1-8

Olive trees represent anointing of God. The lampstands point to their shining as lights in the world.

[5] And if any one would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if any one would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed.

[6] They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may 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.

These witnesses have resources just as great as those of Elijah and Moses

[7] And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them,

Notice: "When they have finished their testimony."

This is the first mention of the beast.

[8] and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

The "great city" is Jerusalem, whose inhabitants crucified Jesus. Because of its immorality and persecution of the saints it has become spiritually like Sodom and Egypt.

[9] For three days and a half men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,

[10] and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

They rejoice because the world always loves a dead church.

[11] But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

[12] Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up hither!" And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud.

The resurrection of the witnesses. Any triumph Satan seems to enjoy over the church is short-lived.

The hour of victory for the church will be the hour of judgment of the world.

[13] And at 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.

The earthquake shows the judgment of God. Compare Revelation 6:12

[14] The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

[15] Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, 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 shall reign for ever and ever."

It is at this point that the seventh angel blows his trumpet. The previous six trumpets focused on the earth, but the seventh trumpet takes us to heaven.

This shows us the complete victory of God – God wins!

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

[17] saying, "We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign.

[18] The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

[19] Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail