

Revelation 11

We now come to one of the most hotly debated chapters of Revelation. Some view this chapter allegorically, while others see it as literal. There are numerous ideas and interpretations offered by scholars. It is true that there is a lot of symbolism in Revelation but there are no real reasons that this chapter should be relegated to allegory. An allegorical approach leaves many questions unanswered. This chapter contains symbolisms but it also contains real characters and events that will be best explained and understood in that manner.

¹And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

John is now asked to participate in the vision. He is told to take a reed and measure the temple of God and the altar and them that worship therein.

In the Jordan valley there is a reed that grows to heights of 20 feet. It is hollow inside, but very stout. It was often used as a measuring rod. Notice that there are no measurements given.

What does measuring the Temple of God and the altar mean? It speaks of preservation. It would seem that Israel is in view here since the next verse makes mention of the Gentiles.

Futurist believe that the Temple will be built again and that Jewish worship will take place for the first 3 and ½ years of the tribulation period. Charles Ryrie Observed:

The temple that will be built during the tribulation, in which Jewish worship will be carried on during the first part of that seven-year period and in which, at the midpoint, the man of sin will exalt himself to be worshiped.”¹

This measuring should be seen as a good thing. (Cf. Zech. 2:1-5) Robbins compares this to the sealing of the 144,000. It symbolizes God’s protection.

²But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.

God’s protection is not extended to the unbeliever. Robbins argues that those in the court of the Gentiles include the nominal Christian. Thus, only deeply committed believers will be offered God’s protection and those who are living worldly will be left to face the judgments that are pending.

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New International Version* (expanded ed.; Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1961.

Robbins position on this appears unfounded. It would be more appropriate to argue that those who feign religion or Christianity will be included in the judgments to come.

The 42 months is significant. It speaks of the tribulation period. Preterists and Amillennialists dismiss the Futurists interpretation as ludicrous and laughable. They see all of these events as either already fulfilled or allegorical in nature.

Swindoll observed:

We see that God has set a limit on the time when the nations will be permitted to “tread the holy city.” The “forty-two months” herelike refers to the second half of the tribulation period during which the future Anti-christ and his False Prophet will reign (13:5). As we’ll soon see, the end time regime of that diabolical duo won’t come to full power until God has first delivered His last prophetic words through his own duo of divine spokesmen—the two witnesses.²

The treading underfoot is obviously a reference to both spiritual and physical realms. In the spiritual realm unbelievers have indeed trampled under their feet the precious blood of Christ and the salvation that He offers through the preaching of the Gospel, but Jerusalem will also experience a time of oppression in the physical realm. (Cf. Matt. 24: 15-22).

¹⁵“Therefore when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²²And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.³

³And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

“My two witnesses” Who are these witnesses? Volumes have been written about this one little verse. Some suggest that it is Enoch and Elijah, since neither of them experienced physical death. Others argue that it is Moses and Elijah, because they represent the Prophets and the Law.

No one can be certain as to who these two witnesses are but that there will be two witnesses during the tribulation period is certain. Here again Preterists, Historicists and Amillennialists scoff at Futurists who believe these will be real men. Food for thought: If

² Swindoll, *Swindoll's NT Insights*, p. 157.

³ *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982. Print.

these two witnesses were Peter and Paul as some claim, how is that possible since neither were resurrected after three and ½ days?

⁴These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

This is the first time that we have read about “two olive trees and the two candlesticks...” What does this represent? Lamps in the ancient Middle East often burned Olive oil. The trees represent an unending source of oil. Thus, these two witnesses will have a continuous supply of God’s power and presence.

Note that they will preach for 1,260 days, which equals 42 months or 3 and one-half years. Thus, the Gospel will be proclaimed during the tribulation.

Sackcloth represents mourning over the wicked conditions of the world and their rebellious hatred for God and Righteousness.

⁵And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

These two witnesses will enjoy God’s protection. Those who attempt to kill them will be met with a fiery death.

What does fire proceeding out of their mouth mean? Is it symbolic or literal? Some would argue that this is only symbolic of God’s judgment upon those who are fighting against God and his message. If the verse had stopped there, one could take that position more easily, but the latter portion of the verse would lend itself to a literal interpretation.

⁶These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Notice that they have the power to stop the rain, which would only add to the suffering of humanity, and the power to affect the water supply and the earth’s environment. And they have the power to do it as often as they like.

You can imagine that these two witnesses will be hated worldwide. If there is media coverage, you can imagine what hate-mongers they will be portrayed as.

⁷And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

It is only after the two witnesses have completed their divinely appointed mission that they can be harmed. This is the first mention of the beast in the book of Revelation.

Robbins argues that this symbolizes the persecution that the church will experience and how that Satan and his cronies will finally bring an end to the preaching of the Gospel. His argument sounds good but it doesn't answer the question about having power over the elements and bringing plagues upon the earth. There is no record in the Scriptures where the Church was given power over the elements or to bring plagues upon humanity. Nor does it make sense that the Church would be raised again after three and ½ days.

⁸And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Another problem arises if one accepts Robbins interpretation; what does one do about the dead bodies lying in the street?

These two witnesses will indeed be killed and their bodies will be left to rot in the streets. In ancient times, this was the ultimate insult and disgrace to be denied burial. So the world powers will finally triumph over these two and succeed in killing them.

There is an important truth that we should see in this text and one that would have been encouraging to the early church, that is, God will always be with us as we do his service.

“Street of the great city” symbolizes the sinful realm of humanity.

“Sodom” was known as one of the vilest and debased places on the planet. God destroyed it for its much sin.

“Egypt” represented a place of bondage. Thus, the world system is a place of debauchery and spiritual bondage.

But the last phrase: “where our Lord was crucified” makes it undeniably, Jerusalem.

⁹And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.
¹⁰And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

A cause of celebration in the world's eyes. With the death of these two witnesses worldwide jubilation erupts. There will be a party like none others perhaps in the history of the planet.

If television is still used, you can imagine the constant scenes being flashed on the screen. They will be so happy over the death of these two witnesses that they will send gifts to one another. But their celebrating will be short lived and will end in utter fear.

¹¹And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

There will be no way to deny the reality of these two witnesses resurrection. No media smear or hype will be able to deny the physical proof! There is a wonderful message of hope here for God's people.

There are times when it seems that evil has won and that there is no hope left. But God always takes care of His own. So if you are suffering remember God has not abandoned or forgotten you. If need be that you suffer for a while, God is faithful to His children. Sunday is on the way!!!!

¹²And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Now one might expect that these two prophets would resume preaching but not so. They have finished the task for which they had been sent. Now it was time for reward.

Notice that their enemies watched as they were taken up into heaven in a cloud. Peter and Paul were not taken up into the clouds as witnesses of the world looked on.

¹³And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Now a great earthquake occurred within the hour and 1/10 of the city was destroyed and 7,000 men were killed. Those who remained were terrified and gave glory to God.

¹⁴The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

The second woe is past and the third one is coming quickly. Again there is a short interlude between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpet.

¹⁵And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The seventh trumpet is sounded but instead of silence, like when the seventh seal was broken, there are great voices in heaven speaking.

So what does this sounding of the seventh trumpet signify? The coming reign of Christ upon the earth. It marks the final events leading up to the coming of Christ to reign upon the earth.

It should be noted that although the seventh trumpet has sounded, its judgments do not begin to occur until Chapter 15. Chapters 12-14, appear to go back and fill in some more details regarding the tribulation era.

¹⁶And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

A worship service erupts in heaven. One cannot help but see the contrast between the party of the world at the death of the two witnesses and the Worship that erupts when all of heaven understands what the sounding of the seventh trumpet means.

¹⁷Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned

Although Christ will not actually set up his earthly kingdom at this moment, the wording is such, as to indicate it is a certain thing that will occur. We use the cliché “It’s a done deal.”

¹⁸And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

One cannot read this phrase: “The nations were angry...” without thinking of Psalms 2.

“Destroy them which destroy the earth.” Does not mean people who pollute the environment, but rather, who pollute the world with their rebellion and sin.

¹⁹And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The temple of God = the place where His presence dwells. Thus, believers are assured unbroken fellowship with God.

“The ark of his testament” = the covenant of His love and fellowship. God’s communion is available to all who have been redeemed by the Blood of His Son, Jesus.

I like the way MacArthur summarizes this chapter.

“The message of the seventh trumpet is that Jesus Christ is the sovereign King of kings and Lord of Lords. He will one day take the rule of the earth away from the usurper, Satan, and from earth’s petty human rulers.”⁴

⁴ MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary*, p. 321.

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So what is the Worship service all about? Swindoll answers that question:

Let's not miss the big picture of what the trumpet is announcing. The voices in heaven summarized the detailed worship chorus in verses 15, 17-18. They declared "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." . . . The words emphasize the great change of power from wicked humanity under the spiritual bondage of Satan (the kingdom of the world) to Christ and the saints under the sovereign headship of God the Father (the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ).⁵

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Reward time is quickly coming both to the Godly and the ungodly.

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⁵ Swindoll, *Swindoll's NT Insights*, 164-165.

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Respectfully,

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⁶ Ibid.