

THE TWO WITNESSES AND THE 7TH TRUMPET OF REVELATION 11

INTRODUCTION

- “While it is clear that 11:1–14 continues the parenthetical section begun in 10:1, an amazing variation of interpretations of this portion of Scripture have been offered. Alford calls this chapter “one of the most difficult in the whole Apocalypse” (*The Greek Testament*, 4:655). The best guideline to follow in interpreting this section is to take each fact literally. In line with this principle, a literal temple will be in existence during the Great Tribulation, and the city should be considered the literal city Jerusalem in keeping with its identification in 11:8. The time periods of 42 months (v. 2) and three and one-half days (vv. 9, 11) again should be considered literally. The earthquake will kill literally 7,000 individuals, and the two witnesses should be considered as two individual men.”¹

THE TWO WITNESSES

- During the dark days of the Tribulation, God will still graciously call sinners to repent and believe
- Even as His righteous wrath and indignation rain down on the earth, He will not leave Himself without a Gospel witness
- In addition to the 144,000 Jews sealed who will function as evangelists, there will also be two unnamed witnesses who will both preach the Gospel and announce God’s judgment on the wicked world
- They will participate in fulfilling Matthew 24:14

Matthew 24:14 ~ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The Temple

Revelation 11:1-2 ~ Then 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.”

- John was given a reed (a 15-20 foot long species of cane that grew in the Jordan valley) to be used as a measuring instrument (cf. Ezek 40:3, 5)
- He was to take measurements of the temple (the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies), the altar (probably the bronze altar), and those who worship the Lord in the temple (depicting a remnant of believing Jews alive during the Tribulation)
- Clearly, this indicates that the temple will be rebuilt during the Tribulation so that Jewish temple practices, including the sacrificial system, will be reinstated
- This temple is 1 of 5 mentioned in Scripture: 1) Solomon’s; 2) Zerubbabel’s; 3) Herod’s; 4) Tribulation; 5) Millennial

¹ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 955). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- This temple will be likely rebuilt under the “peace” provided for Israel when Antichrist signs a covenant to protect them (cf. Dan 9:27) which occurs in the first half of the Tribulation
- The site of the Tribulation temple is presently occupied by the Islamic shrine, the Dome of the Rock; however, under the protection of Antichrist, the Jews will rebuild it
- At the midpoint of the Tribulation, however, Antichrist will break that covenant with Israel and will desecrate the temple with the abomination of desolation in which he puts an idol in the temple and proclaims himself to be God
- This 42-month period (v. 2), in which the sacrifices will stop and the temple will be desecrated, is known as the Great Tribulation and constitutes the last half of the Tribulation, lasting 1260 days (cf. v. 3; 12:6; 13:5)

Daniel 9:27 ~ And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Daniel 12:11 ~ From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

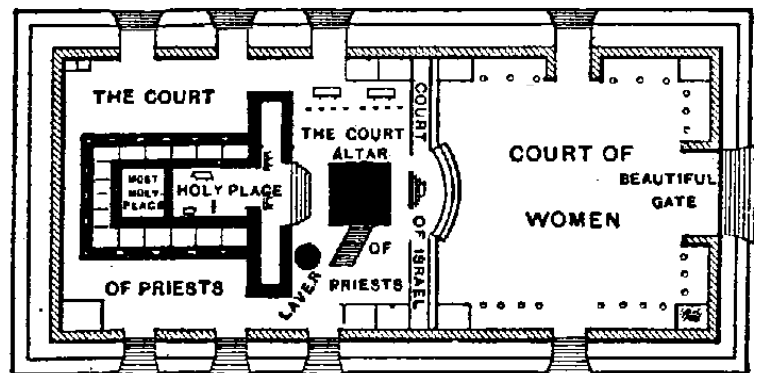
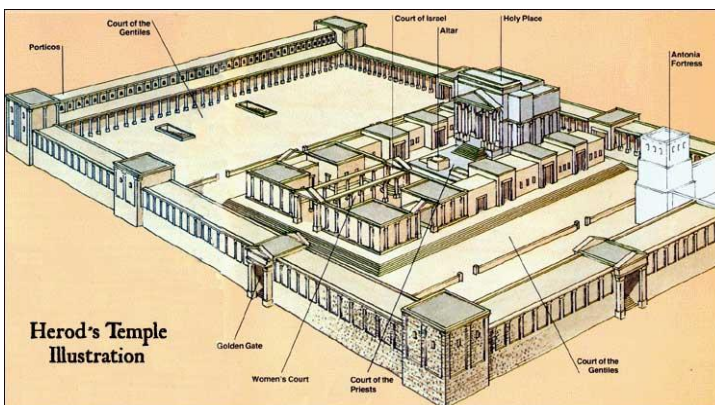
Matthew 24:15 ~ Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

2 Thessalonians 2:4 ~ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

- John’s measurement was likely done to affirm His ownership and to give assurance that God will take note of those who faithfully worship Him during that time, promising to save and protect them
- John was not to measure the “court which is outside the temple” (i.e. the outer court of the Gentiles)
- The reason for this is given in v. 2: “they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months”
- The Gentile nations who will constitute Antichrist’s forces will treat the Jews with contempt during the last half of the Tribulation and will desecrate their temple
- As a result, God will reject those unbelieving Gentiles who will oppress His people

Luke 21:24 ~ and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- Thus, John’s “measuring” was meant to distinguish between God’s favor on Israel (what was measured) and His wrath on the wicked nations of the earth (what was not measured)
- It would have been a great blessing and encouragement to John to know that God will not abandon His people



- During the last half of the Tribulation, God will protect many Jews in a place He has prepared for them in the wilderness (Petra?)

Revelation 12:6 ~ Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

- They will heed Christ's warning to flee to safety

Matthew 24:15-20 ~ Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

- As a result, two-thirds of Israel will be killed in judgment and the remaining one-third will be saved and enter into the Millennial kingdom

Zechariah 13:8-9 ~ "It will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "

- Instrumental in the salvation of the one-third of the Jews will be the two witnesses

Their Ministry

Revelation 11:3 ~ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

- "Numerous and varied interpretations have been given concerning the two witnesses. Some have suggested that they are not literal individuals. However, in view of the fact that they die and are resurrected, the implication is that they are actual people."²
- Some identifications have included: 1) Israel and the church; 2) Representatives of witness in the tribulation; 3) Enoch and Elijah (because they didn't die)
- Many have identified them with Moses and Elijah for a number of reasons:
 - The judgments that come through them in the OT are similar to the ones mentioned in vv. 5-6 (Moses brought plagues onto the earth; Elijah brought fire from heaven and had the power to keep it from raining)
 - The Jews in the OT expected both Moses (Deut 18:15-18) and Elijah to return (Malachi 4:5)
 - Both of them were involved in the Transfiguration which anticipates the Second Coming (Matt 17:3)
 - The length of the drought they bring is the same length as the drought Elijah brought (cf. James 5:17)
- But they are not identified by name...(and can Moses die twice in violation of Heb 9:27? Maybe he is an exception like Lazarus?)
- Perhaps they will be two prophets raised up among the Tribulation saints who will preach the Gospel and announce judgment
- 1260 days = 3.5 years = 42 months
- "Expositors have differed as to which of the two periods is in view here. From the fact, however, that the two witnesses pour out divine judgments upon the earth and need divine protection lest they be killed, it

² Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 955). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

implies that they are in the latter half of the seven years when awful persecution will afflict the people of God, as this protection would not be necessary in the first three and one-half years. The punishments are judgments the witnesses inflict on the world also seem to fit better in the great tribulation period.”³

- They will be clothed in “sackcloth,” indicative of their mourning over the desecration of the Temple and the coming judgment upon the world
- They will be similar to John the Baptist who came wearing sackcloth and preaching repentance because the kingdom of God was at hand

Revelation 11:4 ~ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

- Their description as “the two olive trees and the two lampstands” has a background in Zechariah 4 where a lampstand and two olive trees are mentioned
- Joshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel (the governor) were the olive trees
- Zechariah’s vision was fulfilled partially at that time (with the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel) and will be fulfilled fully by the two witnesses who point to Israel’s salvation in the Millennium
- Their ministry was to be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Zech 4:6)
- In a similar way, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will accomplish their ministry in the power of God, bringing in a spiritual revival of Israel which culminates in the building of the Millennial temple
- “These two miracle-working servants of God are lights for the Lord in the morally and spiritually dark city of Jerusalem. The two witnesses are a reminder that even in the worst of times God does not leave Himself without witnesses.”⁴

Revelation 11:5-6 ~ And 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. 6 These 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.

- The two witnesses will have supernatural power to protect themselves, able to destroy with fire their enemies and anyone who attempts to hurt them
- This will likely be literal fire since God has used fire to destroy His enemies in the past (cf. Lev 10:2)
- They will also have the power to do supernatural miracles similar to Moses and Elijah
- The drought they cause and the waters they turn to blood will undoubtedly add to the torment of the time since one-third of the earth’s fresh water will be poisoned (cf. Rev 8:10-11)
- “Taking all the facts furnished, it is evident that these two witnesses have a combination of the greatest powers ever given prophets on earth, and this accounts for their ability to withstand their enemies for the entire period of 1,260 days.”⁵
- As a result, the unrepentant world will hate them

Their Murder

Revelation 11:7-10 ~ When 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. 8 And 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. 9 Those 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. 10 And those who dwell on the

³ John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 178.

⁴ Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 254.

⁵ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 180.

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.

- At the end of the Tribulation, when their ministry has ended, God will allow Antichrist to kill the two witnesses
- This is the first of 36 references to the “beast,” the Antichrist, in Revelation
- His murder of the two witnesses will undoubtedly win him the support of many people
- Their murder will take place in Jerusalem, here called “Sodom and Egypt” because of the people’s apostasy and rejection of God
- For 3½ days, their bodies will lie in the streets, prevented from being buried by their enemies to show contempt
- God strictly forbade this practice in the OT

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 ~ If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

- Apparently, all the earth will see their dead bodies, probably as a result of TV and Internet capabilities
- “those who dwell on the earth” = a technical term for unbelievers (cf. Rev 6:10; 8:13; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6)
- The wicked, unbelieving enemies of God will gloat and celebrate over the death of the two witnesses by sending gifts to each other
- “This is the only mention of rejoicing on the earth during the entire Tribulation, and it is over the death of God’s true messengers. So overjoyed are the people because their tormentors are dead that this becomes a happy holiday for them.”⁶
- This is a reminder that those who speak God’s truth are always a torment to a wicked world because they pose an obstacle to wickedness



Their Resurrection

Revelation 11:11-12 ~ But 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. 12 And 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.

- The festivities for “Dead Witnesses Day” will be short lived as God will resurrect them from the dead and will take them to heaven

⁶ Charles Ryrie, *Revelation*, 102.

- Their restoration to life and immediate translation to heaven will cause a great panic and fear for everyone watching
- Perhaps the people will realize in this moment that there is a greater power than the Antichrist
- The reason they don't continue their witnessing ministry is because signs and wonders do not make the Gospel more believable

Luke 16:31 ~ But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'

Their Impact

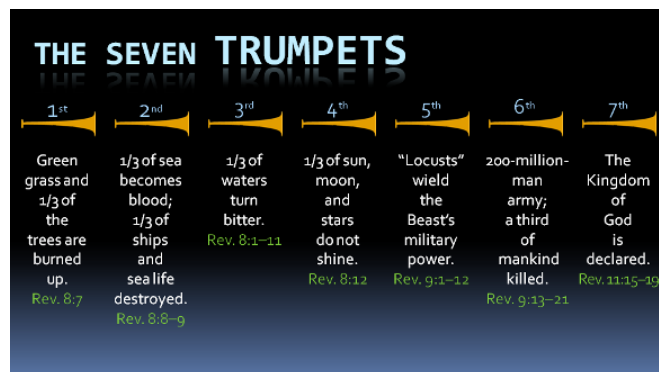
Revelation 11:13-14 ~ And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

- God punctuated the resurrection of the two witnesses with an earthquake which caused a tenth of the city of Jerusalem to collapse and the death of 7,000 people
- The survivors will acknowledge God's power, although that may not necessarily indicate true repentance
- This ended the second woe, leaving only the third and final woe to come

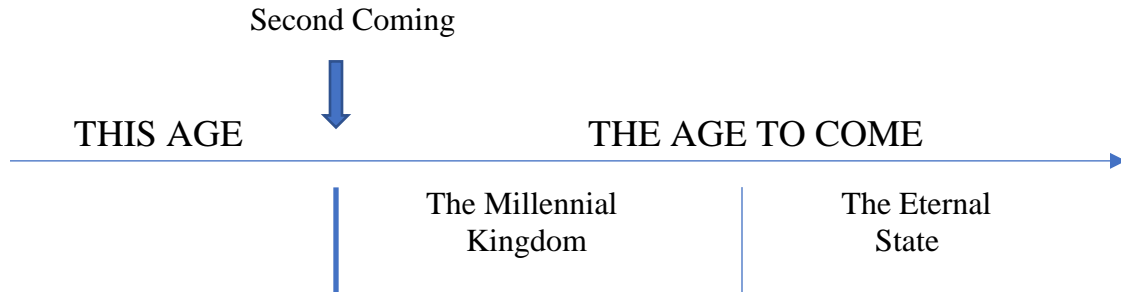
THE 7TH TRUMPET

Revelation 11:15 ~ Then 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."

- Although the sounding of the 7th trumpet occurs here, its contents are not revealed until chapters 15-16, where the bowl judgments are described
- Its sounding marks a significant milestone in the book as it sets in motion the final events leading to the return of Christ and the coming of His earthly kingdom (cf. Ps 2:2; Is 9:6-7; Dan 2:34-35, 44-45; 4:3; 6:26; 7:13-14, 26-27; Zech 14:9; Luke 1:31-33)
- The fact that the earthly kingdom of Christ begins with His Second Coming makes it clear that the period of the 7th trumpet extends from its sounding to His return
- There is no doubt...although much destruction awaits in the bowl judgments, the Lord will officially and unquestionably reclaim the world for Himself
- In fact, the end is so near that the announcement can be made now



- Once Christ’s kingdom is established on the earth, He will reign “forever and ever,” in the first phase of the kingdom (the Millennial kingdom) for 1000 years, then in the final phase of the kingdom (the new heavens and earth) forever



Revelation 11:16-18 ~ And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying, “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. 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.”

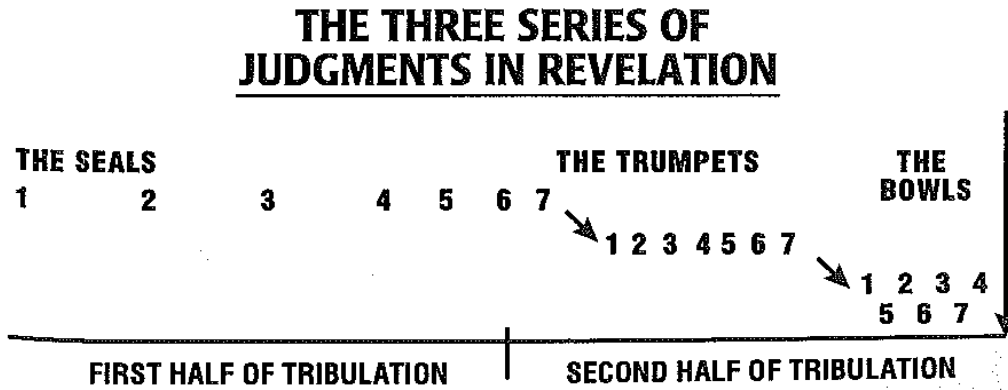
- The certainty and imminency of the Lord reclaiming the earth will elicit great praise from heaven for taking what is rightfully His
- Their rejoicing reflects their exhilaration that their prayers for the kingdom to come (see Matt 6:10) have been answered
- The heavenly chorus praises God for four specific attributes in v. 17:
 - 1) He is Almighty – “O Lord God, the Almighty”
 - 2) He is eternal – “who are and who were”
 - 3) He is powerful – “You have taken Your great power”
 - 4) He is king – “You have begun to reign”
- “That dramatic proclamation is obviously connected to the effects of the seventh trumpet. There is unrestrained joy that the power of Satan is to be forever broken, and Jesus Christ is to reign supreme as King of kings and Lord of lords. With the defeat of the usurper, the question of sovereignty over the world will be settled forever. What Jesus refused to take on Satan’s terms (cf. Luke 4:5-8) He will take on His own terms. Heaven rejoices that the long rebellion of the world against God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is about to end. The setting up of Christ’s long-awaited kingdom is the apex of redemptive history.”⁷
- This will result in God’s “wrath” (v. 18)...and will accomplish two marvelous realities:
 - 1) The judgment of the wicked – a general reference to all future judgments
 - 2) The reward of the righteous – godly OT and Tribulation saints will receive rewards
- In other words, everything that is wrong in the world will be made right

Revelation 11:19 ~ And 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.

- John saw the temple of God in heaven and, in it, the ark of the covenant, symbolizing His presence
- Perhaps this is a reminder of God’s faithfulness just before the outpouring of final judgment

⁷ John MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 310.

- “There may be an antithesis between the temple of God in heaven (v. 19) and the temple of God in Jerusalem during the great tribulation (vv. 1-2). Though the earthly temple may have been desecrated by the beast, its counterpart in heaven reflects the righteousness and majesty of God.”⁸
- Chronologically, the stage is set for the final bowl judgments and the return of Christ which is just around the corner at this point



- The message of the 7th trumpet is that Christ is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth who will one day take back His reign over earth from Satan

⁸ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 186.