

Revelation, Part 13

The Two Witnesses

We continue with a parenthetical insert into the chronological narrative of Revelation. After Revelation 11:14 we sort of briefly pick up the narrative again with mention of the Seventh Trumpet, and then we slip back into a parenthetical interlude in chapter 12 to introduce details to flesh out some events and characters of the Tribulation. This interlude goes all the way to chapter 15 where the Seven Vials or Bowls are introduced. Meanwhile, here in chapter 11 we meet two witnesses and try to understand their meaning and purpose.

Rev 11:1 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 the 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.

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 our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies for 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.

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.

John is given a reed to use as a measuring stick. The reed in view is likely one from the Jordan River Valley. They are long about 15-20 feet and are straight and very light, making a very handy measuring stick. Even though the reed grows to 15-20 feet it is not stated how long this one is but I believe we can assume it is the full size since there is no indication of it being shortened.

The term "the angel stood saying" is not rendered that way in some manuscripts. It may be the voice of God and "it was said" would be a more accurate translation. John is told to "measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there, 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."

He is to measure three things: Temple, the altar, and those who worship there. The Temple of God refers to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The altar is almost certainly the brazen altar. Only priests could go into the Temple but those not priests could approach the brazen altar with their sacrifices. Measuring seems to signify God staking off His claim, especially when we see the outer courts "given to the Gentiles" as excluded. This would suggest the Temple, the Alter, and those who worship there are God's own. We see support for this measuring elsewhere in Scripture. In Zechariah, a man is seen measuring Jerusalem, a scene that portrays God's coming divine judgment on the city. In Ezekiel 40 the Temple of the future Kingdom is measured with a reed. In Revelation 20 the New Jerusalem is measured. The Temple here is the one that exists during the Tribulation. As previously mentioned, plans are already drawn and materials are claimed to be in the process of collection. It is predicted extra-Biblically that with plans and pre-positioned materials the Temple can be built in as little as 9 months, some say even shorter, and probably not longer than 18. This is the Temple that will be desecrated by the antichrist halfway through the Tribulation. Originally constructed for

worship by the Jews, it is taken over by the antichrist and becomes the site of an idol of this wannabe world ruler.

2 Thes 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Rev 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 He performs great signs so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth— by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. 15 He was granted the power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Dan 9:27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week, But in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”

Dan 12:8 Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?” 9 And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. 11 “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

It is significant that John is told to measure not only the Temple and the altar but also the worshipers. This is saying that God is the judge of man's worship and man's character and all must give an account to Him. And since the reed is much longer than a man is tall, he is found not meeting God's divine standard. Some believe God is not only claiming ownership by His measurement of the Temple and the altar, but He is also demonstrating the shortcomings of the worshipers who do not measure up to His standard.

The second part of this verse is instructions not to measure the outer court, as this is given over to the Gentiles for 42 months — 3.5 years. We know from Daniel 9 that the Tribulation is 7 years long. Is this the first half or the second half? Most think this period is the second half after the antichrist has taken over the Temple and instituted idol worship. If so then we would view this as God measuring and finding all: the Temple, the Alter, and the worshipers, not measuring up. And I think that is how we should view this. I will clarify this a bit later.

Rev 11:3 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 the 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.

We are now introduced to two witnesses and some complications. These two prophesy for 1260 days, half the Tribulation. They are two olive trees and two lampstands. Lampstands symbolize their witness for Christ. Olive oil is related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. These are two Spirit-enabled and protected evangelists. They are dressed in sackcloth, which symbolizes humility and service. They have miraculous powers and can destroy those who threaten them. Fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies — like a human flame thrower. They are protected and can't be killed, but can inflict death on others. They have the power to shut up heaven, and this is the first heaven, the sky above, and stop rain

from falling, and no rain falls during the period of their prophesying, 1260 days. They can turn the waters — streams, rivers, and lakes — into blood. They can strike the earth with plagues as often as they wish, and I imagine that will be often. Verse 8 tells us they are in Jerusalem.

These two make life miserable for those on earth. We know that by the reaction of mankind when they are finally killed. At this point, I believe we are mostly dealing with unbelievers, and many if not all are either demon-possessed or heavily demon influenced.

The hatred of these demons is directed at the two witnesses. This is made even worse by their inability to shut them up. Since their witness is primarily to Israel, it seems unbelieving Israel is a primary rejector and hater of these two. Much like they hated the message of Jesus, their Messiah, in the first century. But the world is also hearing this and also hating it. Their message is going worldwide as is suggested later in the text when we see “the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations” rejoicing at their deaths.

There are many opinions concerning the identity of these two witnesses, some reasonable and some outlandish. Some say they are simply two witnesses God will raise up in the last days; they are not special and what is important is their testimony. Some identify one of them as Enoch, who did not experience death and was translated. The Scriptures say man “is appointed to die once” (Heb 9:12) but those alive at the Rapture do not experience death. They were translated. But Enoch was a Gentile, and this is a return to the Age of Israel. That might exclude him.

Some say one is John the Baptist because he came in the Spirit of Elijah who was prophesied to come back before the Lord’s coming. John claimed he was not Elijah. Some say one is Elijah. He did not die if that means anything. Malachi 4:5-6 says Elijah will come back.

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 6 And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

Jewish tradition calls for Elijah's return, and they set a place for him at their Passover Seders. He is associated with fire judgments. He called down fire on the altar that he soaked with water. He also withheld rain from the earth for three years. If they can be identified, Elijah is likely one of the two witnesses.

Moses is potentially the other. He manifested plagues on Egypt. He is intimately associated with Israel and its deliverance. Scripture says he was about to die but no one witnessed his death or saw his body if that means anything. It was both Moses and Elijah that were seen at the transfiguration of Jesus

Mat 17:1 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

It seems logical that Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses. They are associated with Israel, and we often see references to Moses and the Prophets as capturing all the teachings delivered to Israel. Moses and Elijah would capture that concept in two people. And the Matthew passage above, which comes in relation to a passage on the Second Coming, seems to be strong support to me. What is important is their message, not who they are. It is their message that is hated and gets them killed.

Rev 11:7 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 our Lord was crucified. 9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies for 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.

Sidenote: Years ago some misguided and scripturally ignorant greeting card company made a Christmas card with the message, “make merry, and send gifts to one another”.

The scene of their witness is Jerusalem, which is here described in negative terms, “the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified”. Jerusalem is seen as a city of idolatry and sin at this point. The beast that comes out of the pit, the Antichrist, makes war against them and kills them. The word translated "askill" implies the end of life. How they are killed is not specified, but they are not killed until “they finish their testimony”. They have divine protection from death until their purpose in life is complete.

They are not buried, as is demanded by the Law, and their bodies lie in the street in Jerusalem for 3.5 days to be viewed by “the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations”. This suggests they are famous, and since it is illogical that the world would travel to Jerusalem to view the bodies, the event must be broadcast worldwide. The word “street” is a Greek word for “wide street” or what we might call a boulevard. Whatever else that implies, it suggests it is a very public place.

The reaction by mankind to their deaths is generally one of rejoicing. They send gifts to each other like Christmas. There is universal rejoicing at the deaths of these two. Their testimony must have been very convicting for that level of hatred.

When does this occur? We know they testify for 3.5 years and because the Tribulation is 7 years long conveniently divided into two periods of 3.5 years, the tendency is to stuff their testimony into one or the other of those two half periods. Strong arguments have been made for both periods and even for the 3.5 years of their testimony overlapping both halves. My money is on the first half for several reasons:

- First, there is nothing in Scripture that you can point to as proof text for one half or the other.
- If it is the second half, then they must be active during a period of time when things are truly intense with global warfare, which I think would overshadow their testimony.

- With their death (verse 10), mankind celebrates for 3.5 days and sends gifts to each other. If their witness is the second half that would be at the very end of the Tribulation, at its very worst point. It is not logical, in my mind, that man would be celebrating anything beyond personal survival during that period, much less sending gifts to each other.
- Verse 7 coming up says the beast that comes out of the bottomless pit will make war against them. That event is associated with Satan releasing the demons at the mid-point as we saw in chapter 9.
- Their witness must be during a period when they can be heard and it can have an impact. The second half seems way too intense for that to work very well.
- I believe their testimony is mostly during the first half of the Tribulation and overlaps slightly into the second half. I believe their death is one of the first things the antichrist initiates around the time of his setting up the idol in the Temple, which is at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

I think the timing is thus:

- The events of chapter 11 are seen in reverse order
- The witnesses begin their ministry near the beginning of the Trib and witness for the first half when they are most likely to be heard and be effective.
- Israel is under the protection of some kind of a peace treaty for the first half and thus the “beast that comes out of the pit” has not yet established active authority and domination in Jerusalem.
- Satan is released at the mid-point, and that is when the antichrist invades Israel in response to an invasion by the northern federation. (We will see this in more detail when we study the Campaign of Armageddon.)
- And that is when he breaks the treaty.
- And that is when he assumes dictatorial control of Jerusalem.
- And when he sets up the idol in the Temple.
- And that is when he rids himself of the two annoying witnesses.
- The measuring of the Temple, altar and worshipers all take place *after* the antichrist has taken over the Temple, set up the idol, and killed the two witnesses.
- All three (Temple, Alter, and idol worshipers) are found to not measure up to God’s standards, thus the instructions to measure only “the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there”. God claims what is His own.

There is no proof text I can point to that dogmatically says this is the case, but hinting passages and extrapolation suggest it is. There are expositors that agree with me, like Ryre, and those that do not, like Walvoord. Frankly, many expositors say we cannot be dogmatic on any of this relating to the two witnesses, not their identities nor the timing of their testimony.

The Witnesses Resurrected

Rev 11:11 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.

And in the middle of their celebrating and dancing around two rotting corpses ... whoops! God breathes life into the dead witnesses. They stand upright, which must have shocked more than a few, and a loud voice calls to them, "Come up here!" And to the utter amazement of those present, they ascend into heaven in a cloud. All this before the eyes of those who hate them.

Then there is an earthquake and 1/10 of the city is destroyed and seven thousand are killed. Suddenly the doubters are afraid and give glory to God. Some translations use the term "remnant" here and that suggests these "doubters" may now be believers. Their testimony was effective, at least to some degree. It was intense and meaningful enough that they were convicted by it and they hated them for it. They didn't want to hear it, and they rejoiced when they thought they were dead and the tormenting testimony of the witnesses was finally silenced. But then God brought them back to life and brought on an earthquake. Lahaye suggests these events brought on a Jewish revival that swept Israel. They finally responded to the message of the two witnesses when they saw God resurrect them. Elsewhere we see people witness incredible events and they still curse God and do not repent. Here they "fear God and give glory to Him". That sounds like new converts to me.

Were the two witnesses resurrected? There are two camps on this one: One says they died and were resurrected. Many expositors are in this camp. Others say they were not resurrected, but they were resuscitated, that life was breathed into their natural human bodies, and the text seems to suggest this. Verse 11 "... the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet...." We are talking corpses here and they come back to life with no suggestion of a resurrection, that is "corruption that puts on incorruption". Another reason this is not likely a resurrection is that they are Jews, and Israel does not experience their resurrection until the end of the Tribulation, which we will look at later in this study.

I am in the camp they were miraculously restored to life like Lazarus was after being dead for three days. He lived for a time and later died. These two are killed, restored to life and they are taken to heaven in bodily form.

Rev 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

The Seventh Trumpet

Rev 11:15 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.

The Seventh Trumpet sounds, and John hears loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord...." In contrast, previously a single voice made the pronouncement,

and now we have many voices. This sounds to me like the saints rejoicing at the coming fulfillment of God's plan rather than God or an angel pronouncing some judgment.

What is the meaning of this statement, "the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord?" Let's look at a few passages on this.

Dan 2:44 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Dan 7:11 "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

13 "I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.

Zech 14:1 Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. 4 On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. 5 And you

shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

6 On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. 7 And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.

8 On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.

9 And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

The day is coming when the kingdoms of the world will be in total submission to our Lord when He will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This passage in Revelation 11 is looking at that day. “The kingdoms of this world have become...” This is the prophetic use of the aorist participle, already a fact. But we are only in the Seventh Trumpet. We still have Seven Bowls to go so how should this proclamation of the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord be taken?

We are looking at the completion of the Tribulation and the institution of the Millennium reign of Christ. In chapter 11 we have looked at events that encompass the entire seven years of the Tribulation, from the two witnesses to the abomination of desolation to the end and now beyond into the Kingdom. If we take the position that the Seventh Seal encompasses the Seventh Trumpet, and the Seventh Trumpet captures within it all Seven Bowls, then we are seeing in verse 15 with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet all of the events associated with the Seven Bowls and what immediately follows, which is the Second Advent, as well as the judgment of those that brought about all this in the sense of bringing their evil actions to an end. More on this later in this study.

Rev 11:15 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!”

All those who have existed as autonomous earthly kingdoms with their leadership answerable in their minds to no one, with the sounding of the

Seventh Trumpet, the process of destruction of earthly power is underway. The prophetic use of the aorist participle indicates it is already a fact. All earthly dominions are now effectively under the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ with all that is implied in that, which we will look at in a moment.

Note also that the passage says Jesus will reign “forever and ever”. If the 1000-year reign of the King of Kings will begin with the Second Advent, then why does this passage say that? Remember that Revelation, at least this portion relating to the Tribulation is a return to the Age of Israel, so remarks here should be considered in the context of the Age of Israel. Israel viewed the Kingdom as eternal. They knew nothing about these 1000 years we in the Church call the Millennium. While their view of the Kingdom as eternal is completely accurate, it is not completely complete. There are three aspects or sections of the Kingdom:

1. The Millennium
2. The Eternal Kingdom (as a continuation of the Millennium)
3. The spiritual aspects of the Kingdom during the Church Age

Speaking to Israel, both Jesus and John the Baptist said the “Kingdom was at hand,” meaning it was near. Were they wrong? NO, on two points:

1. They were being offered the Kingdom, but they refused the King and lost the Kingdom. It was then offered to the Gentiles.
2. Because of #1, we are experiencing the spiritual aspects of the Kingdom during the Church Age. Many of the spiritual features of the Kingdom are ours to enjoy now.

Some spiritual features available to CA believers:

- We get to experience some aspects of the New Covenant to Israel an unconditional grace covenant resting on the ‘I will of God.
- The new covenant promises the impartation of a renewed mind and heart, which we call regeneration.
- The new covenant provides for restoration to the favor and blessing of God.
- Forgiveness of sin is also included in the covenant, “for I will remove their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34b).
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also included. This is seen by comparing Jeremiah 31:33 with Ezekiel 36:27.
- The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will be manifested, and the will of God will be known by obedient hearts.

- God promised Israel the sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, for it is written “I ... will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them” (Ezek. 37:26–27a). During the Church Age, the Spirit of God lives within us and our bodies are the Temple of God
- The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all the blessings of the New Covenant, for “by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. 9:11). In a Church Age context, the blood of Christ is the foundation of our salvation and our relationship with God.
- In Jeremiah 31 God says they, Israel, will be my people and I will be their God, implying a personal relationship we know only comes through faith. The Church Age believers are God’s *literal* children through the “new birth,” and God the Father is our *literal* Spiritual Father, and as such we are His people and He is our God.

Israel only saw the eternal kingdom not that part of it we call the Millennium. In their Scriptures, it is pictured as both eternal and earthly, whereas the Church sees these other aspects not revealed to Israel. Because of Revelation, we know about the Millennium. Because of the great Pauline epistles, we know about the spiritual aspects of the Kingdom that we enjoy in the Church Age. Even though we are enjoying these benefits promised to Israel, that does not mean the Church has replaced Israel in God’s economy.

Some features of the Kingdom are NOT ours in the Church Age, such as:

- The earthly reign of Christ. Except in the hearts of believers, it is not physical in the same way it will be in eternity.
- We don’t have the universal peace and prosperity that will characterize the Kingdom.
- And earthly kings are far from subject to the will of God like during the Kingdom when Jesus is reigning physically and literally on Earth as King of Kings