

THE TWO WITNESSES

Chapter 11

Throughout history God has faithfully sent His servants to call sinners to repentance. He began by sending them to His people the Israelites, then to the surrounding nations, and ultimately into all the world, *ItoI* preach the gospel to every *IoneI* (Mk. 16:15). And in fulfilment of His will, by the time the end approaches, Mt. 24:14 this gospel of the kingdom *shall* be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. ... Nearing the closing of this present age there will be two exceptionally powerful preachers who will fearlessly proclaim the Gospel and declare God's impending judgment on all who reject their message.

John again becomes involved in the visions he records. Previously he was given the little book (10:8ff.). Now he is given a reed like unto a rod (11:1), which was made from the stalk of a reed-like plant which grew along the Jordan river to a height of about 15-20 feet ... and because they were so long, they were used for measuring. Ezekiel refers to them in Ezel. 40:3-43:17.

John was told by the angel to measure the temple of God *Ivaóç, the inner temple consisting of the Holy Place, - accessible only to the priests, - and the Holy of Holies*, and the altar *Iof burnt offering*, and them that worship therein (Rev. 11:1). He was not to measure the outer court since it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they *[the Gentiles]* tread under foot forty and two months (v.2). The two witnesses to Jerusalem will testify against the nations during these thousand two hundred and threescore days (v.3), This will come to a conclusion when the beast arises out of the bottomless pit, and kill them both witnesses, to the delight of all the people who could not tolerate listening to their message (v.3-10). After three-and-a-half days the two witnesses will be brought back to life, - resurrected, - and they will return to Heaven (ascension, v.11,12), their work having been completed. At the same time as their departure, a great earthquake will destroy a tenth of the city, seven thousand people will be killed, while the remainder will give glory to God (v.13).

As with the Book of Revelation generally, there are various interpretations. Adhering to the principle 'God says what He means and means what He says', this chapter obviously relates to Jerusalem and the Jewish people for that was where they had worshipped Jehovah in the temple. Even though they had a long history of disobedience and spiritual adultery towards God, He never stopped loving them for He had covenanted with the 'father of the nation', Abraham, Gen. 17:7 I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. God repeated this promise many times, and it reached its height when He announced the 'new covenant' through the prophet Jeremiah, Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took

them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. ... Rev. 11 prophetically undergirds the preservation of the Jews and their salvation (cf. Rom. 9-11 ... **Rom. 11:26** all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ²⁷ For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins).

The measuring out of the specific area of the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein (v.1) included the court of the priests, the court of Israel, and the court of the Israelite women. These were the areas in which God's people worshipped, and they were 'measured off' to separate and exclude non-Jews. This was a symbol relating to their preservation and protection.

At the present time, 'the outer court and the city of Jerusalem' is being, - in Jesus' words, - trodden down *Ἰπατέω, trampled* of the Gentiles (Lk. 21:24). John was told Jerusalem would be in the hands of the Gentiles for 'forty-two months', v.2 (1,260 days, v.3; 3½ years). As it is, since 586 BC, outside nations, - such as the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Turks, - have controlled the city.

At the moment, the area in which the Temple of the Lord stood on Mount Zion, - built by Solomon, and rebuilt by Zerubbabel, - a portion of it is now occupied by the Islamic Dome of the Rock. ... This was the area purchased over three thousand years ago by King David from Araunah the Jebusite, who had been using it as a threshing-floor to separate the grain of his harvest from the chaff (II Sam. 24, ²⁵ And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. ... Before the temple was built by Solomon, this was the place David purchased to worship the Lord. Consequently, this ground is Jewish ground, bought and paid for, but presently occupied by pugnacious Islamists intent on keeping it. However, God's Word makes it clear, while there will be the period when they *the Jewish citizens* shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, it is not forever, but until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Lk. 21:24). Following which the Messiah will to the earth and reign from the holy mountain in Jerusalem (Ps. 2:6; Zech. 14). God has decreed a time in the future when the remnant of believing Israelites will be saved, while apostate Jews will incur His Divine wrath (cf. v.8).

Therefore, even though Jerusalem is trodden down by Gentile nations during these ‘forty-two months’, God has not abandoned the Jews and He promises that near the end of time He will send two witnesses, clothed in sackcloth, to prophesy and proclaim and preach, **Rev. 11:3** And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. This is a direct allusion to Zechariah’s vision in which he saw a golden lampstand with seven lamps, flanked by two olive trees from which they drew their supply of oil. In Zechariah, **Zech. 4:2** behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: ³ And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof ... the ‘two witnesses’ represent the two anointed ones standing before the God of the earth (**Rev. 11:4**), and on either side, Joshua the high priest (**Zech. 3:1**) and Zerubbabel the governor (**Zech. 4:6,7**).

As to the identity of the ‘two witnesses’, they will be like Elijah for they will **Rev. 11:6** have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy [*cf. I Kings 17:11*, - and they will also be like Moses who smote the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. Both Elijah and Moses appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, **Mk. 9:4** and they were talking with Jesus. ... They would undoubtedly have been talking about His approaching death on the cross, and the future glory.

Whoever these two witnesses will be, they will be untouchable until they shall have finished their testimony, and when God’s purpose in their ministry concludes, ⁷ the beast [*the antichrist, cf. ch. 13*] that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom [*who sought to abuse God’s messengers, Gen. 19*] and Egypt [*who enslaved God’s people*], where also our Lord was crucified [*Jerusalem*]. ⁹ And 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. ¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth [*the pagan and unbelieving world*] 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. ... They will be hated because of their message and the world will be glad to get rid of them!

This will be when the *beast* (the Antichrist) arises out of the abyss to reign. This *beast* is referred to in Daniel’s vision where a succession of great world empires is symbolized by four fearsome beasts (**Dan. 7**). The fourth beast had ten horns, out of which grew a ‘little horn’ which was greater ‘than his fellows’ (**Dan. 7:20**). This ‘little horn’ made war with the saints, and prevailed against them (v.21) ... ²³ and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. ²⁴ And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. ²⁵ And he shall speak great

words [*blasphemies!*] against the most High, and shall wear out [*afflict!*] the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

However, **Rev. 11:11** after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them [*the two witnesses, - their resurrection!*], and they stood upon their feet; and *great* fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And they heard a *great* voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither [*the two witnesses, - their ascension!*]. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. ... In the Old Testament Elijah was transported to Heaven in a chariot (II Kgs. 2:11,12), and Moses was interred by God secretly (Dt. 34:5,6).

As soon as the two messengers had been removed, and their witness ended, ¹³ 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 [*trembled with fear!*], and gave glory to the God of heaven [*cf. Ezek. 38:19,20!*]. ... This Jewish remnant will recognise Him as their God, and the faithfulness of the two witnesses will be rewarded in the salvation of the remaining surviving inhabitants in Jerusalem, as was also prophesied by Zechariah, **Zech. 12:10** I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. ¹¹ In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem.

At this point, the interlude concludes between the sounding of the sixth trumpet and the preparation for the imminent sounding of the seventh trumpet. From here until the end of chapter nineteen, unprecedented Divine judgment afflicts the earth. The world tried to abolish and ‘cancel’ God but despite the reigns of rulers ... despite what they did to God’s witnesses ... despite the earthquake demolishing a tenth of the city ... despite the horrendous fear which descended upon them ... Despite all of it, God’s will is accomplished according to His Word, for as He has decreed, **Is. 42:8** I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.