

**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY SERIES:
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
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REVELATION 11 – THE TWO WITNESSES**

Revelation 11:1-19

And 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. 2 But 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. 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. 5 And 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. 6 These 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. 7 And 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. 8 And 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. 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 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. 11 And 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. 12 And 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. 13 And 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. 14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. 15 And 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. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, 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. 18 And 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. 19 And 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.

This chapter introduces two prophets who are referred to as the "two witnesses." They are perhaps the last prophets humanity will ever encounter. Their message, supernatural power, death, and resurrection are dramatic moments in the story of the end times. The primary audience of these two will be Jews since they are operating in the city where the Lord died on a stake: Jerusalem. Of course, especially due to the instantaneous worldwide communications that are already in existence, their words and activities will be well known among the gentile world as well. Thus their celebrity will be global and their influence precedes the end of the trumpet judgments, and sets the stage for the final series: the seven "bowl" judgments. John is first given a measuring device and told to measure the temple, altar, and worshippers. This temple, which will be discussed later, may be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation period. Or more likely the prophesied millennial temple (compare Ezekiel chapters 40-42).

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.

In **Ezekiel 40-43**, there is an extended passage where a temple is measured. This temple in Ezekiel is best understood as the temple of the millennial earth and the temple of Revelation 11 seems to be *before* the temple of Ezekiel. Yet there are similarities; the temple in Ezekiel is also measured extensively.

Ezekiel 40:17-19

17 Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, there were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement. 18 And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates was the lower pavement. 19 Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward.

There are a few other Biblical examples of measuring. In Zechariah chapter 2, a man measured Jerusalem, a scene that evidently showed God's coming judgment on the city. In Revelation chapter 21, the New Jerusalem is measured.

Rise and measure the temple of God: Sometimes in the Old Testament, the idea of measuring communicates ownership, protection, and preservation of land, a building, or people and only that owner was allowed to measure them. When Habakkuk prophesied, *He stood and measured the earth*, the idea was that the Lord owned the earth and could do with it as He pleased.

3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. 5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. (Habakkuk 3:3-6)

When this temple here in Revelation is measured, it shows that God knows its' every dimension, and He is in charge. This is one of the glorious, mighty themes of the Book of Revelation.

Chapter 11:17 uses the title *Almighty* for God. The Greek word for *Almighty* is *pantokrater*, and it describes "the one who has his hand on everything." Nine out of the ten times this word is used in the New Testament, it is used in Revelation. This temple will be the scene of great horror and great glory, but God is in charge, working through both the good and bad actions of man. This is an act that is designed to remind the people of God that God I still their protection even in the midst of the shocking and appalling things that are taking place in the Temple.

The temple of God: The identity of this temple is an important matter of interpretation. Many see this temple as a symbol of the church.

* Paul described the church as a temple:

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

* Peter described the church as a temple:

“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:5)

However, if this temple in **Revelation 11** is a symbolic representation of the church, why should it be measured? What is the significance of the courts and the altar – and if the church itself is the temple, who are the worshippers (**those who worship there**)? There is too much specific detail here for this to match the generalized picture of the church as a temple unto God. It is more likely that this is the temple that must be on the earth for the fulfillment of what Daniel, Jesus, and Paul said regarding the *abomination of desolation*. The prophet Daniel told us the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jewish people, bringing sacrifice and offerings to an end. This Antichrist will defile the temple by setting something abominable there

Daniel 9:27

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Daniel 11:31

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

Daniel 12:11

11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Jesus said to look for an abomination standing in the holy place, which would be the pivotal sign that the season of God's wrath was upon the earth

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Matthew 24:15-16

Matthew 24:21

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be

Paul told us that the Antichrist would sit in the temple as God

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

The concept of the *abomination of desolation* is often spiritualized with explaining it as idolatrous worship established in the hearts of God's people (His "temple"). But in what sense can people be called *God's* temple if they worship the Antichrist – an emissary of Satan himself? Certainly this isn't the most plain or straightforward interpretation. The simplest explanation of all these passages is to see a real Jewish temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem, yet to be built – but coming soon.

Abomination of Desolation- An *abomination* is "something that causes disgust or hatred"; and *desolation* is "a state of complete emptiness or destruction." Jesus warned that something (or

someone) that people detested would stand in the temple someday. When that horror occurred, residents of Judea should seek cover without delay. Other translations speak of “the abomination that causes desolation” (NIV), “the sacrilegious object that causes desecration” (NLT), and “that ‘Horrible Thing’” (CEV). The Amplified Bible adds the note that the abomination of desolation is “the appalling sacrilege that astonishes and makes desolate.”

Regardless of whether the abomination of desolation is a person or a thing, Daniel predicted the following:

1. A future ruler will make a treaty with the people of Israel.
2. The terms of this treaty will be for a “week”—which we take to be a period of seven years.
3. Midway through this time, the ruler will gather his troops and *put an end to the sacrifices and offerings in the temple.*
4. At that time the ruler will desecrate the temple, setting up some type of sacrilegious object.
5. The desecration of the temple will continue until the judgment of God is finally meted out on the ruler and his followers, 1,290 days (3½ years and 1 month) later.

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.*

As part of this task, John is told that the outer court of the temple is not to be measured. This area, occupied by "the nations," which is a term for Gentiles, is part of a "trampling" experienced by Jerusalem in the end times (Revelation 11:1–2). There is a theory that the outer courts of this rebuilt temple includes the Islamic Dome of the Rock shrine, which currently stands on the temple mount and is a point of great contention between Jews and Muslims. When the Romans conquered Jerusalem in a.d. 70 they destroyed the city so completely that the foundations of the old temple are not easily found. Most have long assumed that the Dome of the Rock shrine

stands on the place of the old temple. But new research gives some evidence that the temple may have stood to the north where the Dome of the Rock shrine is today, and that if the temple were to be rebuilt at its old place, the Dome of the Rock shrine would be in its outer courts. If this is the case (and the research is by no means settled), then it would explain why the angel told John **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: The **holy city** (Jerusalem) will be **tread underfoot** for a period of **forty-two months**, which equals 1260 days (three and one-half years). This trampling of Jerusalem by Gentiles probably takes place in the last half of the final seven year period described by Daniel 11:26-27 – when the Antichrist pours out his fury on the people of Israel (as described in Revelation 12:13-17 and Matthew 24:15-28). Greek scholar A.T. Robertson said that to **tread underfoot** means “to trample with contempt.”

The two witnesses. (3-6)

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. **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. These have 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.**

God next introduces two un-identified "witnesses" who stand in Jerusalem and proclaim Him.

The character of their ministry is prophetic (**they will prophesy**); they preach and demonstrate repentance (**clothed in sackcloth**), and they have an effective ministry (**I will give power**).

“Such power, in fact, that they are able to witness for 1,260 days in spite of the antagonism of the

world.” Obviously, at this time, that message will not be well-received. **These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands:** The witnesses have a unique, continual empowering from the Holy Spirit, as shown in Zechariah’s olive trees and oil lamps picture (**Zechariah 4:2-3 and 4:14**).

Zechariah 4:1-3

1. And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. 2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and 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.

Zechariah 4:14 “Then said he, **These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.**”

The passage from Zechariah had its first application to two men in Zechariah’s day: Joshua and Zerubbabel. “Just as these two witnesses were raised up to be lampstands or witnesses for God and were empowered by olive oil representing the power of the Holy Spirit, so the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will likewise execute their prophetic office.

The identity of the two witnesses.

- a. Many interpreters see the two witnesses as symbolic of the entire church in the tribulation period or as symbols of the law and the prophets. But how can so many *specific details* in their ministry be reconciled with such a symbolic interpretation?
- b. The most plain and straightforward interpretation sees them as two real individuals, not symbolic representations.
- c. Unfortunately, the list is not short of modern nuts who think *they* are one of the two witnesses. I think that if you added them all together, there would be about 144,000 of them!
- d. Who they are must not be terribly important, or we would have been told exactly who they are!

Generally, if the two witnesses are identified with any two individuals from the past, the leading candidates are Elijah, Moses, or Enoch. Or, perhaps these are merely two believers ministering in the *spirit and power* of these great men, even as John the Baptist went forth in the *spirit and power of Elijah* (Luke 1:17 and Matthew 7:12-13).

1. Some think Enoch is one of the witnesses because he was carried up to heaven by God (Genesis 5:25).

2. Some think Elijah is one of the witnesses because:

- His ministry seems like one of these two witnesses (2 Kings 1 and James 5:17-18).
- He was carried up to heaven (2 Kings 2:11).
- Enemies of Elijah were destroyed by fire (2 Kings 1).
- It is specifically prophesied that Elijah will return before the end of the age (Malachi 4:5-6).
- Elijah had a unique “conference” with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6).

3. Some think Moses is one of the witnesses because:

- His ministry seems like one of these witnesses (Exodus 9:2-21)
- God seems to have a special purpose for the body of Moses that Satan wanted to defeat (Jude 9).
- The enemies of Moses were destroyed by fire (Numbers 16:35).
- Moses had a unique “conference” with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6).

Some believe the two witnesses must be Enoch and Elijah, because neither of them died a natural death and were instead carried to heaven, and [Hebrews 9:27](#) says that it is appointed for men to die once – so Enoch and Elijah must return to die on the earth. This is a misunderstanding of [Hebrews 9:27](#), which is a principle rather than an absolute, immutable law. For example, Lazarus and others were raised from the dead and apparently died *twice* – yet this does not disprove

Hebrews 9:27. The entire church on earth at the time of the rapture will not die, but be carried to heaven. **Hebrews 9:27** stands as a principle, and there are a few notable exceptions which ultimately serve to prove the rule, not deny it. There may be good reasons for considering Enoch and Elijah as the two witnesses, but the principle of **Hebrews 9:27** is not among those good reasons.

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies: The two witnesses have special supernatural protection from God, similar to Elijah's in 2 Kings 1:14-18 where fire comes down from heaven to consume his enemies. Everyone who tries to hurt them is obliterated by fire from the witnesses' own mouths. These men are also able to bring various plagues on earth, such as drought (Revelation 11:3-6) similar to the power Elijah (James 5:17-18) and Moses (Exodus 7:12) had.

These have power to shut heaven... they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire:.

Finally, these two men will be murdered by "the beast that rises from the bottomless pit."

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. 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. Then *those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 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.*

Most interpreters believe this is the same "beast" described in Revelation chapter 13, also referred to as the Antichrist. To the unbelieving world, this will seem like a major victory—their leader will have defeated those claiming to speak for God. The world will be so overjoyed at this

triumph that they will celebrate and exchange gifts, while leaving the bodies to rot in the streets.

Thanks to modern technology, it's entirely possible that people across the entire world can see these events happen in real time (Revelation 11:7–10).

The two witnesses are killed in the city of Jerusalem, which is described in three illustrative terms.

- As **Sodom**, speaking of immorality.
- As **Egypt**, speaking of oppression and slavery.
- As **the great city**, a term often applied to *Babylon*, the headquarters of Antichrist (Revelation 16:19, 17:18, 18:10, 18:16, 18:18, 18:19, 18:21).

Any city in love with the Antichrist, or entering into a covenant with him, could be called **Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon**.

However, their ministry is *not* cut short. They fully accomplish their task (**when they finish their testimony**). God be thanked, we cannot be taken off of this earth until we **finish our testimony**. The devil does not have power over our lives. We are witnesses of the Lord, and He will protect us until our testimony is finished.

3. (11-14) The reviving of the two witnesses.

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. 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. 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. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

After three and a half days, however, the joy of the world will turn into shock and horror. God will resurrect the two witnesses in full view of the world. Announced by a voice, and carried by a cloud, they will be taken into heaven. **They stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them:** As this happens before the eyes of the watching world, the enemies of these two witnesses are horrified and astonished. **Come up here:** The earth was not worthy of these two witnesses, so God simply calls them home, and **they ascended to heaven in a cloud.** At the same time, a massive earthquake will strike Jerusalem, destroying a tenth of the city and killing seven thousand. Those who survive will not honor God deliberately, but their fearful reactions will demonstrate His glory (Revelation 11:11–13). This earthquake will bring judgment, and moves many to give glory to God. But it remains to be seen if this will become true repentance unto salvation. Earlier, those reading Revelation were warned about certain "woes" yet to come. The first and second of these were the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, respectively. These were far worse than the terrible trumpet judgments that came before. The third woe will be inaugurated with the seventh trumpet.

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!*"

Just as the seven trumpet judgments were all part of the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet will contain individual events, known as the "bowl judgments." In the meantime, as the seventh trumpet sounds, heaven praises God for His righteous judgment on evil (Revelation 11:14–19). The next few chapters will discuss seven major figures in the end times, including the Antichrist

and the false prophet. Chapter 16 will resume the sequence of judgments and begin bringing the book of Revelation to a close.

(15) The seventh trumpet finally sounds.

a. **Then the seventh angel sounded:** The seventh seal brought forth a profound silence

(Revelation 8:1); the seventh trumpet initiates joy at the inevitable resolution. There can't be a more glorious proclamation than this:

The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!

In the ancient Greek grammar, the verb tense of **have become** indicates an absolute certainty about Jesus' coming and reign, even *before* the fact is accomplished. How can there be such joy, when the King is not reigning completely yet? At the headquarters of a successful political campaign on election night, there is joy, even though it will be a while until their candidate is actually installed into office. The joy anticipates a certain result.

And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 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. 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."

This thanksgiving isn't to thank God that He has *already* done this; but that the hour has come for it to take place, and that these things are permanently set in motion. Now comes the fitting time for judgment, reward, and destruction. **The nations were angry, and Your wrath has**

come: God's punishment matches the crime; there is nothing arbitrary about it. The nations are **angry** with God and He responds with **wrath**; those that **destroy** the earth are themselves destroyed. They are angry because God comes to rule. The world wants *anything* but the reign of God. As it says in a parable of Jesus, *We will not have this man to reign over us* (**Luke 19:14**).

(19) The temple in heaven is opened.

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 **ark** refers to God's throne, the place where the previously mentioned resolution will come from. In the Old Testament, this was the earthly representation of God's throne – to emphasize God's faithfulness. The symbol of God's faithfulness in bestowing grace on His people, and inflicting vengeance on His people's enemies.

And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail:

The great and awesome phenomenon at the opening of the temple and the revelation of the ark show that the presence of the Lord is *there*; it is reminiscent of God's manifested presence at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19).