

Revelation 11 Commentary

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Revelation 11:1 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.

a reed like a measuring rod

Reed is [κάλαμος](#) [kalamos], the same word which described the mock scepter given to Jesus along with His crown of thorns (Mat. 27:29). The soldiers used this “scepter” to beat Him on the head (Mat. 27:30; Mark 15:19).

Kalamos (measuring rod) refers to a reedlike plant that grew in the Jordan Valley to a height of fifteen to twenty feet. It had a stalk that was hollow and lightweight, yet rigid enough to be used as a walking staff (cf. Eze. 29:6) or to be shaved down into a pen (3Jn. 1:13). The stalks, because they were long and lightweight, were ideal for use as measuring rods.¹

Later, one of the seven angels (having one of the seven bowls of the seven last plagues) talks with John and uses a golden reed to measure the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:15+). *Measuring rod* is [ῥαβδῶ](#) [hrabdō] which is translated elsewhere by “rod,” “staff,” or “scepter.”² This is the word used for the *rod* of iron by which the rule of Jesus is asserted (Rev. 2:27+; 12:5+; 19:15+).

And the angel stood, saying

This phrase, *the angel stood*, is omitted by the [MT](#) and [NU](#) texts which render the voice speaking with John anonymously: “someone said.”³ If we follow the reading of the [TR](#) text, then the angel speaking with John would seem to be the angel of Revelation 10+ which told him he must “prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” (Rev. 10:11+). A few verses later, the voice speaking with John asserts ownership of the two witnesses as if speaking for God in the first person: “And I will give *power* to **my** two witnesses” [emphasis added] (Rev. 11:3a+). Whether the voice is that of an angel or from the throne, the speaker has full divine authority.

measure

In Ezekiel’s vision of the mountain of the Lord’s house, an angelic messenger measures the [Millennial Temple](#) using a measuring rod (Eze. 40:2ff). Ezekiel is told to “look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you, for you *were* brought here so that I might show *them to you*. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.” (Eze. 40:4-5). Measurements were made of both the inner temple and common area (Eze. 42:15-20). Similarly, Zechariah sees a “man with a measuring line in his hand” (Zec. 2:1) who measures the dimensions of Jerusalem. The measurement appears to testify of its immense perimeter in a future time of blessing (Zec. 2:4-5). John is told to “measure” three things: (1) the temple of God; (2) the altar; and (3) those who worship there. The temple and altar are to be literally measured whereas the presence of the worshipers is merely to be noticed and recorded.⁴ The act of measuring indicates a separation between a portion which God recognizes (the temple, altar, and worshipers) versus a portion he rejects (the outer court, see below).

Verses 1 and 2 indicate there will be a distinction between Jew and Gentile in this period. The two earlier Jewish temples were divided into four areas: first, the sanctuary itself, which only priests (not even Levites) could enter (this is called the temple of God); second, the area the men of Israel could enter (this included the altar); third, the court of the women in which Israelite women worshiped God; and finally, the court of the Gentiles. John’s instruction was to measure the first three, thus symbolizing God’s interest in, and protection of, the Jewish nation. Chapter 12 confirms this interpretation, for it describes the divine protection symbolized here.⁵

temple of God

[Τ ν να ν το θεο](#) [Ton naon tou theou]. The word for *temple*, [να ν](#) [naon] has two general meanings in relation to the house of God in Jerusalem. “(1) In a narrower sense, the inner sanctuary within a sacred precinct [τ ἱερόν](#) [to hieron]) where the divine being resides *shrine, (inner) temple* (Mat. 27:51); (2) in a broader yet specific sense, the sanctuary in Jerusalem consisting of the (outer) Holy Place and the (inner) Holy of Holies *temple* (Mat. 26:61).”⁶ The term probably refers to the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, where only the priests were allowed access. The inner sanctuary, where the divine being resided, is where Jesus predicted the “abomination of desolation” would one day stand in the holy place ([τόπ ἁγίῳ](#) [topō hagiō], Mat. 24:15). The man of sin, the son of perdition, will also sit in “the temple of God [Τ ν να ν το θεο](#) [ton naon tou theou]” (2Th. 2:4). This refers to a rebuilt temple yet future to our time, often called the [Tribulation Temple](#).

Five distinct temples are alluded to by the Scriptures. Solomon’s temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes pillaged and consecrated to Jupiter the temple of Zerubbabel in 168 B.C. Herod’s magnificent temple was reduced to ashes by Titus in A.D. 70. The fourth temple, the edifice described in this chapter, is to be the focus of attention during the Great Tribulation. Finally, the fifth temple will be the [Millennial Temple](#) described in Eze. 40-47.⁷

Much confusion has been needlessly brought to bear upon this passage by interpreters who insist on ignoring the literal details of the description and spiritualizing nearly everything as pertaining to “the church.” Barnhouse summarizes:

One commentator has brought together on one page the interpretations of his fellows in a way that will explain much of the confusion that has arisen out of this passage. He points out that almost universally the commentators have tried to force the church into the picture that is painted here when, of course, the church is not in view at all. “The temple is here figuratively used of the faithful portion of the church of Christ.” The command is given to John “to measure the temple of God” in order to call his attention to “the size of the church of God.” The “altar” is again, in the mind of one commentator, “the church.” The “outer court” signifies “a part of the church of Christ.” The “Holy City,” according to these expositors is “always in the Apocalypse the title of the church.” The “two witnesses” represent “the elect church of God,” says one (embracing both Jew and Christian), “and the witness which she bears concerning God, especially in the Old and New Testaments.” “The twelve hundred and sixty days” constitutes the period “during which the church although trodden under foot, will not cease to prophesy.” Concerning the war of the beast against them we are told, “The whole vision is symbolical, and the intention is to convey the idea that the church, in her witness for God, will experience opposition from the power of Satan” and so on and on and on. . . . “What wonder, when such diverse expressions are forced to mean the same thing, if there be endless confusion. Literalism may not solve every perplexity, but it does not lead into any such inexplicable obscurity as this.”⁸

We can avoid much of this mischief by following the [Golden Rule of Interpretation](#). See [Temple of God](#) and [Tribulation Temple](#). This temple is to be contrasted with the “temple of God . . . in heaven” (Rev. 11:19+).

the altar

The altar was the location where sacrifices were offered. We know that the [Tribulation Temple](#) will have an altar because during [The 70th Week of Daniel](#) the [Antichrist](#) is said to make a covenant which appears to provide, in part, for sacrifices to be offered on such an altar. In opposition to his covenant “in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering” (Dan. 9:27b). “By being mentioned separately from the Naos (in which was the golden altar of incense) it looks as though the brazen altar of sacrifice was intended. The word will suit either.”⁹

those who worship there

[το ς προσκυνο ντας](#) [tous proskynountas], present tense participle, *the ones presently worshipping*. At the time of the measurement, worship is in progress. There is an intentional contrast between John’s instructions to measure the ones worshipping in the temple versus to leave out the outer court which is given to the nations. Worship within the temple is recognized by God, whereas the activity of the outer court is dismissed.

Revelation 11:2 “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.

leave out the court which is outside the temple

[Τ ν α λ ν τ ν ζωθεν το ναο κβαλε ζωθεν](#) [Tēn aulēn tēn ezōthen tou naou ekbale ezōthen], a play on words: *the courtyard outside the temple you throw outside*. The phrase *throw outside* ([κβαλε ζωθεν](#) [ekbale ezōthen], *expel outside, cast out*)¹⁰ emphasizes the rejection of the outer court, probably due to God’s disfavor. *Court* is [α λ ν](#) [aulēn]: “An enclosed space, open to the sky, near a house, or surrounded by buildings.”¹¹ The [LXX](#) uses the identical term to describe God’s courts ([α λ ν](#) [aulēn]) which are trampled ([πιτατε ν](#)

[patein]) by those who are godless in behavior, yet come offering sacrifice at the temple (Isa. 1:12, also Ex. 27:9).

In the Temple which had been built by Herod, in which Jesus walked when He was here upon earth, the outer court was marked off from the inner one where Israel was permitted to go and it was separated by "the middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14). Beyond this no Gentile could go. Paul, accused of breaking this rule, and bringing Gentiles into the holy place, was almost destroyed by angry Jews (Acts 21:28).¹²

In the time of the Second Temple [the Jews] had erected a boundary fence, the *Soreg*, between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Israelites, with a warning inscription promising death to any non-Israelite who passed beyond it into the Court of the Israelites. The New Testament (Acts 21:27-28) records a Jewish crowd's violent reaction to Paul when they mistakenly believed that he had taken a Gentile proselyte (Titus) into the Temple to offer sacrifice.¹³

it has been given

The portion of the temple which is not under the control of the Jews *has been given* to the nations to tread. Once again, we see the sovereign purpose of God in the events surrounding the temple during the Tribulation. It is *He* who has ultimately given control of the outer court to the Gentiles. See commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#). When Asaph contemplated the apparent success of the wicked, he lamented how God's "enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place; they set up their banners *for* signs . . . They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground" (Ps. 74:1-7). Elsewhere, he decries, "the nations have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled" (Ps. 79:1). In the setting of Asaph, the temple had been completely destroyed (cf. Isa. 63:18). Here, only a portion of the temple is in the hands of the nations.

the Gentiles

Gentiles is [ἔθνη](#) [ethnesin], often translated as *nations* in Revelation (Rev 2:26[±]; Rev 5:9[±]; Rev 7:9[±]; Rev 10:11[±]; Rev 12:5[±]; Rev 13:7[±]; Rev 14:6[±]; Rev 15:4[±]; Rev 16:19[±]; Rev 17:15[±]; Rev 18:3[±]; Rev 19:15[±]; Rev 20:3[±]; Rev 21:24[±]; Rev 22:2[±]). These are the *nations* which John was just told to prophesy about (Rev. 10:11[±]). Hence, he is already beginning to fulfill that command. The emphasis on a portion of the temple precincts being given to the Gentiles (or nations) supposes that the main part of the temple proper is under the jurisdiction of non-Gentiles, that is, the Jews.

This casting out of the court of the Gentiles because it is the court of the Gentiles, proves the present dispensation at an end. Now Gentiles and Jews stand on the same level. The one has no prerogatives or rights above the other. In the Church there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but all nationalities and conditions in life yield to one common brotherhood and heirship. The text, therefore, tells of a new order of things. . . . the Jew is again in the foreground for the fathers' sakes, and the Gentiles are thrust back.¹⁴

they will tread the holy city underfoot

There is only one *holy city* within Scripture: Jerusalem (Ne. 11:1, 18; Isa. 48:2; 52:1-2; Dan. 9:24; Mat. 4:5; 27:53). In some cases, the phrase refers to the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven (Rev. 21:2[±]; Rev 22:19[±]), but here it is clearly the earthly Jerusalem because a portion of it has been given to the nations to *tread* . . . *underfoot*. The treading of the holy city is typified by the similar occupation and desecration of the sanctuary by Antiochus Epiphanes in the days of the Maccabees:¹⁵

Then I heard a holy one speaking; and *another* holy one said to that certain *one* who was speaking, "How long *will* the vision *be*, *concerning* the daily *sacrifices* and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to **betrampled under foot?**" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed." (Dan. 8:13-14) [emphasis added]

As in Daniel 11, treading underfoot speaks of having authority over the city, just as when the mighty angel *stands* on the sea and land indicating his authority over the globe (Rev. 10:2[±], Rev 10:5[±]). Here, the Gentiles, or nations, exert authority over the holy city while the Jews have authority over the temple of God and the altar. The trampling of the holy city also speaks of *occupation without appreciation*—the occupiers treat that which is holy as a common thing, failing to understand its significance in the eyes of God (Heb. 10:29). God has promised to make the *earthly* Jerusalem "a praise in all the earth" (Isa. 62:7), but the nations steadfastly refuse to acknowledge God's plan for Jerusalem which includes her ownership by Israel. In some settings, treading or trampling may also denote destruction (Isa. 63:18). When Jesus responded to his disciples' question concerning when Herod's temple would be destroyed (Luke 21:7), he indicated that following the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews would "be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). Thus, this trampling is an indication that during the time period which John sees in his vision the "times of the Gentiles" have still not come to a close. "John indicates that Jerusalem is still in Gentile power and that from the beginning of the series of judgments, which this parenthesis interrupts, until the end of the Gentile dominion is three and one-half years."¹⁶ Jesus indicated that the trampling would take place

after the destruction of A.D. 70—which supports the [futurist interpretation](#) that takes this temple to be a [tribulation temple](#) yet to be built. The [preterist interpretation](#) holds that the trampling described here occurs *before* the temple is destroyed—for if this is Herod's temple, as they maintain, then the nations are trampling *while it still stands*. Yet the sequence indicated by Jesus (Luke 21:24) is just the opposite: *first* Jerusalem is destroyed and the Jews dispersed among the nations, *then* the trampling begins. The trampling only ends when the “times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled and jurisdiction of Jerusalem returns fully and permanently to the Jews.¹⁷

The Times of the Gentiles can best be defined as that long period of time from the Babylonian Empire to the Second Coming of the Messiah during which time the Gentiles have dominion over the City of Jerusalem. This does not rule out temporary Jewish control of the city, but all such Jewish control will be temporary until the Second Coming. Such temporary control was exercised during the Maccabean Period (164-63 B.C.), the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (A.D. 66-70), the Second Jewish Revolt (the Bar Cochba Revolt) against Rome (A.D. 132-135), and since 1967 as a result of the Six Day War. This too, is temporary, as Gentiles will yet trod Jerusalem down for at least another 3 1/2 years (Rev. 11:1-2⁺). Any Jewish takeover of the City of Jerusalem before the Second Coming must therefore be viewed as a temporary one and does not mean that the Times of the Gentiles have ended. The Times of the Gentiles can only end when the Gentiles can no longer tread down the City of Jerusalem.¹⁸

It is our belief that at the liberation of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War, the bizarre circumstance where the Jews gave control of the [Temple](#) Mount back into the hands of Muslims rather than retaining control of the Mount and removing the [Dome of the Rock](#) is a modern-example of the hand of God which has determined that the time has not yet been fulfilled for Israel to obtain exclusive and lasting control over all of Jerusalem. How significant it is today that most nations of the world refuse to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel while pressuring the Jews to continue to subject this historic site of Judaism to support an Islamic religious site while at the same time restricting the religious access of their own people. One would think this situation sufficiently strange to obtain the attention of the atheist who denies the divine hand in history! It is interesting that the same root word ([πατεω](#) [pateō]) which denotes the *trampling* of the courts in Isaiah (LXX) appears in this chapter to describe the *treading underfoot* of the holy city by the nations. Even though the nations occupy the holy city, it would seem that God's response to their activities may be akin to how he responded to the Jews when they offered sacrifices which appeared righteous externally, but when in fact their hearts were far from him:

When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. (Isa. 1:12-15)

for forty-two months

The “holy city” which is to be tread underfoot is none other than the “holy city” upon which [the seventy weeks of Daniel](#) are determined (Dan. 9:24), of which one-half of the final week is mentioned here as “forty-two months” and as “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Rev. 11:3⁺). The treading of the holy city is said to last forty-two months. This corresponds to half of the final week of [the 70 weeks of Daniel](#) (Dan. 9:24-27). But which half? John is told not to measure the outer court because it “has been given” (aorist tense, typically an event occurring prior to the time of the writer) to the Gentiles. Then John is told “They will tread” (future tense) the holy city for *forty-two months*. If the treading of the holy city by the Gentiles is taken to be simultaneous with their authority over the outer court, then it occurs while the Jews are allowed to worship in the temple and sacrifice on the altar. This would be the *first half* of the final week—before sacrifices are brought to an end (Dan. 9:27) and the two witnesses are overcome by the beast (Rev. 11:3⁺). If the treading is taken to follow the possession of the outer court by the Gentiles, then the *forty-two months* could denote the *last half* of the week: after the [Antichrist](#) has violated his covenant (Dan. 9:27), the Abomination of Desolation occurs (Mat. 24:15 cf. Dan. 11:31; Dan. 12:11),¹⁹ the Antichrist exerts his global authority (Dan. 7:25; 12:7, 11-12; Rev. 13:5-8⁺), and the Jews flee to the wilderness where they are protected by God (Mat. 24:16-20; Rev. 12:6⁺, 14⁺). See [Events of the 70th Week of Daniel](#). The last half of the week is probably in view so that the termination of the *forty-two months* corresponds to the end of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) with the arrival of Christ and the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom. Jeremiah prophesied the restoration which would follow [Jacob's Trouble and the Great Tribulation](#):

‘Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man *with* his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; and it *is* **the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it**. For it shall come to pass **in that day**,’ Says the LORD of hosts, **‘That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them**. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.’ (Jer. 30:6-9) [emphasis added]

Jeremiah explains the reason the times of the Gentiles will come to an end is so that the nation of Israel will be free to serve God under the Messianic economy of the [Millennial Kingdom](#). It is God's jealousy over His chosen nation which will bring this about. Woe to the nations who will fail to appreciate God's zeal for Israel!

‘Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD, ‘Nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make *him* afraid. For I *am* with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; **Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you.** But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.’ (Jer. 30:10-11) [emphasis added]

The forty-two months correspond to 3 1/2 years of 360-days each. See [Prophetic Year](#).



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.”

my two witnesses

The [IR](#) text indicates that it is an angel which is speaking with John (Rev. 11:1⁺). Yet here, the speaker speaks of the two witnesses as being his own. Either (1) the angel is speaking in the first person for God; (2) the angel speaking to John is the second person of the Trinity (see [Divine Similarities](#)); or (3) the voice is that of God directly from the throne. These witnesses are said to be *my* witnesses because, like the prophets who preceded them, they are dedicated to speaking forth His word and judgments as His servants (Rev. 10:7⁺). There are *two witnesses* because two is the number of witness prescribed by the Law of Moses (Num. 35:30; Deu. 17:6; 19:5 cf. Mat. 18:16. 2Cor. 13:1.). See [Two: Witness](#). *witnesses* is [μάρτυριον](#) [martyrin] from which we get the word *martyr*. Like many of God’s witnesses during the Tribulation, these two individuals will be steadfast in their faith unto death (Rev. 11:7⁺ cf. Rev. 2:10⁺; 12:11⁺; 20:4⁺). They cannot be killed until “they finish their testimony ([μάρτυριον](#) [martyrian])” (Rev. 11:7⁺). The saints and even the angels are witnesses in the sense that they share in the “testimony ([μάρτυριον](#) [martyrian] of Jesus” (Rev. 19:10⁺). The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was to empower the church to be a witness to Jesus (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 13:31). Since their ministry is reminiscent of Moses (plagues, turning water to blood) and Elijah (consuming with fire, shutting off rain from heaven), their message will undoubtedly be that of both *the law* and *the prophets*—the writings which are frequently mentioned as a dual witness elsewhere (Mat. 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16, 29; Lk 24:44; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 26:22; 28:23; Rom. 3:21). The Jewishness of this chapter, and especially the ministry of these two witnesses, must be seen within the larger context of God’s promises to restore Israel. In an important parallel passage, the apostle Paul anguishes over Israel’s need of the gospel:

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. . . . How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? . . . But I say, did Israel not know? . . . I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! . . . For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead? [Eze. 37] . . . God is able to graft them in again . . . For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” (Ro 10:1, 14-15, 19; 11:11, 15, 23, 25-26a)

These two witnesses are among the “beautiful feet” which preach the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15) to Israel. Their ministry involves the entire earth, but takes place in Jerusalem and has all the markings of [OT](#) Jewish prophets. They are a key element in the plan of the Deliverer to “turn ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26) in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom to come. “The purpose of God

to make Israel and her land the centre round which He shall gather the nations, is not frustrated, but postponed. Our chapter presents the initial stages in the development of this glorious earthly purpose.”²⁰The breadth of interpretations expositors have assigned to these two witnesses is legend: from literal individuals such as the apostles James and Peter²¹ to symbolic ideas such as the church preaching Christ in the two testaments.²²There are two forks in the road of interpretation on the way to determining who these individuals might be. The first fork which separates interpreters is whether the text describes symbols, institutions, or individuals?

Symbols, Institutions, or Individuals?

Symbolic	Corporate	Literal
“Expositors within [the symbolic] category agree on one point: The witnesses are not human beings. These scholars vary, however, in their opinion of what the witnesses represent. The main interpretations in this group are these: (1) The two witnesses represent the testimony of the church from the Law and the prophets, (2) the Old and New Testaments, (3) the Word of God and the Spirit of God.” ²³	“Ten views on the witnesses’ identity have been suggested in this category: (1) the church in its function of witness-bearing, (2) the church represented in the east by the Paulikians and the west by the Waldenses, (3) believers who suffer martyrdom, (4) a literal group of people (i.e., the number two may be symbolic of a large multitude), (5) the Christian church and the Christian state, (6) the line of witnesses in the Eastern and Western church against the papacy, for 1,260 years (taking each day for a year, Rev. 11:3+) until the sixteenth century, when it was exterminated, (7) Israel and the church, (8) the house of Israel and the house of Aaron, (9) the believing Jewish remnant during the tribulation, (10) the two nations descended from Abraham (i.e., the Arabs and the Israelites).” ²⁴	“Expositors in this category agree that the witnesses are two individuals, but they disagree on who these people are, as exemplified by the following ten interpretations: (1) Elijah and Moses, (2) Elijah and Enoch, (3) Elijah and John the Baptist, (4) Elijah and John the Apostle, (5) Elijah and an unidentified person, (6) Peter and James, (7) Peter and John, (8) Peter and Paul, (9) the two high priests, Ananus and Jesus, who nobly withstood the zealots in Jerusalem, and were massacred by them, and (10) two unknown persons who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future.” ²⁵ “These witnesses are <i>individuals</i> . No reader of the account, having no preconceived theory to defend, would ever think of taking them for bodies, or successions of people. All the early fathers, from whom we have any testimony on the subject, regarded them as two individual men.” ²⁶

We concur with many other interpreters who see abundant evidence indicating the witnesses are to be understood as two individuals:²⁷

The classical use of [μάρτυς](#) [martyrs] is “in the sense of human attestation or testimonial.” The word thus implies that the “witnesses” ([μάρτυροι](#) [martyrsin]) are human beings. This consideration is further suggested by John’s use of the article [το](#) [ς](#) [tois], which indicates specific persons. Elsewhere in the New Testament [μάρτυς](#) [martyrs] is always personal (Mat. 18:16; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 1Ti. 5:19; Heb. 10:28; Rev. 1:5+). Therefore symbolic interpretations must be rejected. Second, Revelation 11:3+ states that the two witnesses “shall prophesy” . . . The activity of prophesying, then, is personal and involves personal beings. This too suggests that symbolic interpretations are inadequate. Third, the overall context in which the activity of the two witnesses is described (Rev. 11:3-12+) supports the preferred view. In these verses witnesses, depicted as individuals, speak (Rev. 11:3+, 6+); are given power to kill their enemies (Rev. 11:5+); are heard, handled, and hated (Rev. 11:3+, 7+, 10+); have mouths, ears, and feet (Rev. 11:5+, 11-12+) ; wear “sackcloth,” and after their martyrdom John saw their “dead bodies” ([τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν](#) [to ptōmata autōn], Rev. 11:8-9+). By no stretch of the imagination, then, can an interpreter regard these witnesses as other than real persons.²⁸

Who are the Witnesses?

Now we reach the second fork in the interpretive road: having established that the two witnesses are best understood as historic individuals, which individuals might they be? The most popular suggestions include: (1) the return of Moses and Elijah; (2) the return of Enoch and Elijah; (3) two future prophets who minister in the power and character of Moses and Elijah.

Identifying the Witnesses

Identity	Reasons For	Reasons Against

Moses and Elijah²⁹	"Based on the miracles they are to perform, some have said they are Elijah (commanding fire to devour enemies and shutting up the sky so that it does not rain, Rev. 11:5-6[±]; cf. 1K. 17:1; 2K. 1:10-14), and Moses (water turned to blood, the earth smitten with every plague, Rev. 11:6[±]; cf. Ex. 7:20; 9:14 ; etc.).³⁰ "Some writers argue that Moses and Elijah must be the two witnesses because their return is prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and Malachi 4:5-6."³¹ "Both [Moses and Elijah] left the earth in unusual ways. Elijah never died, but was transported to heaven in a fiery chariot (2K. 2:11-12), and God supernaturally buried Moses' body in a secret location (Deu. 34:5-6; Jude 1:9)."³² "Moses appeared with Elijah at the transfiguration (Mat. 17:13) . . . the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) would be joining in witness unto Christ during the announcement of the coming of the King."³³ The transfiguration is connected with the second coming (Mat. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27) which these prophets help usher in. Some claim that John the Baptist already fulfilled the coming of Elijah but, "The Lord's statement that John was Elijah was a statement based on contingency. John was Elijah 'if ye will receive <i>if</i> (Mat. 11:14). The Lord indicated that if they received the offered kingdom John would be the one to do the work of Elijah. But they rejected this offer (Mat. 17:12) and therefore John is precluded from being the one to fulfill the prophecy."³⁴ John himself indicated he was not Elijah (John 1:21).	"There is nothing in Scripture that limits miracles such as these to Moses and Elijah. Elijah raised a person from the dead (1K. 17:17-24); but so did Jesus (Mark 5:35-42; Luke 8:49-56; John 11:14-44), Peter (Acts 9:36-41), and Paul (Acts 20:9-12). To argue that Moses and Elijah must be the witnesses because of the miracles mentioned, then, is weak."³⁵ "The expression 'like me' in Deuteronomy 18:15 seems to preclude using that verse as a means of identifying the witnesses in Revelation 11:3[±] [as Moses and Elijah], for the promised prophet was not Moses, but one 'like' Moses. Also, Jesus said, 'For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come' (Mat. 11:13-14). Christ later said, 'Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished?' (Mat. 17:11-12). These statements of Jesus show that John the Baptist was, in a real sense, the anticipated Elijah of Malachi, though there may yet be a future fulfillment of that prophecy. The point is that while the prophecy does speak of a literal witness, the person need not be Elijah himself but one who is like Elijah (cf. Luke 1:17). This apparently is the Lord's interpretation of Malachi's prophecy (Mat. 17:11-12). In view of this, it is not necessary to insist that Elijah the Tishbite must be one of the two witnesses."³⁶ "The likelihood that Elijah and Moses appeared in glorified bodies (Luke 9:30-31) on the Mount of Transfiguration is a problem for the return of Elijah as well, for since Elijah has already received a glorified body, he cannot die. An exponent of the Elijah view might respond that Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration was not in a glorified body, for which death could never be a possibility, but 'in glory' (i.e., some other state such as the glorious characteristics manifested in Christ's own natural body at that time). It might also be argued that Moses had died and that Scripture never records a special resurrection and glorification for him, so that he may have appeared at the Transfiguration only by some act of God's power to visualize his old body in a 'vision' intelligible to the disciples (Mat. 17:9), or as Samuel was made to appear, though still actually in the state of death (1S. 28). By this logic, Elijah, like Moses, was on the Mount of Transfiguration in a vision and not a body at all. However, since Elijah was caught up into heaven in his natural body, it seems more likely that he appeared in that body (presumably glorified) on the mount. If Elijah was glorified, it would then be most appropriate to interpret Moses' body as also glorified (though some may say that this requires the assumption of a resurrection for Moses, which Scripture nowhere records, and that this is too large an assumption). If Elijah was still in his mortal body preserved for centuries by powers known only to God and enabled to appear on the mount, then, in the interest of consistency, Moses also was there in person in his mortal body. However, the fact that Moses died, and his body was buried (Deu. 34:5-8; Jude 9), makes it less likely that he reappeared in that mortal body. It seems then that both Elijah and Moses probably have already received glorified bodies of some kind and so could not die. This rules them out as candidates for a future return."³⁷ "An objection to this interpretation is that those blessed departed servants of God would have to submit to death (Rev. 11:7[±], 8[±]), and this in Moses' case a second time, which Heb. 9:27 denies."³⁸ "No second coming of Moses is anywhere promised in the Word."³⁹ "While the transfiguration is identified with the millennial age (2Pe. 1:16-19) it is nowhere identified with the tribulation period or the ministry of the witnesses."⁴⁰
Elijah and Enoch⁴¹	"Some, on the basis of Jewish tradition and the wider context of Scripture,	"It should be pointed out, however, that since there will be a whole generation of believers who are raptured and thus will not die physically

interpret the two witnesses as Elijah and Enoch. One reason is that according to an early rabbinic opinion it is believed that Enoch will rejoin Elijah for a ministry like that of the two witnesses (1 Enoch 90:31; cf. 4 Ezra 6:26). But this is simply an ancient Jewish opinion, not necessarily correct. Also there are many statements in 1 Enoch that are bizarre and questionable. Another reason for saying these witnesses will be Elijah and Enoch is that neither of these two men saw death but were translated to heaven (Gen. 5:24; 2K. 2:11). Since Hebrews 9:27 says that 'it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,' God, it is argued, must have reserved Enoch and Elijah as His witnesses for this future time. The merit of this argument is that it helps rule out Moses and others as possible candidates, for they have already died.⁴² "Neither [Enoch] nor Elijah were given immortal bodies when they were translated, however, because it was necessary for Christ first to die for their sins and rise again. . . (1Cor. 15:22-23). Thus Enoch and Elijah have been waiting in heaven in their natural bodies through all the intervening ages since their respective translations."⁴³ "In Revelation 11:4+ the word 'standing' suggests that they were already there in John's day, and must be two people who have already been translated. Thus, it is held, only Elijah and Enoch could meet this requirement."⁴⁴ "Even after His incarnation, on the mount with Peter, James, and John, [Jesus] was much arrayed in heavenly glory as Elijah who there appeared in converse with him; yet, from that holy mount, and glory, and sublime transfiguration, he came down, and suffered, and *died*. Paul was once in heaven, caught up, he knew not how, and saw and heard things he dared not tell; and yet, he came back, and preached, and suffered, and *died*. John was called up to heaven, to behold the wonders that are described in this Book; yet he also returned, and suffered, and *died*."⁴⁵

(1Cor. 15:51-57; 1Th. 4:16-17), the idea that Enoch and Elijah must return in order to die once to make Hebrews 9:27 absolutely all-inclusive, is without basis. It should also be noted that Hebrews 11:5 says that Enoch was translated 'so that he should not see death.' To allow a future return and death, then, would nullify God's promise."⁴⁶ "Those who claim them to be Enoch and Elijah base it on the fact that these two men never died, and so they will return to die in the Tribulation. Often, Hebrews 9:27 is used as evidence for 'it is appointed unto men once to die.' But it is a general principle and not an absolute rule. For example, take the word *once*: some people have died twice, namely, all those who had been resurrected in the Old and New Testaments apart from Messiah. Furthermore, what about the living Church saints? If indeed Hebrews 9:27 is an absolute rule, it would mean that all living Church saints at the Rapture will also have to die at some time. Both I Corinthians 15:51 and I Thessalonians 4:15-17 show that Hebrews 9:27 is only a general principle. Also in the light of Hebrews 11:5 ['By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death. . .'], it cannot be that Enoch will die in the future."⁴⁷ "Enoch is clearly said to have been *translated*, and this involves corruption putting on incorruption and mortality putting on immortality (1Cor. 15:50-58). Since Elijah has already been taken into Heaven, the same is true of him, for no man in his physical state can enter Heaven (1Cor. 15:50). This means that neither Elijah nor Enoch can die, for they are now immortal."⁴⁸ Enoch seems an unlikely candidate on the grounds that he is a type for the Church which is [removed](#) prior to the Tribulation as Enoch was taken before the flood.⁴⁹ "It is the stated purpose that Enoch was translated 'in order that he might not see death' (Heb. 11:5). In view of this it could hardly be stated that he will be returned to die. . . . It would seem that an antediluvian prophet would not be sent into a time when God is dealing with Israel."⁵⁰ If the nature of their ministry serves to identify the individuals, and it may not, then we have no indication for Enoch: "A further difficulty for this view is Enoch's failure to match the criteria assigned to the two witnesses."⁵¹

Two Future Prophets ⁵²	The two witnesses are taken as two unknown Jewish prophets who will minister at the time of the Tribulation. This view avoids the various problems which attend the other views. The passage does not positively identify the individuals so there is no need to find fulfillment in previous individuals having already died or been translated. "If God wished us to know He could have told us. The fact that He has not done so ought to stop our mouths."⁵³ "There are great difficulties in all points of view identifying the two witnesses with historical characters."⁵⁴	Although Jesus indicated that John the Baptist served in a capacity like that of Elijah who would come prior to the day of the LORD (Mat. 11:14), John himself indicated he was not Elijah (John 1:21). If Malachi is to be taken literally, then it is necessary for <i>Elijah</i> to come, not his <i>likeness</i> (Mal. 4:5). Both Moses and Elijah are connected with the coming of Christ in His kingdom (Mat. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27) by their appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30). The character of the ministry of the witnesses seems to intentionally recall that of Moses and Elijah.
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they will prophesy

Their ministry will be like that of John (Rev. 10:11⁺) in that their prophesy will be global in extent, for they shall not only prophesy (which includes correction and exhortation), but they shall also torment those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 11:5-7⁺, 10⁺).

one thousand two hundred and sixty days

This is the first half of the final week of [the seventy weeks of Daniel](#), before the beast reaches ascendancy and is able to overcome them (Rev. 11:7⁺).⁵⁵ It cannot be the latter half of the week as some suggest.⁵⁶

1. It is the *beast* who is destroyed at the close of the week (Rev. 19:20⁺), not the witnesses. See [Events of the 70th Week of Daniel](#).
2. It is more natural to understand the overthrow of the Jewish prophets as leading to the defilement of the [Temple](#) in the Abomination of Desolation to follow. Prior to their overthrow, they are invincible and almost certainly would not allow the beast to sit in the Holy Place to declare himself as god (2Th. 2:4).⁵⁷
3. Why would the two *Jewish* witnesses, who are key in the revival of the Jews during the Tribulation, be found in Jerusalem *after* the Jews have fled elsewhere due to the intense persecution of the dragon which begins at the midpoint of the final week (Mat. 24:15; Rev. 12:6⁺, Rev 13-14⁺)?
4. How could the beast overcome the witnesses at the *end* of the 70th week and the world throw a big celebration at the very time [Antichrist](#) is heavily involved with the [Campaign of Armageddon](#) and Christ arrives?⁵⁸
5. The overthrow of the prophets would more naturally contribute to the rise and fame of the beast.⁵⁹
6. If Christ returns with the resurrected saints to the earth at the end of the 70th week, why do these two resurrected witnesses ascend to heaven?

These problems disappear if the 1,260 days mentioned here are understood as denoting the first half of the week, including a powerful witness to Jerusalem culminating in the ascent of the beast to overthrow the witnesses and exert full control over the Temple, as Paul relates of the man of sin (2Th. 2:4).

in sackcloth

Sackcloth was a rough, course cloth, or a bag-like garment made of such cloth which was worn as a symbol of mourning, grief, or repentance (e.g., Jer. 4:8; 6:26; 48:37; 49:3; Amos 8:10). Its association with mourning and sorrow may have been not only due to its coarseness on the wearer, but also because it was made from black goat hair. When prophets wore sackcloth, it indicated their own brokenness over the message of doom and judgment which they themselves were delivering. Prophets were never cavalier in their dire predictions, but grieved over the judgment they proclaimed (Isa. 20:2). In this sense, the sackcloth of the two witnesses is akin to the bitterness which attended John's consumption of the little book of prophecy (Rev. 10:9-10⁺). The sackcloth indicates the message of the two witnesses is one of impending judgment to which their listeners should respond in repentance. Although this chapter records a rare case of repentance in the judgments of God at the time of the end, it is not directly due to the testimony of the witnesses (Rev. 11:13⁺). The pattern elsewhere is one of failure to repent (Rev. 9:21⁺; 16:11⁺). These two witnesses are 1) clothed in sackcloth, 2) have a ministry matching that of previous OT Jewish prophets, and 3) minister in Jerusalem. These factors, along with the absence of the Church (see [Rapture](#)) and the sealing of the 144,000 Jews (Rev. 7:4-8⁺), argue for the Jewishness of the two witnesses.

THE TWO WITNESSES Revelation 11:3-6, 7-14

2 Witnesses Finish Testimony
Beast from Abyss overcomes & kills them
Bodies lie in Jerusalem 3.5 Days (2x)
Earthdwellers celebrate → tormenters now dead
Breath to 2 Witnesses → Stood, then "Raptured"

2 Witnesses prophesy 1260 Days
2 Olive Trees, 2 Lamp stands
Call down fire → Kill enemies
Shut up the sky – 3.5 years
Waters to blood
Strike with plagues

IN THAT HOUR = Rev 11:13-14 – 2nd Woe Past

- (1) Great Earthquake
- (2) 1/10 of Jerusalem fell
- (3) 7000 killed
- (4) Rest Terrified & gave glory to God of heaven

7th Trumpet
Sounds
Rev 11:15

Who are these 2 witnesses?
3.5 Years

3.5 Years

1000 years
Revelation 20

Forever & Ever. Amen!
Revelation 21-22

7 Seals → 6 Trumpets

Great Tribulation → 7 Bowls

Millennium

New Heaven
New Earth

How Does this Relate to the
Mystery of God?
Revelation 10:7

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

These are

[α τολι ε ολιβ](#) [autoi eisin]: *These, they are*, emphasizing the individuals.

the two olive trees

Israel is referred to by God as a "Green Olive Tree, Lovely *and* of Good Fruit" (Jer. 11:16a). The psalm writer referred to himself, one who trusted in God's mercy, as "a green olive tree in the house of God" (Ps. 52:8). The definite article (*the*) is intended to denote a specific pair of olive trees (see below).

ED THOUGHT - What do the two olive trees in Zechariah 4+ symbolize as it relates to the two witnesses in Revelation 11? One thought is that the attachment of the lampstand in Zechariah 4 to the two olive trees pictures a continual source of oil to light the lamp. In the same way the two witnesses are pictured as continually supplied by the "oil" of the Holy Spirit to supernatural empower their incredible 3.5 year witness for the Lord of all the earth. This begs the question, am I continually empowered by the "oil" of the Spirit, that my light (ultimately the light of Christ in me - John 8:12+, Colossians 1:27+) might shine forth clearly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Mt 5:14-16+, Philippians 2:15+)? Let it be so Lord in all who read these words and rely fully on the power of Your Word and Your Spirit. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

and the two lamp stands

Lamp stands is [λυχνια](#) [lychniai], the same word which described the seven lampstands which were the [Seven Churches of Asia](#) (Rev. 1:12+, 20+; 2:1+, 5+). Evidently, these two lamp stands will serve a similar purpose to the seven lampstands (the churches). As in the previous phrase, the definite article (*the*) points to a pair of olive trees and lamp stands which would be known to John. The allusion is to Zechariah's fifth vision (Zec. 4:1-14+) wherein Zechariah is shown a lampstand of solid gold with seven pipes feeding seven lamps. The lamps are fed by a shared bowl of oil which stands between two olive trees into which the oil from the trees drips (Zec. 4:3, 12+). When Zechariah asks an angel concerning the identity of the two olive trees and the fruitful oil-dripping branches which extend from them, the angel responds: "These *are* the two anointed ones [lit. "sons of oil"] who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth" (Zec. 4:14+). They are two who are anointed by oil ([a common figure for the Holy Spirit](#)).

The candlestick itself—the central object of this vision—is doubtless a figurative representation of the seven-branched candlestick in the Temple. There it stood in the Holy Place . . . not only as the emblem and representation of what the whole redeemed family shall finally be "when in union with their risen, glorified Lord they shall for ever shine in the sanctuary of God," but also as *typifying Israel's high calling in relation to the other nations*. In his midst a great light had shone—the light of the self-revelation of the glory of Jehovah—not only for his own illumination, but that he might be the candlestick, the light-bearer, and light-diffuser all around. . . . We know how terribly and sadly Israel failed to respond to God's purpose concerning Him.⁶⁰

It is most in harmony with the scope of these visions (one of the great objects of [the vision] was to encourage the two heads, or leaders, of the restored remnant of the nation in their task of rebuilding the Temple) to regard the olive trees as representing Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel the prince.⁶¹

The fourth (Zec. 3) and fifth (Zec. 4+) visions of Zechariah are related. In the fourth vision, upon the stone which is laid before Joshua are *seven eyes* (Zec. 3:9). Similarly, the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel is seen by seven “eyes of the LORD which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth” (Zec. 4:10+). As we have seen, these eyes represent the Holy Spirit, the “seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (Rev. 5:6b+). The fifth vision concerns seven lamps which also allude to the Holy Spirit: “Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 4:5+). Zechariah’s two visions concern the work of the Holy Spirit through *two individuals* during *two restorations*:

- **Two Individuals** - The fifth vision ends with the statement that the two “sons of oil” *stand* beside the Lord of the whole earth. In the fourth vision, Joshua is said to be *standing* before the Angel of the LORD. Throughout the fourth vision, it is the high priest Joshua who is being encouraged. In the fifth vision, Zerubbabel is told that the construction of the temple will be completed “ ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts” (Zec. 4:6). Thus, it is by the hand of Joshua and Zerubbabel that the Holy Spirit will accomplish the restoration of the second [Temple](#). “While in relation to the remnant of Israel at that time, and to the Temple then in building, we are to understand by these two ‘sons of oil’ the actual persons of Joshua and Zerubbabel, it is certain that these two, considered *merely as individuals*, do not exhaust the symbol, for the simple reason that the supply of oil for the candlestick is a vision designed to describe the *abiding*, and especially the *future* position and mission of the congregation of Israel, could not be represented as dependent on the lives of two mortal men. They must therefore be viewed standing here as types or representatives of the kingly and priestly offices to which they respectively belonged.”⁶²
- **Two Restorations** - In the immediate context of the fourth vision, Joshua is admonished to walk in God’s ways. There is also a distant context of the vision which indicates that God will bring forth his Servant “the BRANCH” (Zec. 3:8). This is a common title of Messiah (see [Four Gospels](#)) and results in the eventual cleansing *of the land* (Zec. 3:9). “ ‘In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘Everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree.’ ” (Zec. 3:10). This speaks of a time of prosperity and peace—as in the Millennial Kingdom.⁶³ The fifth vision concerns the foundation of the temple (*house*) and communicates to Zerubbabel that “his hands shall also finish *it*” (Zec. 4:9). This speaks of the second temple which was underway at the time of the vision. Later, Zechariah indicates that a future individual, called “the BRANCH,” will build the temple and wear *two* crowns: ruling as both priest and king.⁶⁴ Concerning this individual, Zechariah relates, “So He shall be a priest on His throne” (Zec. 6:13b), yet no high priest ever ruled on a throne nor did any king of Israel function in the office of priest. When taken together, these passages indicate both a near-term restoration (the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple in the days of Zerubbabel and Joshua) and a distant restoration (the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple for the [Millennial Kingdom](#) under Messiah). The meager temple of the time of Zerubbabel, which caused those who remembered Solomon’s temple to weep in disappointment (Ezra 3:12-13), which was enhanced by Herod and saw the first advent of Messiah only to be destroyed by Rome in A.D. 70 due to the apostasy of the nation, would one day stand anew in the days of the [Millennial Temple](#) (Eze. 40-47). “But Zechariah’s prophecy also looks forward to the restoration of Israel in the Millennium (cf. Zec. 3:8-10). The olive trees and lampstands symbolize the light of revival, since olive oil was commonly used in lamps. . . . God will not bring salvation blessing from human power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Zec. 4:6). Like Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two witnesses will lead a spiritual revival of Israel culminating in the building of a temple.”⁶⁵ “[The witnesses] are the corresponding Zerubbabel and Jeshua of the final restitution.”⁶⁶

The allusion back to Zechariah’s visions is further proof of the Jewishness of these individuals, but also underscores their function in bringing Israel toward the final restoration seen by Zechariah.⁶⁷ The Church Age having come to a close, the focus has shifted back to Israel in preparation of a faithful nation suitable for the Millennial Kingdom to come.

The history of corporate Gentile Christianity is not as the shining light that “shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” as some who boast in the supposed progress and speak of the conversion of the world before the glorious appearing of Christ ignorantly suppose, but rather that of a bright dawn, developing into an increasingly dark and cloudy day, and ending in blackness of darkness. And there is no hope for Christendom which continued not in the goodness of God when once it is “cut off”; nor is there any promise of the restoration and relighting of *its* candlestick when once its light has been quenched in anti-Christian apostasy. But it is different with Israel. There is always hope in his end. Not only shall the sceptre of governmental rule and the kingdom come back to the daughter of Jerusalem, after the long centuries of subjugation and oppression, but her candlestick, too, shall be restored after the long period of Israel’s spiritual darkness and blindness, to shine in more resplendent glory than even in the past. This is the meaning of Zechariah’s fifth vision, and it sets forth in symbol the great truth proclaimed by the former prophets in relation to Israel’s future glory as the centre of light and blessing to all the nations of the earth.⁶⁸

It is the role of the people of God, be they Israel or the Church, to shine forth so that those who do not God may “see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mat. 5:14). This mission was fulfilled in the life of John the Baptist (John 1:7-8; 5:35) and also in Jesus (John 1:9; 3:19). In the absence of Jesus, the Church had presented the light (Rev. 1:13+, Rev 20+, Rev 2:5+). **Why**

the need for these two lampstands if the previous seven are still present on the earth? It is our view that this is additional evidence in favor of a [pretribulational Rapture](#) for the seven lampstands are not present on the earth during this period of time when the two lampstands minister.

standing before the God of the earth

Standing is [στῆτες](#) [estōtes], a perfect tense participle, *while having stood*. They took their place before God prior to John having seen them. Here the phrase is an intentional allusion to the nearly identical phrase in the related passage in Zechariah. “These *are* the two anointed ones **who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth**” [emphasis added] (Zec. 4:14). *Standing before* the Lord describes a position of *ministry to the Lord* (Deu. 10:8; 1K. 17:1; Rev. 8:2+). These two stand before God and *minister to Him* by faithfully prophesying and witnessing His word. Although their ministry appears directed toward the [earth dwellers](#), they are in fact focused upon being pure and faithful conduits for God to speak to the nations at the time of the end.

the God of the earth

The term for *earth* is [γῆ](#) [gēs], which [preterist interpreters](#) generally prefer to interpret as designating the *land of Israel* or the surrounding geographical area in order to restrict the scope of the book of Revelation to Israel in the events of A.D. 70. The global scope of Revelation is seen again here in that these witnesses stand before the God of the entire *earth* and those which they torment include “peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations”—a global population (Rev. 11:9-10+).

Revelation 11:5 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.

if anyone wants to harm them

Although set forth as a conditional statement, the remainder of the passage implies that the vast majority of people strongly oppose their ministry and *do* desire to harm them, for they rejoice at their eventual death (Rev. 11:10+).⁶⁹ In the eyes of the [earth dwellers](#) who will hate these witnesses, the ability of the beast to kill them is a testimony to his invincibility. He is seen as a “savior” from these detestable prophets and their defeat no doubt elevates his status before the [earth dwellers](#) (Rev. 13:4+).

fire proceeds from their mouth

Those who seek to harm the two witnesses face a similar fate to the opponents of the army of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:18-19+). *Fire* speaks of judgment and in some cases is used figuratively to describe destruction (Jdg. 9:14, 20; Ps. 18:8). Frequently, judgment by God, in conformance to His Word, is described as being a weapon of His *mouth* (Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Hos. 6:5; 2Th. 2:8; Rev. 1:16+; Rev. 19:15+). In the passages just cited, there are normally clues in the context which indicate where figurative language is being employed. For example, in Judges 9 various men in the dispute are said to be “trees,” “brambles,” and “cedars” (Jdg. 9:14-15). In the Second Coming of Jesus, His eyes are *like* a flame of fire and He is said to be riding a horse through the sky. These textual clues prevent us from interpreting the sword that goes forth from His mouth as a literal sword extending from His face. Rather, we recognize the figurative language employed and understand the sword in His mouth as an allusion to the Word of God (Heb. 4:12) by which His enemies are judged and so justly killed. This is part of normative interpretation using the Golden Rule of Interpretation. The passage before us is very similar to statements made by other prophets:

Therefore I have hewn *them* by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and your judgments *are like* light *that* goes forth. (Hos. 6:5)

Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: “Because you speak this word, behold I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.” (Jer. 5:14)

“Is not My word like a fire?” says the LORD, “And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29)

Hosea likens the words spoken by God through the prophets to a weapon. The prophets spoke forth God’s judgments which eventually resulted in the literal death of those judged. The words of the prophets are likened to a sword (“I have hewn”), but there is no literal sword in the prophets’ mouths. Similarly, Jeremiah’s words are likened to fire and the people wood. It would be easy to conclude from these figurative uses of fire and the mouth as a weapon that such must be the case here too. But there are important differences between the previously cited passages and what is said here. Passages wherein figurative language occurs typically contain an indication of such. For example, Hosea says, “I have hewn *them* by the prophets.” Obviously, people were not literally cut in two by the prophets. This is an indication that figurative language is employed. Similarly, Jeremiah is told that the people will be made “wood”—another indicator that figurative language is in use. It is not good enough simply to establish that similar themes in related passages are figurative and therefore conclude that this passage must be too. The immediate context of the passage in question must itself provide indication that figurative language is in use. It would seem there are three alternatives for interpreting the

passage before us:

1. **Purely Figurative** - The fire which proceeds from their mouths speaks of general judgments which are spoken forth by the two witnesses. The judgments result in death, but not necessarily by literal fire.
2. **Partly Figurative** - Literal fire devours their enemies. The fire “proceeds from their mouth” in the sense that, like Elijah, they *call forth* fire from heaven upon their opponents (1K. 10:10-12).
3. **Purely Nonfigurative** - Literal fire actually proceeds directly from their mouths (like the demon horses of Rev. 9:17⁺).

Notice that all of these alternatives are possible within the boundaries of “literal interpretation,” because literal interpretation includes the recognition of figures of speech *where the context so indicates*. The question becomes, “Does the context indicate figurative language is employed?” Although figurative language describes the similarity of their identity to the “two olive trees” of Zechariah, the pattern of their ministry—and especially the judgments they bring forth—match that of non-figurative judgments found in the [OT](#). It would seem that we must conclude that if figurative language is afoot, it is minimal. That is, literal fire comes forth directly out of their mouths or they employ their mouths to call literal fire down from heaven.⁷⁰ A question remains: if this passage is intended to describe the ability to *call down fire from heaven* upon their enemies, how do we explain the difference in description here from other passages where fire is explicitly said to be called down from heaven (2K. 1:10-12; Rev. 13:13⁺)? Thus, several factors favor a purely nonfigurative interpretation regarding this judgment by fire of their enemies:

1. Clear indicators of figurative language concerning the nature of the fire or plagues are lacking.⁷¹
2. Literal judgments such as those described here are recorded as historical facts in the OT.
3. The fire is not said to originate in heaven as it is in other passages concerning Elijah (2K. 1:10-12) and the [False Prophet](#) (Rev. 13:13⁺).

Whether the fire comes directly from their mouths, or whether their words call it forth, it would seem that the unique miraculous authority which attends such a defensive ability is intended to manifest the divine source of their ministry (Num. 10:2; 16:35; Ps. 106:18; Heb. 12:29). The unusual nature of their response to their enemies brings to mind the incident in Numbers where Korah’s household is judged:

And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for *I have not done them* of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the LORD has not sent me. But **if the LORD creates a new thing**, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, **then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD**.” Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. (Num. 16:28-33) [emphasis added]

Moses explains that the unusual nature of the judgment serves a specific purpose. It provides unique testimony to the *source* of the judgment (God) and the *authority* of Moses as His spokesman. So will this fire-consuming ability testify that God is the one judging the opponents of His two witnesses and that they have His full authority in their ministry. We should also remember the unique period in which these two individuals minister. This is a time in history during which demonic powers are at a peak (Rev. 9:1-2⁺, Rev 13-19⁺; Rev 12:12⁺) and the time of the lawless one, the [Antichrist](#), whose coming “is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous **deception** among those who perish” [emphasis added] (2Th. 2:9-10a). These are the days of the false prophet who “performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (Rev. 13:13⁺). These unique historic factors also argue for a completely nonfigurative interpretation because these two witnesses must exhibit miraculous powers which are on a par with, or even superior to, that of the man of sin and his false prophet in an age frequented by demonic manifestations.

Revelation 11:6 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.

shut heaven

Shut is [κλεισαι](#) [kleisai]: “shut, lock, bar.”⁷² The same root is used where Jesus informs us “many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was **shut up** three years and six months, and there was great famine throughout all the land” [emphasis added] (Luke 4:25b). Jesus described the ministry of Elijah the Tishbite who said to King Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word” (1K. 17:1). Elijah, by the power of God, shut the atmospheric heaven from providing rain and dew.

so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy

James refers to the similar event in Elijah's life to underscore the power of prayer in the life of believers. "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months" (Jas. 5:17). Both Jesus and James inform us that the heaven was shut against rain for a period of *three years and six months*—a period of time matching *the days of their* (the two witnesses) *prophecy*: 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3+).

The third trumpet judgment resulted in the poisoning of one-third of the earth's fresh water supply (Rev. 8:10-11+). Added to that, the three-and-one-half-year drought lasting throughout the 1,260 days of their preaching (Rev. 11:3+; cf. Luke 4:25; Jas. 5:17) brought by the two witnesses will cause widespread devastation of crops and loss of human and animal life through thirst and starvation.⁷³

The *lack of water* and the *sackcloth* worn by the prophets allude to a time of *fasting and mourning* on the earth which is intended to produce repentance. See [Who are the Witnesses?](#) See [Events of the 70th Week of Daniel](#)

power over waters to turn them into blood

The witnesses have power like that of Moses in Egypt (Ex. 4:9; 7:17-21; Ps. 78:44; 105:29). See [Who are the Witnesses?](#) See [The Plagues of Egypt and the Tribulation](#). The results of this plague will emulate the effects of the second trumpet judgment and the second and third bowl judgments where the seas and springs of water "become blood" (Rev. 8:8+; Rev 16:3-4+).

to strike the earth with all plagues

The two witnesses will be able to initiate numerous plague judgments upon the earth as they will. The full range of plagues is not described, but we can safely assume they are similar to the plagues with which Moses and Aaron tormented Egypt. See [Who are the Witnesses?](#) See [The Plagues of Egypt and the Tribulation](#).

Revelation 11:7 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.

When they finish their testimony

As we have seen throughout the book of Revelation, the ability of the evil forces which manifest during the time of the end is entirely within God's sovereignty. These two witnesses may not be killed until they have finished their God-given task (John 17:4). So it is with all believers (John 21:18-23; Acts 20:24; 2Ti. 4:7).

the beast

[Beast](#) is [θηρίον](#) [thērion], which was used of wild animals (Rev. 6:8+), including those which fought in the Roman arena.⁷⁴ The term is also used to describe animals as revealed in visions, such as that of Daniel ([LXX](#): Dan. 7:3, 5-7, 11-12, 17, 19, 23). It is the diminutive form of [θήρ](#) [thēr] but equivalent in meaning.⁷⁵ It is to be contrasted against the diminutive for *Lamb*, [ἀρνίον](#) [arnion].⁷⁶ See [Master Imitator](#).

This name "the Beast" contrasts the Antichrist from the true Christ as "the Lamb;" and it is a significant fact that by far the great majority of passages where the Lord Jesus is so designated are also found here in the Apocalypse. The "Lamb" is the Saviour of sinners; the "Beast" is the persecutor and slayer of the saints. The "Lamb" calls attention to the gentleness of Christ; the "Beast" tells of the ferocity of the Antichrist. . . . Under the Law lambs were ceremonially clean and used in sacrifice, but beasts were unclean and unfit for sacrifices.⁷⁷

Revelation mentions two different beasts: [Antichrist](#) (Rev. 13:1+) and the False Prophet (Rev. 13:11+). Which beast is in view here? Evidence indicates it is Antichrist who slays the witnesses.

The "beast" most probably refers to the future Antichrist. Five facts support this view. (Following is quoted from Daniel Wong in [THE TWO WITNESSES IN REVELATION 11](#))

First, the persecutor of the witnesses is not "a beast" but "the beast" ([τὸ θηρίον](#) [to thērion]). This use of a definite article indicates that he is a figure well known to the writer. Since teaching on the Antichrist was so familiar to Jews and Christians through Old and New Testament prophecy (Dan. 7:2-25; 9:27 ; 11:35-45 ; Mat. 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2Th. 2:3-12; 1Jn. 4:1-6), it is not impossible that John was thinking of him here.

Second, since the word "beast" ([θηρίον](#) [thērion]) in the Apocalypse is always used with reference to the future Antichrist or his system (Rev. 13:1+ ; Rev 14:9+ , Rev 14:11+ ; Rev 15:2+ ; Rev 16:2+ ; Rev 17:3+ ; Rev

19:20[±] ; Rev 20:10[±]) [we note one exception: Rev. 13:11[±]], the beast in 11:7[±] should be seen in the same light.

Third, the beast will come up out of ([κ](#) [ek]) the abyss, that is, it will have a satanic,demonic source and character (cf. Rev. 9:1[±]). This feature corresponds with that of the coming Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10.

Fourth, the description of the beast as “coming up out of the abyss” ([ναβα νον ἐκ τ ς βύσσου](#) [anabainon ek tēs abyssou], Rev. 11:7[±]) corresponds with the beast “about to come from the abyss” ([ναβαινεiv κ τ ς βύσσου](#) [anabainein ek tēs abyssou]) in Rev. 17:8[±] (cf. Rev. 13:1[±]). This correspondence is illuminating, for since the beast in Rev. 17:8[±] probably refers to the future Antichrist with his kingdom, the same is probably the case in Rev. 11:7[±].

Fifth, [νικῶω](#) [nikaō] (“to overcome”) is used three times in the Apocalypse with reference to the enemy of God’s people (Rev. 6:2[±] ; Rev 11:7[±] ; Rev 13:7[±]). Since other occurrences of the term are related directly to the coming Antichrist (Rev. 6:2[±] ; Rev 13:7[±]), the same may be true in Rev. 11:7[±].⁷⁸

The definite article, *the*, implies at his first introduction here by John that he is a recognized figure:

This beast was not mentioned before, yet he is introduced as “the beast,” because he had already been described by Daniel (Dan. 7:3, 11), and he is fully so in the subsequent part of the Apocalypse, namely, Rev. 13:1[±]; Rev 17:8[±]. Thus, John at once appropriates the Old Testament prophecies; and also, viewing his whole subject at a glance, mentions as familiar things (though not yet so to the reader) objects to be described hereafter by himself. It is a proof of the unity that pervades all Scripture.⁷⁹

The individual before us is found in many passages of Scripture and given many different titles. “Across the varied scenes depicted by prophecy there falls the shadow of a figure at once commanding and ominous. Under many different names like the aliases of a criminal, his character and movements are set before us.”⁸⁰

It is unfortunate that the great variety of names bestowed upon him has led some brethren to the conclusion that they must belong to separate persons, and has caused them to apportion these out to different individuals; only confusion can result from this. There is almost as much ground to make the Devil and Satan different persons, as there is to regard (as some do) the Beast and the Antichrist as separate entities. That the Devil and Satan are names belonging to the same person, and that the Beast and the Antichrist is the selfsame individual, is proven by the fact that identically the same characteristics under each is found belonging to the one as to the other.⁸¹

Pink cites the *Teaching of the Apostles* (said to be dated to the beginning of the 2nd century), the writings of Cyril (Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century), and Gregory of Tours (who wrote at the end of the 6th century) as evidence of the early view that the Beast is an *individual* rather than a *system*. He attributes the idea that the Antichrist was the Roman system to the Waldenses: “It is not until we reach the fourteenth century (so far as the writer is aware) that we find the first marked deviation from the uniform belief of the early Christians. It was the Waldenses,—so remarkably sound in the faith on almost all point of doctrine—who, thoroughly worn out by centuries of the most relentless and merciless persecutions, published about the year 1350 a treatise designed to prove that the system of Popery was the Antichrist.”⁸² “This shows that these Witnesses are upon the earth during the thirteenth chapter; and that the Beast is on the Earth during the eleventh chapter.”⁸³ See [The Beast](#).

ascends out of the bottomless pit

Bottomless pit is [βύσσου](#) [abyssou], the deep well within the earth where fallen angels are held. See commentary on [Revelation 9:1](#). See [Supernatural Origin?](#) The beast is from the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7[±]; Rev 17:8[±]) whereas the Lamb is from heaven (John 3:13, 31; 6:33, 38, 41-42, 51). “We have not here his historical rise ‘out of the sea’ (Rev. 13:1[±]), but his satanic revival ‘out of the bottomless pit’ or abyss (Rev. 11:7[±]).”⁸⁴

make war

A trademark of the beast, and the dragon who empowers him, is his incessant opposition to the people of God. In addition to these two witnesses, he makes war against the saints in general (Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 7:9-16[±]; Rev 12:11[±]; Rev 13:7[±]; Rev 20:4[±]), and against the Jews in particular (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 8:24; 12:1; Rev. 12:13[±], Rev 12:17[±]). See [Jacob’s Trouble and the Great Tribulation](#).

overcome them, and kill them

Overcome is [νικήσει](#) [nikēsei] from [νικῶω](#) [nikaō]. Here is the one who rides forth “conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2[±]). See

commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#). This is another *external similarity* between the beast and the Lamb. See [Master Imitator](#). He appears to overcome in the eyes of the world, but those he kills are the true overcomers (Rev. 2:11⁺; Rev 12:11⁺). See [Who is the Overcomer?](#) He overcomes the witnesses after he is restored from his deadly wound:

That this incident will happen after his resurrection from the dead is clear from the statement, *the beast that comes up from the abyss*, and he will come back from the Abyss by means of his resurrection by Satan. Along with his resurrection, the act of killing the Two Witnesses will provide another reason why mankind will worship him. All previous attempts to kill the Two Witnesses fail.⁸⁵

Immediately upon his resurrection, he kills . . . the Two Witnesses. Consequently, *their* 1,260 days must just overlap into *his* 42 months. They must have witnessed, therefore, for nearly 1,260 days during his mortal stage, before his assassination.⁸⁶

See [Events of the 70th Week of Daniel](#)

Revelation 11:8 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.

their dead bodies *will lie* in the street

Lack of burial is particularly repugnant to the Jews. "For a corpse to remain unburied or to be exhumed subsequent to burial, and thus become food for beasts of prey, was the climax of indignity or judgment (1K. 14:11; 16:4; 2K. 9:37; Ps. 79:3; Jer. 7:33; 8:1; 16:4, 6; 22:19; Eze. 29:5; Rev. 11:9⁺)."⁸⁷ The beast and [earth dwellers](#) purposefully leave the bodies of the witnesses unburied as an intentional dishonor and insult (Isa. 14:20; Jer. 8:2; 14:16). This is another indication of the Jewishness of the context.⁸⁸

the great city

The same phrase is used elsewhere to describe Babylon (Rev. 14:8⁺; Rev 17:18⁺; Rev 18:10⁺, Rev 18:16⁺, Rev 18:18,19⁺), earthly Jerusalem (Rev. 16:19⁺), and the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10⁺).⁸⁹ Both Babylon and earthly Jerusalem have great significance in the scenario of the Tribulation. One is the center of the anti-God system of Babylon (Rev. 17⁺-18⁺) whereas the other is the earthly city where God has placed His name (1K. 11:36; 2Chr. 33:4, 7; Dan. 9:19). It is within this latter great city, Jerusalem, that the [Tribulation Temple](#) will stand which [Antichrist](#) desecrates (Rev. 11:1-2⁺). The identity of the city among the three possible locations (Babylon, earthly Jerusalem, heavenly Jerusalem) is established by its identification as the place "where also our Lord was crucified."

spiritually

[πνευματικῶς](#) [pneumatikōs] meaning "*in a manner consistent with the (divine) Spirit*."⁹⁰ " 'Spiritually' . . . shows this to be the language of allegory or metaphor. Neither Sodom nor Egypt is the city's real name."⁹¹ One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to assess the true spiritual conditions of His subject. He is represented by "seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev. 5:8⁺). His omniscient gaze burns away the dross of external representation to reveal the true character below (Rev. 4:5⁺). It is in this sense, as seen by the Spirit, that Jerusalem is called "Sodom and Egypt."

called Sodom and Egypt

Both Sodom and Egypt typify cities which were opposed and judged by God. Sodom was an exceedingly wicked city which was overthrown for her sins by God's judgment (Gen. 13:13; 19:24). Egypt was the nation which held Israel in bondage and was judged by plagues prior to the Exodus (Ex. 1:13-14; 3:7; 20:2). Jerusalem, in her godless state, is likened to both the wicked city and the wicked nation. Even though the two witnesses exhibit a Jewish ministry located in Jerusalem, they are rejected by the majority of the inhabitants—their fellow Jews. When Moses sang a song predicting the apostasy of Israel upon entering the Promised Land after his death, he referred to the Jewish nation as "a nation void of counsel," whose "vine is of the vine of *Sodom* and of the fields of Gomorrah" (Deu. 32:28-32). Isaiah used a similar analogy when describing God's rejection of Israel's insincere sacrifices: "Hear the word of the LORD you rulers of *Sodom*; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?' " (Isa. 1:10). The sin of Jerusalem is said to be as the sin of Sodom in that it was flaunted openly (Isa. 3:8).⁹² Even the apostate prophets are likened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jer. 23:14). When rejected by the cities of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Jesus indicated that the cities which did not receive the apostles or their words would be considered worse off than Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment (Mat. 10:14-15; Luke 10:12). Although Jerusalem is here referred to as Sodom, Isaiah also indicated that Babylon's eventual overthrow would be like that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 13:19). Elsewhere, Ezekiel describes the Northern Kingdom (Samaria) and the Southern Kingdom (Jerusalem) as idolatrous sisters, both of which committed harlotry in their youth while in *Egypt* (Eze. 23:2-4, 19, 27). Comparison with *Egypt* recalls the idolatrous golden calf which Israel made upon departure from Egypt (Ex. 32:4, 24).

where also our Lord was crucified

The [MT](#) and [NU](#) texts have *their Lord* instead of *our Lord*. Although the city has the spiritual attributes of Sodom and Egypt, its identity is clearly established as Jerusalem, the place of the crucifixion (Luke 13:33; John 19:20; Heb. 13:12). Concerning those who suggest some other location than Jerusalem, Bullinger observes: “A Sunday-school child could tell us where the Lord was crucified; but these learned men cannot.”⁹³

Revelation 11:9 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.

those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations

A fourfold designation indicating global scope—all the peoples of the earth. See [Four: the Entire World, the Earth](#). This is the global community which John was told he “must prophesy again about” (Rev. 10:11⁺), over which the beast is granted authority (Rev. 13:7⁺), and upon which the harlot sits (Rev. 17:2⁺, 15⁺).

will see their dead bodies

The phrase “from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations” generally speaks of a global community which is worldwide in scope and not necessarily restricted within a single city. It is unlikely that we are to understand this as describing a group of people *from* the global community who are resident in Jerusalem at the time,⁹⁴ but that the populace of the entire globe is aware of the events which are transpiring. Television or a similar technology would be a natural explanation in our own day. Bullinger, writing before 1913 and the advent of television said: “The older commentators might have felt a difficulty in understanding how the whole earth could rejoice at an event happening in Jerusalem. But in these days of electric inventions, telephones, and wireless telegraphy, we all know how the next day the whole world sympathises or rejoices together.”⁹⁵

three-and-a-half days

The global audience will not just see the dead bodies at the time they are slain, but will continue to observe the bodies over the three-and-a-half day period. That these are not to be taken as lengthy periods, but literal days, is seen from their lack of advanced decomposition at the time of their resurrection. Their bodies would have probably remained exposed and allowed to slowly decompose over an extended period, but God intervenes and resurrects them on the third day. See commentary on [Revelation 11:11](#). Three days speaks of life and resurrection. See [Three: Life, Resurrection, Completeness, the Trinity](#).

not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves

There are at least two reasons burial is withheld from the witnesses:

1. **Jewish Sensibilities** - One reason their bodies will remain unburied is as an intentional insult to Jewish sensibilities which consider lack of burial an indication of being judged or cursed. See commentary on [Revelation 11:8](#).
2. **Trophies to the Beast** - Not only will their bodies be withheld from burial, but it seems likely they will be proactively protected from disturbance by scavengers, such as birds and dogs which would normally descend upon unguarded carcasses (2K. 9:10; Ps. 79:2; Jer. 7:33; Rev. 19:17-18⁺). They are prevented from burial and protected from scavengers because they serve as trophies which testify to the power of the beast and the victory of the world over the torment which they delivered at the hand of God. So long as they lie inert on the pavement they provide visual confirmation of the superiority of the beast (Rev. 13:4⁺).

Graves is [μν μν](#) [mnēma] which emphasizes the purpose of a tomb as a *sign of remembrance*.⁹⁶ Instead of having their own private memorial, they serve as a public memorial to the victory of the beast.

Revelation 11:10 And those who dwell on the 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.

those who dwell on the earth

This [technical phrase](#) denotes the global populace of the time of the end who consistently oppose God (Rev. 9:20⁺), worship the beast (Rev. 13:8⁺), and reject the things of heaven in favor of the things of earth. They are the ones for whom the time of testing is purposefully designed (Rev. 3:10⁺).

make merry

[ε φραινονται](#) [euphrainontai], the same root word describes “eat, drink, and **be merry**” [emphasis added] (Luke 12:19). It is used “of

religious and spiritual jubilation *rejoice, celebrate, be jubilant* (Acts 2:26).⁹⁷ Although they make merry for a few days, their triumph will be short-lived:

That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is *but* for a moment? Though his haughtiness mounts up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the clouds, *yet* he will perish forever like his own refuse; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?' He will fly away like a dream, and not be found; yes, he will be chased away like a vision of the night. The eye *that* saw him will *see him* no more, nor will his place behold him anymore. (Job 20:5-9)

Although the time of the end is characterized by war and disruption, worldly enemies will unite in their hatred for these two witnesses and join hands rejoicing in their demise (Luke 23:12).⁹⁸

send gifts to one another

So great will be their elation over the death of these two prophets that they will declare a holiday and exchange gifts with one another in celebration (Ne. 8:10-12; Est. 9:19-22). The elation of the [earth dwellers](#) over the death of the two witnesses provides evidence of the seriousness of the plagues which they meted out during their ministry. These two witnesses were not hated solely because they represented God, but all the more so because of their effectiveness at tormenting those who were affected by their plagues.

because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth

Tormented is [βασιάνισαν](#) [ebasanisan], which can describe torture in judicial examination, general harassment, or any kind of severe distress, especially physical distress. It is used to describe the results of paralysis (Mat. 8:6), the torment inflicted by the demonic scorpions (Rev. 9:5⁺), the eventual torment feared by demons (Mat. 8:29), the pain of childbirth (Rev. 12:2⁺), and the final torment of the unsaved dead (Rev. 14:10⁺; 20:10⁺). As prophets, they joined a long list of God's servants who were hated by those to whom they were sent (1Ki 18:17; 21:20; 22:8; Jer. 38:4; Mat. 23:37; Luke 13:33-34; John 7:7, 25; Acts 5:33; Acts 7:54-57; Acts 17:5-7).

Revelation 11:11 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.

breath of life from God entered them

Breath is [πνεῦμα](#) [pneuma], also rendered *spirit*. Here it speaks of the life-giving force which animates men's bodies of clay (Gen. 2:7; Job 33:4). The return of the spirit by the power of God attended the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:54). Although there are significant parallels between the breath of life which animates the dead witnesses and that which will animate the nation of Israel (Eze. 37:5, 10), the spiritual restoration of the nation is not in view here. This is a literal resurrection of two individuals. The Jewish nation has not yet been spiritually revived as evidenced by the opposition to the witnesses by many residing in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:13⁺). At this point in the events of the end, the spiritual revival of the Jews is in progress, but not yet complete (Rom. 11:25-26). See commentary on [Revelation 11:13](#).

great fear fell on those who saw them

Those who saw is [θεωροῦντας](#) [theōroutas], a present tense participle, *the ones presently observing them*. The "peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations" were watching the bodies of the dead prophets for the entire period they lay in the street and now saw them stand *as they watched!* Their rejoicing is cut short as they witness the unthinkable—the two dead, partially decomposing corpses rise to their feet. What they see is manifestly impossible, yet impossible to deny. Unlike the resurrection of Jesus which was witnessed by relatively few, this resurrection is seen by an international audience of probably many more. The testimony to the superiority and victory of the beast unravels in a moment and exultation turns to *great fear* as the power of God is seen to overcome even the death inflicted by the beast. The demonstration of God's power universally results in fear, especially for those who do not know Him (Jos. 2:9; Mat. 27:54; Acts 5:5, 11). The phrase *those who saw them* seems to speak directly to the global community rather than denoting a subset of peoples who happen to be present in Jerusalem at the time of their resurrection. The implication is that their resurrection is seen as part of a global broadcast.

Revelation 11:12 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.

they heard

The [MT](#) text has [κουσῶν](#) [ēkousa] instead of [κουσάν](#) [ēkousan] indicating *I heard*—emphasizing what John heard said to the two witnesses rather than what they heard.⁹⁹

ED ADDENDUM - [NET NOTE](#) - Though the nearest antecedent to the subject of ekousan is the people "those who were watching them", it could also be (based on what immediately follows) that the two prophets are the ones who heard the voice. (ED: But it could also be true they both heard the voice from heaven.)

Come up here.

[ἀναβατε](#) [anabate], *you all come up here*. The same command was heard by John when he arose to heaven (Rev. 4:1⁺). See commentary on [Revelation 4:1](#). See [Rapture](#).

they ascended to heaven in a cloud

Their ascent to heaven is much like that of Jesus following His resurrection (Acts 1:9; Rev. 12:5⁺) and that of the Church at the [Rapture](#) (1Th. 4:17). Their ascent, having been resurrected from the dead, is part of the *first resurrection*:

Although the resurrection of the righteous is called "first" in Rev. 20:4⁺, it is not one event but embraces a series of resurrection events, "Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1Cor. 15:23). Under the single profile of the first resurrection, therefore, is to be comprehended the resurrection of Christ, the rapture-resurrection of church saints, and the resurrection of tribulation saints (such as the two witnesses of Rev. 11:1-19⁺). It also comprehends the resurrection of Old Testament saints at the end of the tribulation.¹⁰⁰

See commentary on [Revelation 2:11](#).

their enemies saw them

We are specifically told that their resurrection is seen by their enemies. Their resurrection is perhaps the greatest moment of their ministry since they manifest the power and promise of God: the power to overcome death and the promise to raise believers from the grave. This, their greatest and last testimony, is not ineffectual for it contributes to the fear of those who survive the coming earthquake and results in their apparent salvation.

Revelation 11:13 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.

a great earthquake

There are numerous earthquakes during the Tribulation. A previous great earthquake attended the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12⁺). As great as this earthquake is, a still greater earthquake—the greatest of all recorded history—is yet to follow at the pouring forth of the seventh bowl judgment (Rev. 16:17⁺).

a tenth of the city fell

In the subsequent earthquake associated with the seventh bowl, Jerusalem is said to be "divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell" (Rev. 16:19⁺). In this lesser precursor to the final great earthquake, only one tenth of the city falls. Only a portion falls resulting in a relatively lesser death toll in order to provide opportunity for those remaining to respond in repentance and turn to God.

people

[νόματα νθρώπων](#) [onomata anthrōpōn], *names of men*, as in *the number of individuals*. Some understand this as an allusion to the removal of their names from the [Book of Life](#).¹⁰¹

the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven

Since the ministry of the two witnesses occurs during the first half of the final week of Daniel, they are overcome by the beast near the midpoint of the Tribulation (see [The 70th Week in Relation to the Book of Revelation](#)). During this period, it appears that the covenant of the [Antichrist](#) is in effect (Dan. 9:27+) and the Jews have control of the [Temple](#), except for the outer court, and are able to worship and offer sacrifices there (Rev. 11:1-2⁺). Thus, the covenant has not yet been broken, the *Abomination of Desolation* has not yet transpired, and the most intense Jewish persecution has not yet occurred (Mt. 24:15-21+; Rev. 12:6⁺, Rev 12:14⁺, Rev 12:17⁺). Thus, it is likely that the majority of the population of Jerusalem is still Jewish up to the point that the two witnesses are killed and resurrected. This would make sense since, as we have noted, the ministry of the two witnesses is very similar to Jewish prophets of old, both in their God-given powers and their wearing of sackcloth. Although the ministry of the two witnesses obviously affects the entire world, it is uniquely Jewish and seemingly designed to have the greatest impact upon those who are Jews and who

have not yet accepted Jesus as Messiah. When a tenth of the city falls, the remaining population is said to give glory to the God of heaven. Their response to the final ministry of the two witnesses—their resurrection—and the subsequent earthquake is markedly different than that of the [earth dwellers](#) in general as recorded elsewhere in the book of Revelation for these apparently repent. The text says they fear and give glory to God! In concert with the 144,000 sealed of Israel (Rev. 7:4-8⁺), this would appear to be further evidence of the ongoing spiritual regeneration of the Jews which Paul so plainly predicted:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this *is* my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” (Ro 11:25-27+)

The two witnesses are special servants of the Deliverer and through their ministry ungodliness was turned away from a portion of Jacob. In the midst of the time of Jacob’s trouble, remaining aspects of the New Covenant as it relates to the Jewish nation (Jer. 31:33-34+) are being fulfilled in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom to follow. Although some commentators connect the *resurrection of the two witnesses* with Ezekiel’s promise of the spiritual regeneration of Israel (Eze. 37+), it is more correct to connect the *repentance of this Jewish remnant* in Jerusalem with Ezekiel’s passage, although complete fulfillment will not be realized until the Second Coming of Christ.

Revelation 11:14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

the second woe is past

The *woes* referred to here are the three woes which correlate with the last three trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:13⁺). These are more severe than the previous four trumpet judgments and target *men* rather than *natural systems*. The *second* woe refers to the judgments attending the sounding of the *sixth* trumpet. This verse provides a helpful indicator which correlates the events of Revelation 10⁺ and Revelation 11⁺ with the trumpet judgments which were underway in Revelation 8⁺ and Revelation 9⁺. Although the immediate effects of the second woe (the sixth trumpet judgment) come to a close with the ending of Revelation 9⁺, we are here told that the events recorded in Revelation 10⁺ and Revelation 11⁺ transpire *before* the end of the second woe—that is during the times of the opening of the seven seals and the sounding of the first six trumpets. This confirms our observation that the “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” during which the two witnesses prophesy (Rev. 11:3⁺) coincides with the *first half* of [The 70th Week of Daniel](#). See [The 70th Week in Relation to the Book of Revelation](#).

the third woe is coming quickly

The *third* woe refers to the judgments attending the sounding of the *seventh* trumpet. This would seem to indicate that the sounding of the seventh trumpet *follows* the ministry of the two witnesses and their overthrow by the beast. The seventh trumpet must sound near the midpoint of the Tribulation or early in the second half. This would position all seven of the final bowl judgments in the last half of [The 70th Week of Daniel](#). See [The 70th Week in Relation to the Book of Revelation](#). Each of the final seal and trumpet judgments is set off from the previous six by an interlude during which additional information and perspective is provided and the greater severity of that which is to come is emphasized. Between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal, we are informed of the 144,000 sealed of Israel and the multitude coming out of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7:1-17⁺). Between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpet, we are told of the mighty angel standing upon the earth, the book of prophesy eaten by John, the [Tribulation Temple](#), and the ministry of the two witnesses (Rev. 10:1⁺-11:13⁺).¹⁰²

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.”

seventh angel sounded

The seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet (Rev. 8:2⁺). This last of the seven trumpets is not to be confused with the “last trump” which attends the [Rapture](#).¹⁰³

This cannot be what is meant by *the last trump* [1Cor. 15:52+]; at the time that First Corinthians was written, John had not written Revelation. The Corinthians would not have had any knowledge of the seven trumpets. The only knowledge they would have of trumpets are those spoken of in the Old Testament, especially those of the Feast of Trumpets. *The last trump* refers to the [Feast of Trumpets](#) and the Jewish practice of blowing trumpets at this feast each year. During the ceremony there are a series of short trumpet sounds concluding with one long trumpet blast which is called the *tekiah gedolah*, the great trumpet blast. This is what Paul means by *the last trump*.¹⁰⁴

This **seventh trumpet** is the last of this series of seven, but not the last absolutely, and is not to be confused with the “last trump” of 1Cor. 15:52+. Chronologically, the trumpet of Mt. 24:31+ must follow this seventh trumpet of Revelation, for it occurs after the Tribulation, at the open manifestation of Christ’s Second Advent (Mt. 24:30+), which in the book of Revelation is recorded in Rev. 19:11-16[±], which is after the time expressed here. In the book of Revelation the seventh trumpet is never called **last**” (Rev. 1:11[±], Rev 1:17[±]; Rev 2:8[±], Rev 2:19[±]; Rev 15:1[±]. Rev 21:9[±]; Rev 22:13[±]).¹⁰⁵

The **seventh trumpet** covers an extended period of time, thus distinguishing it from the instantaneous (“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”) event of the “last trumpet.” Instead of calling for the moment of the Rapture of the church, as the “last trumpet” does, the seventh trumpet calls for prolonged waves of judgment on the ungodly. It does not parallel the trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52+, but does parallel the trumpet of Joel 2:1-2+: “Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”¹⁰⁶

The seventh trumpet is typified by the seven trumpets of the conquest of Jericho by Joshua. See commentary on [Revelation 8:2](#).

kingdoms of this world

[MT](#) and [NU](#) texts have *kingdom* (singular).¹⁰⁷

The use of the singular term kingdom of the world instead of the plural “kingdoms” introduces an important truth. All of the world’s diverse national, political, social, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups are in reality one kingdom under one king. That king is known in Scripture by many names and titles, including the accuser (Rev. 12:10[±]), the adversary (1 Pet. 5:8+), Beelzebul (Mt. 12:24+), Belial (2Cor. 6:15+), the dragon (Rev. 12:3[±], Rev 12:7[±], Rev 12:9[±]), the “evil one” (John 17:15), the god of this world (2Cor. 4:4+), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2+), the roaring lion (1Pe. 5:8+), the ruler of the demons (Mark 3:22+), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the serpent of old (Rev. 12:9[±]; Rev 20:2[±]), the tempter (1Th. 3:5+), and, most commonly, the devil (Mt. 4:1+) and Satan (1Ti. 5:15).¹⁰⁸

The sounding of the seventh trumpet “proclaims the coming coronation of earth’s rightful king, the answer to the prayer of the ages, ‘**Thy kingdom come**’ [Mt. 6:10+].”¹⁰⁹ The seventh trumpet is typified by Zadok’s blowing of the horn when Solomon was anointed as King (1Ki 1:39). The coming of the kingdom of God is connected with the overthrow of Satan (Rev. 12:10[±]) and involves the reclamation of the earth as the Lord’s, but now, Satan is “god of this age” (Mt. 4:8-9+; 2Cor. 4:4+, 1Jn 5:19+, Lk 4:6+). See commentary on [Revelation 20:2](#).

The sounding of the seventh trumpet signals God’s answer to the prayer, “**Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**” (Mt. 6:10+). That answer sweeps through chapters 12-22 as God finishes His mighty work of reclaiming creation from the usurper, Satan.¹¹⁰

See commentary on [Revelation 5:1](#).

have become

[yéveto](#) [egeneto], singular, prophetic ([proleptic](#)) aorist. The event is so certain in the sounding of the seventh angel that it is treated as if already past. However, the kingdom will not have arrived in totality until all seven bowl judgments are poured forth (Rev. 16:17[±]) and the King Himself returns to earth to defeat the armies of the nations (Isa. 63:1-6+; Zec. 12:1-9+; Zech 14:1-8+; Rev. 19:11-21[±]). That day is described by many passages of which a small sample appears below:

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations. (Ps. 22:27-28).

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. (Ps. 72:8-11)

Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isa. 9:7+)

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. 2:44+)

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. (Dan. 7:14+)

And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—"The LORD *is* one," and His name one. All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and *from* the Tower of Hananeel to the king's winepresses. *The people* shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. (Zec. 14:9-11+)

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:32-33+)

Not one of the above passages finds literal fulfillment in the present day Church as the adherents of [Replacement Theology](#), [Dominion Theology](#), and [Covenant Theology](#) claim because the sounding of the seventh trumpet remains future to our time. These passages do not speak of an *invisible spiritual* kingdom, but a *visible earthly* kingdom—the [Millennial Kingdom](#) of Revelation 20:4-6+. See [The Arrival of God's Kingdom](#).¹¹¹

All attempts to equate this glorious reign of Christ over the whole earth with any past event or with the church is utterly foreign and contradictory to the clear eschatological teaching of Scripture, including especially this passage. **There is no way this text can be fulfilled except by the universal reign of Jesus Christ over the whole earth—as the prophets had for so long predicted.**¹¹²

His Christ

Christ is [Χριστο](#) [[Christou](#)], an appellation *the Anointed One, the Messiah*.¹¹³ This speaks of His *office* as the promised Anointed One and is a direct allusion to the Father's pronouncement concerning the Son: "Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and **His Anointed**, saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.' " [emphasis added] (Ps. 2:1-2). *His Anointed* is [inִישׁוּ](#) [m^ešîḥô] ([mashiach](#); Lxx - [Christos](#)), *the anointed of His* and is a direct parallel to [το Χριστο α το](#) [tou Christou autou], *the Christ of His*. The seventh trumpet proclaims the impending fulfillment of Psalm 2, especially Ps 2:7-9 which will be realized in the pouring forth of the final seven bowls:

"I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' " (Ps. 2:7-9)

See commentary on [Revelation 2:27](#).

forever and ever

[ε ς τους α νας τ ν α ωνων](#) [eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn], *into the ages of the ages*. His kingdom is without end (Ex. 15:18; Ps. 10:16; 145:13; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 4:3; 6:26; 7:14, 18, 27; Mic. 4:7; Luke 1:33; 1Ti. 1:17; 2Pe. 1:11; Rev. 11:15+).

Revelation 11:16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

the twenty-four elders

See commentary on [Revelation 4:4](#).

their thrones

The thrones belong to the elders. This argues for their identification as the redeemed. See commentary on [Revelation 4:4](#).

fell on their faces

The elders are repeatedly found prostrate before the throne in worship (Rev. 4:10+; Rev 5:8+, Rev 5:14+; Rev 7:11+; Rev 19:4+).

Revelation 11:17 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.

the Almighty

[παντοκρατωρ](#) [ho [pantokrator](#)], see commentary on [Revelation 1:8](#).

who is and who was and who is to come

See commentary on [Revelation 1:4](#). [MT](#) and [NU](#) texts omit *and who is to come*.¹¹⁴ Some see the omission of this phrase as support

for the [premillennial](#) interpretation of the Second Coming, as an indication that He has *already come* at the time His reign is taken up.¹¹⁵ The expectation for the “Coming One” is clearly set forth at the first advent when Israel expected her coming King and His kingdom (Mt. 11:3; 21:9; Luke 7:19). They will not see the king until they ask for Him (Mt. 23:39; Luke 13:35).

reigned

[βασιλευσας](#) [ebasileusas], an ingressive aorist, *did begin to reign*.

Revelation 11:18 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 nations were angry and Your wrath has come

This refers to the rage of the nations (Ps. 2:1) exhibited throughout the Tribulation by an unrelenting opposition to God. The response of God to the anger of the nations was predicted long ago: “He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure” (Ps. 2:5). The nations of the Tribulation are ruled by unwise kings (Rev. 17:12⁺; Rev 19:19⁺) who fail to “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish *in* the way when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Ps. 2:12). The wrath of God speaks of the entire period of the judgments which are being loosed upon the earth, beginning with the first seal loosed by the Lamb (Rev. 6:1⁺). Even the [earth dwellers](#) understood that God’s wrath was being poured forth at the time of the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:16-17⁺). Yet, this statement is made in response to the sounding of the seventh trumpet which proclaims a period of intensified judgment specifically characterized as seven “bowls of the wrath of God” (Rev. 15:7⁺; Rev 16:1⁺). In these impending “seven last plagues . . . the wrath of God is complete” (Rev. 15:1⁺). See [Delivered from the Wrath to Come](#).

the time of the dead that they should be judged

Time is [καιρ ος](#) [[kairos](#)]. Here it denotes a “specific character of time”¹¹⁶—the time during which God will judge the dead. Every man, once dead, will face judgment (Heb. 9:27). To Daniel it was revealed that the time of Jacob’s trouble would precede the time of the judgment of the dead and that there would be two categories of resurrection: to everlasting life and to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:1-3, cf Jer 30:7). Later in the book of Revelation, we will find that the timing of these two categories of the resurrected dead differs by at least one thousand years. All the righteous dead are resurrected by the advent of the [Millennial Kingdom](#) in order to participate therein, whereas the unrighteous dead are not resurrected until after the final rebellion at the close of the [Millennial Kingdom](#) (Rev 20:7-10⁺). The resurrection of the unsaved dead and their final judgment is referred to as “the [second death](#).” For the saved dead who participate in the first resurrection preceding the [Millennial Kingdom](#) “the [second death](#) has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6⁺, cf Rev 5:10⁺). Although the righteous dead will stand before the [judgment seat of Christ](#), it is for reward rather than punishment and those who trust in Christ cannot themselves be lost (1Cor. 3:13-15⁺; 2Cor. 5:10⁺). It is in this sense that Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24). Believers will not undergo judgment for their sins because Christ has taken their sins upon Himself in their stead. The judgment of all those throughout history who reject Christ occurs at the [Great White Throne](#) (Rev. 20:11⁺). This judgment cannot transpire until every last rejecter of Christ has met physical death. This is one of the purposes found in the loosing of Satan for the final rebellion at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9⁺)—to manifest the last generation of Christ-rejecters prior to the judgment. The result of the [Great White Throne](#) Judgment is the assigning of varying degrees of punishment, based on works, and the casting of the unsaved dead into the [Lake of Fire](#). “This is the [second death](#)” (Rev. 20:14⁺). See commentary on [Revelation 20:11](#). Jesus promised that the overcomer ([nikao](#) - 1Jn 5:4-5⁺) would not participate in the [second death](#). See commentary on [Revelation 2:11](#). Since the judgment of the dead does not occur until the close of the [Millennial Kingdom](#), it can be seen that this passage is very forward-looking, taking in a long period of history within its purview. Thus, it is describing the *results* which flow from the outworking of the seventh trumpet. This includes the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 16⁺), the return of Christ (Rev. 19⁺), the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6⁺), and the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15⁺).¹¹⁷

that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints

The reward of the prophets and saints is associated with Christ’s return (Rev. 3:11⁺; Rev 22:12⁺) and is to be contrasted with the judgment of the dead just mentioned. *The prophets* refers to both [OT](#) and [NT](#) prophets.¹¹⁸

(1) “Thy servants the prophets” evidently points to those who have in all ages witnessed for God. . . . “Servants” is here qualified by the additional noun, “prophets.” “Thy servants the prophets.” To witness for God in a dark and evil day is a service which God never forgets. All such are peculiarly His servants. (2) “The saints.” This term is the common one in the New Testament to designate the general body of believers, and is nowhere used in the New Testament Scriptures to express a select company. It is the common appellation of the redeemed in both Testaments.¹¹⁹

The rewards include the many promises found throughout Scripture (Dan. 7:18; Mat. 5:12; 10:41; 16:27; 25:34; Luke 14:14; Rom. 2:7; 1Cor. 2:9; 2Ti. 4:8; Heb. 4:9; 11:10; 2Jn. 1:8) including those related to the inheritance of the believer (Acts 20:32; 26:18; Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:11-14; 5:5; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Heb. 9:15; 1Pe. 1:4). This includes all the promises made to the overcomer (Rev. 2:7⁺, Rev 2:11⁺, Rev 2:17⁺, Rev 2:26⁺; Rev 3:5⁺, Rev 12⁺, Rev 21⁺; Rev 21:7⁺) and the blessings which attend the Millennial Kingdom (see [The Arrival of God's Kingdom](#)) and the eternal state (Rev. 21⁺, 22⁺).¹²⁰ See [Believer's Crowns](#).

those who fear Your name both small and great

A healthy, reverent fear undergirds the attitude of those who trust in the Lord (Jos. 24:14; 1S. 12:24; Ps. 34:9; 85:9; 102:15; 103:11; 115:13, 14; 147:11; Ecc. 8:12; 12:13; Mic. 6:9; Luke 1:50; Rev. 19:5⁺). *Both small and great* describes every category of mankind—all variations in physical stature, wealth, or position—are found in His kingdom (Ps. 115:13; Rev. 19:5⁺).¹²¹

destroy those who destroy the earth

Destroy is from [διαφθείρω](#) [diaphtheirō] which can denote either physical or moral destruction.¹²² Here is God's assessment of modern environmentalism—which purports to radically care for the earth while denying the Creator behind the creation and creatures which it panders to. At the Second Coming, the condition of the earth has reached the equivalent of the time of the flood where “the earth is filled with violence” (Gen. 6:13). This corruption was due to the great wickedness of man in that “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). This is the predictable end of unregenerate men once the Restrainer is removed and the mystery of lawlessness reaches full flower (2Th. 2:7). “The word ‘destroy’ is the same, actually, as ‘corrupt.’ Man had destroyed the earth by corrupting the earth, using it not for God's glory, but instead to satisfy his own greed and lust.”¹²³ Some take *those who destroy the earth* as a separate category from *the nations*, as if denoting fallen angels which are under the rule of the *Destroyer*, that is “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” (Rev. 9:11⁺).¹²⁴ But the object of their destruction would seem to be *men* rather than the earth as stated here.

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.

the temple of God was opened in heaven

This is the heavenly temple (Isa. 6:1-4; Rev. 7:15⁺; 14:15⁺, 17⁺; 15:5-6⁺, 8⁺; 16:1⁺, 17⁺), not the earthly temple in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:1-2⁺). The chapter begins and ends with [Temples](#): the *earthly* Temple in Jerusalem and now this Temple in *heaven* is *opened* to reveal its contents to John (and subsequently to the reader). See [Temple of God](#).

the ark of His covenant

The [MT](#) text has “the ark of the covenant of the Lord”. Ark is [κιβωτός](#) [kibōtos], meaning “box, chest,”¹²⁵ and is used to describe both the Ark of the Covenant (Heb. 9:4; Rev. 11:19⁺) and Noah's Ark (Mat. 24:38 cf. Gen. 6:14, [LXX](#)). The *ark of His covenant* refers to the box which stood in the Holy Place containing items which testified of God's relationship with Israel.¹²⁶ This testimony had both positive and negative aspects:

The broken tablets of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 32:19) were a witness to the great spiritual defection and breaking of the covenant by the people—a defection which almost cost them their existence as Abraham's seed (Ex. 32:10; Deu. 9:14). The pot of manna recalled the violations committed against its gathering (Ex. 16:20) and the complaints against its provision (Num. 11:16). The rod of Aaron was a visible reminder of the treasonous spirit that sought to replace God's appointed leadership (Num. 16:1-50). . . . The pot of manna revealed God's loyal love in that He continued His constant care of the nation by giving her ‘daily bread’ until everyone finally reached the Promised Land (Ex. 16:35; Jos. 5:12). Aaron's budded rod was graciously given to validate God's proper priesthood (Num. 17:5⁺, Nu 18:6-9, 23⁺) and to preserve the lives of those who would otherwise have perished for their complaints (Num. 17:10). Finally, the book of the Law was present with the Ark to testify to every successive generation (Deu. 4:9) that God had chosen the nation not because of anything she had done but because of His own sovereign love and gracious choice (Deu. 7:6-9).¹²⁷

There has been much speculation concerning the location of the earthly Ark of the Covenant.

The ark of the covenant disappeared when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and carried Judah captive into Babylon 600 years before Christ. At that time “all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord” were also taken to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:18), as were the brass and other metals that adorned the temple (2Kings 25:13-20). No mention, however, was made of the ark, the most important and perhaps most costly (the ark was overlaid with gold and the mercy

seat and cherubim were of pure gold) item in the temple, as well as certainly the most significant item to the writers of the accounts in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Jeremiah (Jer 52, as well as the book of Lamentations). Neither was there any mention of the ark when Cyrus commissioned the rebuilding of the temple and sent back all its vessels as well (Ezra 1:1-11).¹²⁸

Numerous locations have been suggested for the *earthly* Ark of the Covenant:

1. Shishak took the ark to Egypt (1K. 14:25-26; 2Chr. 12:2-4, 9).
2. Nebuchadnezzar took the ark to Babylon (2K. 25:13-15; 2Chr. 36:17-19; Jer. 52:17-22; cf. *Fourth Book of Ezra* 10:19-22).
3. Jeremiah hid the ark in a cave (2 Maccabees 2:4-6; Ezra 1:9-11).¹²⁹
4. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) took the ark to Syria (1 Maccabees 1:21-24, 57).
5. Titus took the ark to Rome.¹³⁰
6. The ark is hidden below the Temple Mount.¹³¹
7. The son of the Queen of Sheba took the ark to Ethiopia.¹³²
8. The ark no longer exists and will never appear again (Jer. 3:16).¹³³
9. The ark was taken to heaven by God (see below).¹³⁴

Some suggest that this passage proves that the ark has been relocated to heaven, but Scripture informs us that the earthly Temple was patterned after a greater heavenly reality (Heb. 8:4-5; Heb. 9:1-11). Thus, within the heavenly Temple we find many of the same implements as is the earthly Temple (Rev. 4:5⁺; 6:9⁺; 8:3⁺, 5⁺; 9:13⁺; 14:18⁺; 16:7⁺). The revelation of an ark in the heavenly Temple no more precludes the continued existence of the earthly ark than the existence of the heavenly altar of sacrifice means the earthly one has been relocated to heaven. Leaving aside the question of the location of the earthly ark, as interesting as it might be, what is the significance of the ark revealed in heaven? As we noted in our commentary on [Revelation 11:5](#), there is a unique relationship between the word of God and judgment. It is God's word which establishes the righteous requirements for obedience and underwrites the definition of righteous judgment. The appearance of the Ark of *His covenant* emphasizes that which will be used as the standard for judgment. It is because of man's willful disobedience and rebellion in the light of the standard of the law that God's righteous judgment is required. His wrath is measured by the distance between the contents of the written requirements in the ark versus the actions of sinful men. In a similar passage, "the temple of the [tabernacle](#) of the testimony in heaven was opened." There, the tabernacle of the testimony is seen to be connected to the "seven angels having the seven plagues" (Rev. 15:5-6⁺). The mention of *covenant* and *testimony* indicate the righteous requirement of the law which judges those who are guilty and under judgment of God's wrath (Rom. 2:12; 3:19-20). For "the law brings about wrath" (Rom. 4:15). Believers will not be subject to the written requirements which were taken away in Christ (Rom. 7:6; Col. 2:14). See commentary on [Revelation 15:5](#). Some believe the break between chapters 11 and 12 to be placed incorrectly and take this last verse of chapter 11 as being more closely associated with the opening verse of chapter 12.¹³⁵ Both verses begin with the same conjunction ([καί](#) [kai]) offering numerous interpretive possibilities regarding their association. The suggestion is made that the Ark of the Covenant suggests God's remembrance of Israel which explains the shift in focus to the woman with child of the next chapter. But God's promises to Israel flow primarily from other covenants (Abrahamic, Davidic, New, Land) than the Law of Moses, which the ark recalls. The Law of Moses is said to have been broken which necessitated the establishment of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Rather than a sign of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel associated with the next chapter, it seems more natural to understand the appearance of the ark as denoting the standard of the law by which all the unredeemed stand guilty of impending righteous judgment. The mention of the manifestations of impending judgment would seem more naturally to be associated with the proclamation attending the sounding of the seventh trumpet bringing wrath than the scene of chapter 12 which sets forth Israel's struggle to bring forth Messiah.

lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail

All of these manifestations speak of impending judgments of the seven bowls (Rev. 16⁺) which are in accord with the wrath of God based upon the righteous law as recorded in the Ark of the Covenant. See commentary on [Revelation 4:5](#). The ark is revealed after the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15⁺), but before the seven bowls of God's wrath are poured out on the earth (Rev. 16:1-17⁺). When the final bowl is poured forth, the manifestations of judgment seen in this heavenly scene are *delivered to earth*: lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake (Rev. 16:18⁺) and a plague of great hail (Rev. 16:21⁺). These manifestations underscore the connection between the heavenly Ark of the Covenant (containing the "testimony," the Ten Commandments) and the final judgment of the God-rejecting world below. See commentary on [Revelation 16:21](#).

Notes

¹John MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), Rev. 11:1.

²James Strong, [The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible](#) (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), G4464.

³NASB.

⁴A figure of speech: “*Zeugma*. The verb measure is by this figure ‘yoked’ to a second object which does not fit it as equally as the first, for worshippers would not be measured but taken account of.”—Jerome Smith, [*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), Rev. 11:1.

⁵Monty S. Mills, [*Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John*](#) (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1987), Rev. 11:1.

⁶Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, [*Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 269.

⁷W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, eds., [*The Holy Bible: Baptist Study Edition*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), Rev. 11:1.

⁸Donald Grey Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), Rev. 11:1.

⁹E. W. Bullinger, [*Commentary On Revelation*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1984, 1935), Rev. 11:1.

¹⁰Smith, [*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*](#), Rev. 11:2.

¹¹Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 121.

¹²Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#), Rev. 1:2.

¹³Randall Price, [*The Coming Last Days Temple*](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999), 484.

¹⁴J. A. Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), Rev. 11:2.

¹⁵“The best conclusion is that the twenty-three hundred days of Daniel are fulfilled in the period from 171 B.C. and culminated in the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B.C. The period when the sacrifices ceased was the latter part of this longer period. Although the evidence available today does not offer fulfillment to the precise day, the twenty-three hundred days, obviously a round number, is relatively accurate in defining the period when the Jewish religion began to erode under the persecution of Antiochus, and the period as a whole concluded with his death. The alternate theories produce more problems than they solve.”—John F. Walvoord, [*Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1971), Dan. 8:14.

¹⁶J. Dwight Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 213. ([See online copy of this book](#))

¹⁷“The period termed by our Lord the ‘Times of the Gentiles’, commences with the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a period coincident from its beginning to its close, with the treading down of Jerusalem.”—Arthur Wakington Pink, [*The Antichrist*](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1999, 1923), s.v. “Israel and the Antichrist.”

¹⁸Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [*The Footsteps of Messiah*](#), rev ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 21.

¹⁹Although Daniel 11:31 was fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes, it stands as an example of a future desecration which Jesus spoke of (Mat. 24:15).

²⁰Walter Scott, [*Exposition of The Revelation*](#) (London, England: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 218.

²¹“We have no hesitation in naming St. James and St. Peter as the persons indicated.”—J. Stuart Russell, [*The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999, 1887), 434.

²²Isbion T. Beckwith, [*The Apocalypse of John*](#) (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 324.

²³Daniel Wong, ONLINE “[The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11.](#)” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 154 no. 615 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, July-Sep 1997), 345.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 345-346.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 346-347.

²⁶Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#), Rev. 11:3.

²⁷Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 304-313. ([see online copy](#))

²⁸Wong, [*The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11*](#), 348.

²⁹So [Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#)], [MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#)], [Robert L. Thomas, [*Revelation 8-22*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995)]. See [Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#), 248-249] for a summary of the writings of various church fathers in support of the coming of Elijah prior to the end.

³⁰Wong, [*The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11*](#), 349.

³¹*Ibid.*, 349-350.

³²MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#), Rev. 11:3.

³³Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 306. ([see online copy](#))

³⁴*Ibid.*, 311.

³⁵Wong, [*The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11*](#), 349.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 349-350.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 351-352.

³⁸A. R. Fausset, "[The Revelation of St. John the Divine.](#)" in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [*A Commentary. Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, 1877), Rev. 11:3.

³⁹Arno C. Gaebelin, [*The Revelation*](#) (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), Rev. 11:3-6.

⁴⁰Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 306-307. ([see online copy](#))

⁴¹So [Henry Morris, [*The Revelation Record*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983)], [Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#)], "The ancient church, including such as Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, were consistent in identifying the two witnesses as Enoch and Elijah."—Thomas, [*Revelation 8-22*](#), Rev. 11:3. See [Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#), 248-249] for a summary of the writings of various church fathers in support of the coming of the Elijah prior to the end.

⁴²Wong, [*The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11*](#), 350-351.

⁴³Morris, [*The Revelation Record*](#), Rev. 11:3.

⁴⁴Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 307. ([see online copy](#))

⁴⁵Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#), Rev. 11:3.

⁴⁶Wong, [*The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11*](#), 350-351.

⁴⁷Fruchtenbaum, [*The Footsteps of Messiah*](#), 234-235.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 235.

⁴⁹Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#), Rev. 11:3.

⁵⁰Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 307. ([see online copy](#))

⁵¹Robert L. Thomas, [*Revelation 1-7*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), Rev. 11:3.

⁵²So [Wong, [*The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11*](#)], [John F. Walvoord, [*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966)], [Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 308]. ([see online copy](#))

⁵³Bullinger, [*Commentary On Revelation*](#), Rev. 11:3.

⁵⁴Walvoord, [*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*](#), Rev. 11:3.

⁵⁵"The duration of man is often reckoned in days (Gen. 47:9, 28; Ps. 90:10, 12; 119:84), whereas judgments are sometimes reckoned in months (Gen. 8:5; Rev. 9:5⁺, 10⁺; 13:5⁺)."—Smith, [*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*](#), Rev. 11:3.

⁵⁶ [MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#)], [Mills, [*Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John*](#)]

⁵⁷"The three-and-a-half year period of the prophecy of the two witnesses corresponds to the first half of the tribulation. . . . [The] absolute rule by the beast (Revelation 13:5⁺) apparently becomes possible only by the execution of the two witnesses by the beast (Revelation 11:7⁺) As long as the witnesses exercise such power over both men and nature, it is impossible for the beast to acquire world power."—Morris, [*The Revelation Record*](#), Rev. 11:6.

⁵⁸"But here in revelation 11 instead of the awful advent of the Lord from heaven 'immediately' after the killing of these witnesses, we read of a hideous celebration of their death by the nations and tribes of the earth. . . . it is at the *beginning* of the Beast's successful blasphemous career, *that he kills these two witnesses*."—William R. Newell, [*Revelation: Chapter by Chapter*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994,c1935), Rev. 11:14.

⁵⁹Pentecost cites English: "There is thought-provoking logic in the argument that their testimony will be given during the first half of Daniel's prophetic week, and that their martyrdom will be the first persecuting act of the Beast, after he breaks his covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27)."—Pentecost, [*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*](#), 309. ([see online copy](#))

⁶⁰David Baron, [*Zechariah: A Commentary On His Visions And Prophecies*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1918), 131.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 135.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 136.

⁶³"A picture is given of a day of similar gladness and joy of heart when, on account of sin pardoned, free access to God's throne granted, and the Deliverer having come anointed with the plenitude of the Spirit and sealed by God the Father, each true Israelite would invite his friends as joyful guests to partake of festal cheer under his own vine and fig-tree. The days of peace once more are seen. The glorious era of the earthly Solomon has indeed returned in greater splendour under the reign of the Prince of Peace. 'Paradise lost' has become 'Paradise regained.'"—*Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁴The offices of both Joshua (priestly) and Zerubbabel (civil, or kingly) will be combined in one in Messiah and the counsel of peace shall be between both offices (Zec. 6:11-13).

⁶⁵MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#), Rev. 11:4.

⁶⁶Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#), Rev. 11:4.

⁶⁷We do not believe it to be coincidental that the subsequent vision of Zechariah is that of a flyingscroll wherein wickedness in the form of economic measures is transported "to build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, *the basket* will be set there on its base" (Zec. 5:11). We see the corresponding fulfillment of Zechariah's vision in subsequent events concerning Babylon in Revelation 17⁺ and 18⁺.

⁶⁸Baron, [*Zechariah: A Commentary On His Visions And Prophecies*](#), 134.

⁶⁹"The verb [θέλει](#) [thelei] ('desires') is present indicative and makes the assumption that some will want to harm the two."—Thomas, [*Revelation 8-22*](#), Rev. 11:5.

⁷⁰"These men are accorded miraculous power to bring fire down from heaven—they are filled with the Holy Spirit."—J. Vernon McGee, [*Thru The Bible Commentary*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981), Rev. 11:5.

⁷¹The only possible exception would be the *source* of the fire being their mouths. This could be construed as a possible indicator of figurative language. Then again, how else could God indicate literal fire directly originating in their mouths? It seems there will always be room for some uncertainty when interpreting potentially figurative passages which prophesy miraculous events because the boundary between normalcy and miraculous is highly elastic and subject to the purpose of God in any given setting.

⁷²Danker, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#), 434.

⁷³MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 11:6.

⁷⁴Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 361.

⁷⁵Friberg, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), 198.

⁷⁶Therion describes the Antichrist in Rev. 11:7[±]; 13:1-4[±], 12[±], 14-15[±], 17-18[±]; 14:9[±], 11[±]; 15:2[±]; 16:2[±], 10[±], 13[±]; 17:3[±], 7-8[±], 11-13[±], 16-17[±]; 19:19-20[±]; 20:4[±], 10[±]. Arnion describes the Lamb in Rev. 5:6[±], 8[±], 12-13[±]; 6:1[±], 16[±]; 7:9-10[±], 14[±], 17[±]; 12:11[±]; 13:8[±], 11[±]; 14:1[±], 4[±], 10[±]; 15:3[±]; 17:14[±]; 19:7[±], 9[±]; 21:9[±], 14[±], 22-23[±], 27[±]; 22:1[±], 3[±].

⁷⁷Pink, [The Antichrist](#), s.v. "The Beast."

⁷⁸Wong, [The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11](#), 353-354.

⁷⁹Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 11:7.

⁸⁰Pink, [The Antichrist](#), s.v. "intro."

⁸¹Ibid., s.v. "Names and Titles of the Antichrist."

⁸²Ibid., s.v. "The Papacy Not the Antichrist."

⁸³Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 11:7.

⁸⁴Scott, [Exposition of The Revelation](#), Rev. 19:18.

⁸⁵Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 250.

⁸⁶Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 17:12.

⁸⁷J. B. Payne, "Burial," in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., [The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979, 1915), 1:556.

⁸⁸The Jewishness of Revelation contributed to its lack of acceptance in the Eastern Church. See [Acceptance into the Canon](#).

⁸⁹The phrase "great city" in Revelation 16:19[±] probably denotes Jerusalem: "The likelihood of Babylon's being named twice (or even three times if 'the cities of the nations' refers to Babylon) in the same verse is quite remote. Revelation 11:8[±] has a clear identification of Jerusalem as 'the great city' (Moffat, Ford). Furthermore, its separation from 'the cities of the Gentiles (or nations)' in the next phrase indicates that Jerusalem is in view. This interpretation that does justice to this context also concurs with predicted topographical changes that will take place around Jerusalem in conjunction with the second advent (Zec. 14:4) (Seiss). Jerusalem experienced a fairly severe earthquake earlier (Rev. 11:3[±]), but that was only partial. This earthquake will divide the city into three parts."—Thomas, [Revelation 8-22](#), Rev. 16:19.

⁹⁰Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 679.

⁹¹Thomas, [Revelation 8-22](#), Rev. 11:8.

⁹²"The reference to Sodom may relate to Dan. 11:37; the Beast may well encourage homosexual orgies, thus God's blast of 'Sodom.'"—Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#), Rev. 11:8.

⁹³Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 11:8.

⁹⁴Thomas, [Revelation 8-22](#), Rev. 11:8.

⁹⁵Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 11:9.

⁹⁶Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 524.

⁹⁷Friberg, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), 181.

⁹⁸Demonstrating the political parable: "My enemy's enemy is my friend."

⁹⁹"Not only does the weight of external evidence favor [κουσαν](#) [ēkousan], but since the Seer constantly uses [κουσα](#) [ēkousa]

throughout the book (24 times), copyists were more likely to substitute [κουου](#) [ēkousa] for [κουουυ](#) [ēkousan] than vice versa.”—Bruce M. Metzger, [A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament](#) (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 672.

¹⁰⁰Paul Lee Tan, [The Interpretation of Prophecy](#) (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1993), 94-95.

¹⁰¹“In the letter to the church in Sardis, the Lord stated that He would not blot out of the scroll of life the names of the overcomers (Rev. 3:5⁺). Is this not further proof that there is a book containing the record of every individual who is ever born into this lost world?”—Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), Rev. 11:13.

¹⁰²This pattern does not extend to the sixth and seventh bowl judgments which are consecutive and lack any discernible gap (Rev. 16:12-21⁺).

¹⁰³See [Pentecost, [Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology](#), 188-192]. ([see online copy](#))

¹⁰⁴Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 149.

¹⁰⁵Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#), Rev. 11:15.

¹⁰⁶MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 11:15.

¹⁰⁷“It should be noted that the word *kingdom* is singular, and so Messiah will gain the one-world kingdom of the Antichrist.”—Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 273.

¹⁰⁸MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 11:15.

¹⁰⁹Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#), Rev. 11:15.

¹¹⁰MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 11:15.

¹¹¹Concerning the future aspect of the kingdom: Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:11-14, 21-22, 25-27 (cf. Rev. 19:20⁺); Mat. 6:2; 7:21-22; 19:28; 25:31; 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 11:2; 19:11, 15; 21:31; 22:16-18, 29; 22:30; 23:51; Acts 1:6-7; 1Cor. 15:24; Heb. 2:8; 2Ti. 4:1; Rev. 3:21⁺; 12:10⁺; 11:15⁺, 17⁺; 19:20⁺ (cf. Dan. 7:11-14).

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 886.

¹¹⁴The arbitrariness of the heuristics behind textual criticism and the prevailing bias of *Critical Text* advocates against the Byzantine texts are demonstrated in the reason given for rejecting *and who is to come* from the *Critical Text*: “The addition of [ρχόμενος τι](#) [ho erchomenos hoti] . . . is a typical Byzantine accretion, in imitation of the tripartite expression in 1.4, 8; cf. 4.8.”—Metzger, [A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament](#), 672. It seems when a longer reading is favored by advocates of the *Critical Text* they reason that omissions are a common copyist error. When a shorter reading is favored then the longer reading is dismissed as a “typical Byzantine accretion.” The fact that the former are errors of *omission*, whereas the latter are errors of *commission*, doesn’t seem to be considered. A copyist with any reverence for the text is much more likely to commit the former (resulting in the shorter reading) than the latter (resulting in the longer reading). Therefore, in lieu of other considerations, the longer reading should normally be favored.

¹¹⁵“Millenarian writers have always insisted that a personal [Premillennial] Advent is to be witnessed under the seventh or last trumpet. Now, Bengel in his *Gnomon* has shown, that by the authority of the earliest MSS. the phrases ‘*and art to come*’ in Rev. 11:17⁺, and ‘*and shalt be*’ in Rev. 16:5⁺, are to be rejected. This criticism is fully sustained by the authoritative Sinaitic MSS. discovered by Prof. Tischendorf. . . . Thy should the title of ‘Who is to come,’ or ‘the Coming One’ given in Rev. 1:4⁺, 8 and 4:8 be omitted in 11:17⁺ and 16:5⁺? The reason, so corroborative of our faith, was given long ago by Ansbert (as quoted by Bengel): ‘They do not here subjoin, as they are accustomed, “and Who art to come;” they speak of Him *as already present*.’ This omission, as the weightiest MSS. (admitted by Anti-Millenarians, as Prof. Stuart, *Com.*) prove, is not *accidental* but *intentional*, showing that the Coming One is no longer expected to come, but *has already come*. It is a beautiful, incidental, and most powerful proof confirmatory of our position, indicative of a [Premillennial] arrival and presence.”—George H. N. Peters, [The Theocratic Kingdom](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1978, 1884), 2:185.

¹¹⁶Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 395.

- ¹¹⁷“The sounding of the seventh messenger is a prolonged blast which covers the announcement of events to take place in the distant future, even after the millennial reign of Christ has been completed.”—Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), Rev. 11:2.
- ¹¹⁸“The linking of prophets with apostles in Rev. 18:20⁺ and the angel’s reference to them as ‘your [John’s] brethren’ in Rev. 22:9⁺ shows the impossibility of excluding NT prophets from the term.”—Thomas, [Revelation 8-22](#), Rev. 11:18.
- ¹¹⁹Scott, [Exposition of The Revelation](#), Rev. 11:18.
- ¹²⁰The reward of the believer is a vast topic spanning innumerable Scriptures from which only a small sample is listed here.
- ¹²¹So too are they found in Antichrist’s: Rev. 13:16⁺; 19:18⁺; 20:12⁺.
- ¹²²Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 190.
- ¹²³Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 11:18.
- ¹²⁴“The event is a fulfillment of the double prophecy, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth” (Isa. 24:21). There can be no doubt that here is a division that recognizes Satan and his followers on the one side and the earthlings on the other.”—Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), Rev. 11:18.
- ¹²⁵Friberg, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), 230.
- ¹²⁶Concerning the contents of the ark: Ex. 16:34; 25:16, 21; 40:20; Num. 17:10; Deu. 10:2-5; 31:26; 1K. 8:9, 21; 2Chr. 5:10; 6:11; Heb. 9:4.
- ¹²⁷Randall Price, [In Search of Temple Treasure](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), 53,54.
- ¹²⁸Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 11:19.
- ¹²⁹The inventory in Ezra 1:9-11 lists gold and silver dishes, silver pans, gold and silver bowls, and other articles for a total of 5,400 items. The Ark of the Covenant is not specifically listed.
- ¹³⁰“Vespasian resolved to build a temple to Peace, which he finished in so short a time, and in so glorious a manner, as was beyond all human expectations and opinion: for he having now by Providence a vast quantity of wealth, besides what he had formerly gained in his other exploits, he had this temple adorned with pictures and statues; for in this temple were collected and deposited all such rarities as men aforetime used to wander all over the habitable world to see, when they had a desire to see them one after another: he also laid up therein, as ensigns of his glory, those golden vessels and instruments that were taken out of the Jewish temple.”—Flavius Josephus, [The Complete Works of Josephus](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981), s.v. “Wars VII, v7.” Elsewhere, Josephus records the Holy of Holies was *empty*: “The inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. **In this there was nothing at all.** It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies.” [emphasis added]—Ibid., s.v. “Wars V, v 5.”
- ¹³¹“Certain Rabbis claim to have seen the Ark in a tunnel under the Temple ground in Jerusalem. The Israel government sealed the entrance with cement because of protests from the Arabs, because it was near the Dome of the Rock. There is no proof that the Ark is there.” [[www.bibleandscience.com](#)]
- ¹³²“Supposedly, King Solomon had a son by the Queen of Sheba named Menelik. When he grew up Menelik returned to Jerusalem for a copy of the Ark of the Covenant which Solomon gave to him. But Menelik secretly switched the real Ark with the replica. Menelik took the real Ark back to Ethiopia. Traditionally, Sheba is located in Saudi Arabia not Ethiopia.— [[www.bibleandscience.com](#)]”
- ¹³³“Certain it is, that the ark in the future is not to be brought to light, spite of speculation and guess-work to the contrary. On this Jeremiah speaks with no uncertain voice (Jer. 3:16). The ark, the sign of Jehovah’s presence and faithfulness, will no longer be needed in the palmy days of the kingdom, for *that* which it signified will then be an accomplished reality. Jehovah will have made good His unchanging grace to His people, and His throne and presence in their midst will gloriously supersede the ark in the tabernacle and temple of old.”—Scott, [Exposition of The Revelation](#), Rev. 11:19.
- ¹³⁴Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 11:19.
- ¹³⁵ [Scott, [Exposition of The Revelation](#), Rev. 11:19], [Gaebelein, [The Revelation](#), Rev. 11:19].

