

The Tribulation Temple, The Two Witnesses, & The Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11

Revelation 11 - *"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. ⁷ When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

⁹ Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰ And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹² And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. ¹³ In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. ¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: " We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth." ¹⁹ Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail."

Background Notes

At the end of Revelation 8, under the fourth Trumpet Judgment, three “woes” were pronounced on those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 8:13: *“And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”* So, the three woes are the last three Trumpet Judgments -- the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets.

Revelation 11:15: *“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”* The sounding of the seventh angel’s trumpet brings us to the end of the Tribulation, and the beginning of Christ’s earthly kingdom.

Remember, this is the coming earthly kingdom of our Lord. (This is not a reference to the Church!) This kingdom will last for a thousand years, according to Revelation 20, and will merge with eternity, when Christ will reign forever and ever. In verses 16-17 the twenty-four elders, who represent believers in heaven, praise God because the reign of Christ has begun. So, this is not “the reign of Christ in the Church” at the present time – it is the beginning of “the earthly reign of Christ” in the future, after the Tribulation period.

Verse 18 is part the praise of the twenty-four elders. They quoted from Psalm 2, and praised God that the time had finally come for the judgment of the damned and the reward of the righteous. Revelation 20 says that the reward of the righteous will come at the beginning of the Millennial (thousand year) kingdom reign of Christ, and the judgment of the damned will come at the end of the thousand-year kingdom.

Doctrinal Points

1. Two Temples will be built on this earth in the future.

Two Temples are mentioned in this section of John’s vision, in the first verse and the last verse of the chapter. However, the Temple in the last verse is not one of the two Temples of our doctrinal point, because the Temple in the last verse of Revelation 11 is not an earthly Temple – it is a heavenly Temple.

In verse 19 John saw this heavenly Temple opened, and he saw the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. This probably does not mean that the ancient Ark of the Covenant was (or will be) taken up to heaven. No. Remember that Revelation is a vision with lots of symbols (as we’ve seen). It seems that the vision of the Ark seen in the Temple of God in heaven means that the way into God’s presence is now open, as we read in Hebrews 10:19.

In addition, it means that God has not forgotten His covenant with Israel! Remember, the Ark represented the covenant relationship between God and His people Israel, and it signified the Lord’s loyal presence among His people, the Jewish people.

Two temples will be built on the **earth** in the future. One of those earthly temples is seen in verses 1-2: *“Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.”* The 42 months mentioned here is the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation period, or the Great Tribulation, so this is the earthly Temple of the Tribulation period. It has not yet been built because we are not yet in the Tribulation time period. This Temple will be built on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Perhaps it will be built in the near future, and it may even be built before the Rapture.

The other earthly Temple of the last days is the millennial Temple. It is not mentioned here in this chapter, but it will be built after the Tribulation period. It will be the Temple in Jerusalem during the thousand-year earthly kingdom of Christ. You can read about this millennial temple in Ezekiel 40-48.

In reference to the Temple of the Tribulation period, in Revelation 11 John was told to measure the Temple and the altar, and to number those who worship there. So true worship by the godly remnant will take place at the Tribulation Temple of the last days. Verse 2 tells us that godless Gentiles will desecrate this Temple during the Tribulation period: *“for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.”* The “abomination of desolation” will be set up in this Temple, as predicted by the prophet Daniel and affirmed by our Lord in His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. I’m reading Matthew 24:15-16: *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”* This “abomination” and the Tribulation Temple itself will be removed and replaced with the Millennial Temple of our Lord. Two Temples will be built on this earth in the future.

2. Two witnesses will appear on this earth in the future.

Verse 3: *“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”* The 1260 days correspond to the 3 1/2 years of the Great Tribulation. (Forty-two Hebrew months is 1260 days, or 3 1/2 years.)

In verse 4 we see that these two witnesses of the Tribulation Period have a powerful testimony, represented by the lamp stands supplied with olive oil. This oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit providing a bright witness. Fire even proceeds from their mouths and devours anyone who would harm these two witnesses!

Who are these two witnesses? One suggestion is that they will be two powerful leaders of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who will witness in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah. The description of their powerful witness is similar to that of Moses and Elijah, with fire and stopping the rains as in the ministry of Elijah, and plagues as in the ministry of Moses.

Another suggestion is that the two witnesses will actually be Moses and Elijah themselves. The prophet Malachi predicted that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah, and in Matthew 17 the Lord said that Elijah was still to come, because John the Baptist did not completely fulfill the Malachi prophecy.

Another good possibility is that the two witnesses will be the actual Elijah and Enoch. Why? These two Old Testament saints never died -- but the two witnesses will die when the demon-controlled world ruler, known as the Beast, kills them. They will be martyred in Jerusalem, which is called "Sodom" and "Egypt" because of Jerusalem's ungodliness during the Tribulation period (v8). But just when the ungodly world will be celebrating the death and decay of these two godly witnesses, the two witnesses will be resurrected and caught up into heaven! Then a great earthquake will kill 7,000 people in Jerusalem, and the survivors of the earthquake will be terrified and give glory to God!

So, we don't know the exact identity of the two witnesses, but we do know their ministry and their destiny. Two witnesses appear on this earth in the future.

Practical Application

Remember, you are immortal until your work on earth is over.

Verse 7 says that when the two witnesses have finished their testimony, they will be martyred. Notice -- they will be immortal as long as they still have work to do on this earth.

The same is true for us. If you drive your car off a cliff, or have a fatal heart attack, or die of pneumonia, of course that would mean that your work on earth is done! The point of this practical application is that you don't have to fear the enemy or the forces of spiritual opposition, because God is in control -- in your life and in your death.

Remember, you are immortal until your work on earth is over!