

Revelation Chapter 11

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(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.



- **John Hinds:**

In the preceding chapter, the symbolic scenes were transferred from heaven to earth. This vision is also upon the earth. As John himself became a part of the vision of the little book, so he is a part of this vision. There appear before him the **temple, altar, and worshipers** with instruction to measure the three. While the old temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed for more than a quarter of a century, yet there was no more forceful way for John to understand the lessons than through that picture. Jewish minds had been accustomed for centuries to the temple system of **worshipping God**. Besides, before its destruction it had been used as a type of the church. (1 Corinthians 3: 16.)

John's being told to measure the **temple, altar, and worshipers** in the symbol meant that when the time arrived that this vision applied the church, the worship, and worshipers were to be measured. Since the purpose of measuring, according to verse two, was to determine what was approved or acceptable to God, then the measuring instrument had to be of divine make. This was nothing else than the New Testament teaching that already had been given by the apostles. As it was perfect (2 Timothy 3:16,17), nothing else was allowed as a standard. Galatians 1:8-9.



Discussion: How does the Bible compare to a tape measure?

(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 underfoot the holy city for forty-two months.



- **Hinds:**

The Gentiles could enter the outer **court** of the Jewish **temple**, but not the temple itself. In fact, only consecrated priests could enter that building. The altar referred to is the golden altar of incense inside the holy place of the temple. The Jewish priests were typical of Christians. (1 Peter 2: 5.) As John in the symbol was told to measure the worshipers (priests) so in the thing represented only those professing to worship God were to be measured.

(3) "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (4) These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

- The **two witnesses** from God who **prophesied** may have been the Old and New Testaments and the measuring rod of verse one. The **olive tree** is emblematic of peace and the candlestick or **lampstand** is emblematic as a source of light. They were standing before the **Lord of the earth**. The Scriptures are the perfect measuring rod.

These **witnesses** had been witnessing before, but for now they were to be **clothed in sackcloth**, garments of mourning. It should be noted that they stand before the **Lord of the earth**, making the view that they represent the Scripture very reasonable.



- **B. W. Johnson:**

This period of mourning (**sackcloth**), during which the witnesses shall prophesy in sackcloth is 1260 days. The same period is named in several places in prophecy.

In A.D. 527 Justinian ascended the throne of the Eastern Empire. Before his reign the schism had begun between the Greek and the Roman churches. He healed that schism by force in favor of Rome. If the reader will open Gibbon, vol. 4, p. 528, he will find an account of a terrible persecution, inaugurated by this monarch, in order to make all conform to the Papal rule. "His reign," says Gibbon, "was a uniform, yet various scene of persecution . . . Churches with their congregations were surrounded by Catholic soldiers, and the houses were burned with the congregations in them." At this period, then, the Church is drenched in blood in order to make the Romish power universal. The witnesses certainly prophesy in mourning. What more? In A.D. 531, Justinian, the ruler of the Eastern half of the old Roman world, the ruler of the countries where the churches still protested against the arrogant claims of Rome, decreed and enforced by arms the subjugation of the whole Church to the Roman Pope, and in A.D. 533, he bestowed upon him the title of Rector Ecclesiæ," or Lord of the Church. (*D'Aubigne's Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 42.) In **A.D. 533** the "Man of Sin" was certainly fully revealed. The Papacy was completely established. The universal claims of the Pope were sanctioned by imperial power. Here, then, is the beginning point.

During the long period extending from **A.D. 533 to 1793**, a prophetic period of 1260 years, the **two witnesses**, the Old Testament and New Testament, remained in sackcloth. Even where the light had begun to spring up and the Protestant Reformation had taken the place of Romish faith, there was still intoleration. Puritans were persecuted in England, Baptists in Lutheran Germany, Calvin burnt Servetus in Geneva, Quakers and Baptists were punished for their religion in the American colonies.

Near the close of the last century the most determined attack ever known was made upon the Bible. Voltaire and Rousseau led in France; Frederick the Great in Germany; Tom Paine, Hume, Gibbon and Bolingbroke in England; Thomas Jefferson and Paine in America. At last the culmination was reached in France. The nation rose in a crusade against all religion. The Convention, composed of the representatives of the mightiest nation then upon the

earth, by national law abolished not only the Bible but God. They decreed that France would worship no gods but Reason and Liberty. Atheism became the law of the State.

This is the only instance known to all history of a deliberate enactment abolishing all religion. Most fitly might such an event be styled the slaying of the **witnesses** who testify of the Lord. For 1260 years the testimony of the witnesses had been in part suppressed; in 1793 it was enacted that they should testify no more, or henceforth should be silent as death. It was decreed that time should date no more from the Christian era, and that the week itself should be abolished because it was a Bible division of time.

(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.

- **Hinds:**

The Old and New Testaments as God's two witnesses, though testifying for 1,260 years in sackcloth, were to have God's protection and finally prevail. Their **enemies**, therefore, were to be **devoured**. The evident meaning is that those who were **enemies** or rejected God's word would be punished finally as his word taught. The warning is repeated for emphasis with the statement that such enemies are to be killed "in this manner"--the manner God's word prescribes.

(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.

- These witnesses may have appeared defeated, but watch the story unfold!

(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. (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.

- These witnesses completed their **testimony** in sackcloth and were **killed**. They **dead bodies** were treated contemptibly in the street of **Sodom** (corruption) and **Egypt** (bondage.) In Daniel, a **beast** was a king or kingdom and so it is here.
- It appeared that God's Word was a **dead** issue and would no longer be bothering the wicked just as the rulers who **crucified the Lord** thought they had ridded themselves of the Living Word.

(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.

- **B.W. Johnson:**
They shall not be buried, but remain in plain sight. Though the witnesses were slain, their enemies could not get them out of sight. They could not bury them. During a period of **three and a half days** their bodies shall be seen in the street of the city slain, and all shall see them. They shall be conspicuous. This would seem to point to a period of three and one-half years.

(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.

- **Johnson:**
This expression (**those who dwell on the earth**), often used in Revelation, always refers to enemies of Christ. [See Revelation 3:10 6:10 11:10 12:12 13:8,12,14 14:6 17:8.] These rejoice because the witnesses are slain. They make merry over their death, because these two prophets tormented them. These witnesses, then, prophesied; that is, they spoke the will of God. Their warnings, exhortations, and denunciations of sin tormented the dwellers of the earth.

(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.

- **B. W. Johnson:**

After **three days and a half** the witnesses came to life. This implies that they regain their power and influence. The French "Convention," which inaugurated the Reign of Terror, guillotined all the royal family and many thousand citizens, decreed the dethronement of God, and made itself a terror to mankind, continued in existence for a little more than three years, and in about three and a half years the French nation began to recover from its madness. Its atheistic laws were repealed, and Christianity was acknowledged as the religion of the State.

The exaltation of the witnesses has followed. With the nineteenth century began a mighty movement to extend the circulation of the Bible. It is now translated into every written tongue of the earth, and the Bible societies have made it the cheapest book in the world.

(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.

- **Hinds:**

If we are correct in saying the witnesses represent the word of God, then their exaltation means their restoration as heaven's authoritative teachers. Their enemies beheld the witnesses ascend, which indicates that the infidel influences that attempted the destruction of the Bible were unable to prevent its return to its rightful place as authority.

Discussion: Is the Bible still spreading? Printed page, electronically.

(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.

- We met the beast (kingdom) in verse seven. Now it appears to be a city kingdom, as was the city of Babylon in some of Daniel.

- **Johnson:**

Seven thousand persons. In my judgment **seven** is used because it is the perfect number. Seven thousands would imply totality. The meaning is, therefore, a total overthrow.

So complete was the overthrow from the earthquake, that the rest were filled with fear and glorified God. The whole implies that when the witnesses were lifted up, a commotion shook the false religion or apostate church, and that it was destroyed by the commotion. A part of its inhabitants were slain (perhaps spiritually), and the rest repented.

(14) The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

- There is more trouble coming. The last **woe** trumpet is still ahead.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

(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."

- **Johnson:**

This is the **seventh** trumpet of the seventh seal. It should bring the end, the final victory, the grand consummation. Here is the final triumph. It is the brightness of Zion's glad morning, the long deferred day of victory, the ushering in of the conquering reign of Christ.

(16) And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, (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."

- **Hinds:**

These words picture what John saw in heaven; they are in the vision and only indicate that when the redemption of

man has been accomplished, the angelic creatures will ascribe all praise to God.

(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." (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.

- This was called a woe trumpet in vs. 14 because it includes judgment on **the nations** as well as the rewards for several categories of the righteous. This ends the sweep of history that emphasizes the relationship of the church to the *political forces* of the world. Time has ended. The visions in following chapters are overlays, showing other relationships of the church during this same period of time.

B.W. Johnson's Analysis of Part I

With Revelation 11:18 closes the first great division of the Book. It brings one series of visions which reaches from the time of John to the end of the world. The future history of the world and the Church is symbolized by a sealed book. It has seven seals. These are seven epochs that reach into the future until the end of time.

THE FIRST SEAL. The White Horse. The Era of Triumph. The Glorious Period of Roman History; **6:1,2.** A.D. 96 to A.D. 180

THE SECOND SEAL. The Red Horse. The Era of Blood and of Civil Discord; **6:3,4.** *Beginning A.D. 193.*

THE THIRD SEAL. The Black Horse. The Seal of Calamity, and of National Distress; **6:5,6.** *Beginning about A.D. 200.*

THE FOURTH SEAL. The Pale Horse. The Era of Famine, Pestilence and Death; **6:7,8.** *About A.D. 240 to A.D. 270.*

THE FIFTH SEAL. The Era of Persecution. The last effort of Paganism to blot out the Christian name; **6:9,10.** A.D. 303.

THE SIXTH SEAL. The Seal of Revolution. The Era of the Overthrow of Pagan Civilization; **6:12-17.** *Beginning about A.D. 310 and extending to A.D. 350.*

THE FOUR WINDS. A vision of destructive forces that shall destroy

the Roman Empire, but held back until it shall be Christianized. The Four Winds represent Four Northern Invasions, also indicated by Four Trumpets; **9:1-17**. *Fulfilled from A.D. 340 to A.D. 395.*

THE FALL OF THE OLD ROMAN EMPIRE

THE FIRST TRUMPET under the Seventh Seal.--The Gothic Invasion fulfilled by the Invasion of Alaric; **8:7**. A.D. 409.

THE SECOND TRUMPET.--The Vandal Invasion. The Conquest of the Seas; **8:8**. A.D. 422

THE THIRD TRUMPET.--The Invasion of Attila the Hun. The Scourge of the Rivers; **8:10,11**. A.D. 440.

THE FOURTH TRUMPET.--The Final Overthrow of Rome by Odoacer. The End of Ancient History; **8:12**. A.D. 476.

These Four Trumpet Invasions are the Four Winds which were withheld.

THE FALL OF THE EASTERN OR NEW ROMAN EMPIRE.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET SOUNDED.--The Mohammedan Uprising. The Saracen Empire; **9:1-12**. A.D. 632 to A.D. 782.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET.--The Euphratean Angels Loosed. The Rise of Turkish Power; **9:13-21**. A.D. 1057 to A.D. 1453.

REVIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE LITTLE BOOK and the Seven Thunders.--Symbols of the Reformation of Luther; **10:1-11**. A.D. 1518.

THE OLD PATHS SOUGHT.--The Church Measured; **11:1,2**. From A.D. 1516 to the present time.

THE TWO WITNESSES.--The Two Books of the Word of God. In Sackcloth for twelve hundred and sixty years. Slain in 1793. Resurrected near the beginning of this century (Johnson wrote in 1891); **11:3-12**.

QUESTIONS:

1. Was the measuring rod the New Testament? (Verse 1)
2. The two witnesses were Peter and John. (4)
3. The Church divided into Greek and Roman sections. (4)
4. The 1260 years span was from 533-1947? (4)
5. The two witnesses were protected. (5)
6. Some rejoiced over the fate of the two witnesses. (10)
7. The two witnesses never came back to life. (11)
8. The kingdom of Christ prevailed. (15)
9. Those in heaven watched the events on earth. (16)
10. The nations were relieved that Christ's kingdom had won. (18)