

THE TWO WITNESSES AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

Revelation 11:1-19

This continues the parenthetical section began in Chapter 10 which ends in Revelation 11:14. The mighty angel declares that the end is near, but there is still some hope in the midst of judgments. This chapter is called most difficult in the Book of Revelation to understand.

THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD. Revelation 11:1-2

John is told to measure the future Tribulation Temple which will be built in the first part of the seven years in Jerusalem. In the chronology of the Tribulation Chapter 11 is taking place between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpet Judgment. The Tribulation Temple will be built, dedicated, and worship will be restored with animal sacrifice. Later it will be desecrated by the Antichrist who sets up his image there.

There is today a great amount of speculation concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. Many believe it will be rebuilt on the traditional site which is the temple mount in Jerusalem. Presently on the Temple Mount is the Dome of the Rock which is a Moslem shrine and only Moslems are allowed there. If the Jews attempted to build a temple on the temple mount there would be a Moslem uprising, a *jihad* (holy war). Recently a Jewish group called the Temple Mount Faithful tried to install a corner stone for the new Temple. They were prevented from doing so by the Israeli police. The matter was appealed to Israel's Supreme Court who ruled the stone should not be placed in order to keep from stirring up further religious unrest.

The Temple Mount, Mt. Moriah, Jerusalem is 35 acres in size and there is ample room to build the Jewish Temple. There is a vacant area in line with Golden Gate where the Temple could be built.¹ The present Dome of Tablets would be Holy of Holies as it was Solomon's temple. The Herodian temple was on same site. The mosque the Dome of the Rock, sacred to the Moslems would not be disturbed if the Temple is built there. The Antichrist will bring Jews, apostate Christianity, and Moslems together in the one world religion. All three religions have a common root in Abraham, and in the ecumenical spirit of the time of the Tribulation they will put aside their differences and form a common world religion. The movement will be headed by the false prophet who will at first just bring all these religious groups together under the banner of worshiping their common God. However, as time proceeds, the focus will be changed to in the last half of the Tribulation worshiping the Antichrist.

In 1988 a group called the Temple Institute was founded by Rabbi Ariel for the purpose of gather data concerning the Temple. They studied its ceremonial objects of worship, reconstruction of the Temple vessels, publishing information on the Temple and teaching concerning the Temple.² In October 2002 your author visited the Institute in Jerusalem and saw these Temple items on display having been prepared for the construction of the third Temple when it is constructed.

The instruction, not to measure the court of Gentiles, also supports this idea as the outer court is to be under Gentile rule for forty-two months, or three and a half years. It could be the first or second three and a half years. This may indicate both a Gentile presence on the Temple Mount in the form of the Moslem mosque.

This is the period of time spoken of by the Christ in Luke 21:24, “. . . *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*” In truth, since Israel rejected the risen Savior, we have been in the time of the Gentiles. Although modern Israel now controls Jerusalem, this is but a temporary situation. They will lose control once again of the city. If it were not for the support United States and her other allies Israel would not exist. Some have suggested that American support for Israel is based in its need to have a presence and influence in the Middle East and that if the situation changed America would abandon Israel. Modern Israel is neither clearly not in power nor control over the situation in the Middle East. She is surrounded by her enemies and outnumbered a hundred to one. There are proposals being discussed which would give control of the city jointly to several different groups including the Moslem Palestinians. Whether this happens prior to the Tribulation is unknown, but surely the Jews could even now lose control of Jerusalem once again.

On my visit there in 2002 it was clear that the whole of the country is a war zone. The IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) were everywhere we went. The Israelis expressed their determination to defend their land at all costs and American support figures greatly in their strategy. The most impressive thing about the modern Israelis is their strong desire for peace which is borne out of centuries of persecution and anti-Semitism. However, modern Israel is not trusting God to bring that peace, but seeking as they historically done, peace by political alliance with other nations.

The modern twist on their political is giving away land for peace to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the 1967 war against impossible odds Israel gained control of the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Current the policy seems to be temporarily abated after the dismal failure of Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, in returning Gaza to the Palestinians. All that giving away Gaza accomplished was to give the Palestinian enemies of Israel a place to amass weapons and a safe haven to launch continued attack against the Jews.

The new Tribulation temple is described in Ezekiel 40-48. When God starts measuring things in the Old Testament it indicates God is going to do a special work with Israel. For example in Jeremiah 31:38-39, God says, “*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.*” This tower will be built in the Millennium at the north east corner of Jerusalem. God gives Zechariah a vision of the restoration and blessing of Jerusalem during the Millennium and He starts out by measuring the city.

(Zech. 2:1-13)

All of this is prophetic and nothing at present exists of a new temple. As stated earlier, the Temple Institute has already prepared the furniture and instruments of the Temple they are planning to build. Further breeders are trying to produce the red heifer needed for the cleansing of the Temple. In April of 2002 it was reported that a kosher heifer was born, however it was reexamined in November of this same year and was disqualified because a small spot of white was found on it.³ Numbers 19:2-10 describes the ceremony and how the red heifer will be used in cleansing the Temple. The Temple Institute says that King Josiah commanded the priests to hide the Ark of the Covenant in the maze of tunnels which Solomon built under the Temple. They report they know exactly where it is hidden under the Temple mound. An attempt was made in digging a tunnel towards that location some years ago which brought on a storm of protests and riots from the Moslems and the excavation was stopped.⁴ It is clear that at this moment in time that if Israel were to begin construction of the Temple would surely provoke a "holy war" with the Moslems who regard the Temple Mount as a sacred Moslem site.

One notable point is that history shows in the past this temple has not been built and therefore these events are future to our time. This is further evidence that the Amillennial and Preterist views are not supported by Scripture. This is a specific prophecy of events God says will happen in the Tribulation. The only course for the Preterists and Amillennialists is to somehow spiritualize these prophecies and deny their literal fulfillment. God said to Jeremiah, *"Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."* The heaven cannot be measured nor the earth's foundations searched. God will never forsake Israel and will keep every promise He has made to them.

THE TWO WITNESSES: Revelation 11:3-12

The Lord declares that He will give power to two witnesses and they will preach for three and one half years. They are real persons? Some refuse to accept these statements literally and spiritualize the passage concluding that the two witnesses are law and grace or the Old and New Testament. However, the description of these two individuals precludes that interpretation. They are to be literal men who are heard, handled, hated and murdered. They have physical bodies and can be hurt and they wear the clothes of a mourner. It is impossible to see how this could be referring to Law and Grace.

Who are these two witnesses for the Lord? It is not known who they will be, but God does give descriptive information about them. From their description they will be unmistakably identified in the Tribulation. They are called "olive trees" and "lamp stands" (KJV candle sticks) which denotes them as being Jewish. (See Zech. 4:2-3, 11-14 which uses the same symbolism) Their ministry parallels those of Moses and

Elijah. Matthew 11:14, says that John the Baptist would have been Elijah, "*if ye received it*" meaning if they had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. (See Matt. 17:12) Malachi 3:1-3, 4:5-6 predicts that Elijah would come. Therefore one of the witnesses could be Elijah who will come back from the grave, or someone like Elijah.

There is also much speculation as to who is the second witness? Many believe that it will be Moses or Enoch. The second witness does appear to have many things in common with Moses or Enoch. In Verse 6, it speaks of turning waters to blood and smiting the earth with plagues. This sounds like Moses, but only God knows for sure. Enoch's only qualification is that like Elijah he "translated" or taken to be with the Lord and did not die a normal death. However, Enoch was not a Jew and these two witnesses are certainly Jews. This would seem to preclude Enoch being one of the witnesses.

J. Vernon McGee believes one of these witnesses is John the Baptist who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ.⁵ William R Newell makes no attempt to identify these two witnesses stating they may be unknown witnesses⁶

The two witnesses are greatly persecuted for their witness for the Lord. John 3:19, says, ". . . *This is the condemnation that men love darkness better than light because their deeds are evil.*" This is the reason for persecution. Men hate to be rebuked of their sins and so try to put it "out of sight and out of mind." They seek to silence these two witnesses and not be reminded of their sins and also that God is judging the world and Christ will soon return. A seared conscious does not want to be reminding of sin.

Fire destroys those who attempt to persecute these two men. Many see this as further evidence of the witnesses being Moses and Elijah. Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume the altar proving Baal to be a false god and he called fire down to destroy the soldiers sent to arrest him. (1 Kings 18:38, 2 Kings 1:10-14) Moses likewise called fire down to destroy the two hundred and fifty men who burned incense when Korah placed himself as priest over Israel. (Numbers 16:35) There is no reason to not accept this as literal fire that comes out of their mouths and devours their enemies. It is a power God gives them for self-protection and instant judgment of those who attack them.

God also gives them special power to shut off rain. This parallels the events in Elijah's life when he prayed and it did not rain for three and one-half years. Like Moses they are able to turn water to blood and to smite the earth with plagues. They use their power to complete their witness. (Rev. 11:7)

In spite of the efforts of men to stop them they complete the work God has for them. (Rev. 11:7) God then allows Satan to attack and kill them. Satan seems to have won and ended their witness and there is great rejoicing in Jerusalem and around the world. But God's purpose in allowing their deaths is to make them even a greater witness. Remember Job? No persecutor of God's people ever has ever been

successful in stopping or hindering the work of God. The churches have always grown in greater numbers when they were under severe persecution. For the Christian today a time of trouble can be the time of greater closeness and fellowship with the Lord.

After the two witnesses are killed, their bodies are allowed to lie in the street for three and a half days as a sign of their defeat. The whole world sees them which many speculate could be by the means of television coverage. (Rev. 11:9) There is no reason for God not to use media coverage to accomplish this. The TV networks today rush to show even the goriest scenes of accidents and disasters. There will be a great worldwide celebration when the witnesses are killed. The world rejoices at their deaths revealing the degree of sin and rebellion to the world has come too. Their joy is so great these godless men of earth sent gifts one to another to celebrate these deaths. J. Vernon McGee, refers to this event as the Devil's Christmas⁷

The city is where they are killed is Jerusalem where the Lord was crucified. (Rev. 11:8) God says that Jerusalem is spiritually degraded to have become like Sodom and Egypt. The reference to Egypt represents pride and defiance of God as Egypt did in the Old Testament. Sodom symbolically stands for evil, wickedness, and perversion being completely out of control morally. The holy city of Jerusalem thus at this time will be wicked to the core.

In scorn, the people of earth will not allow the witnesses' bodies to be buried. They think they have won! They believe they have victory and have silenced God's witnesses. Today the same evil exists only in miniature. During the Tribulation, unrestrained by the Holy Spirit, the wickedness of men shall run rampant. Killing God's men and shutting up the saving message they preach calls for great rejoicing. How foolish and empty are the victories of those, who oppose God by opposing God's men and defeating them.

THE TWO WITNESSES ARE RESTORED TO LIFE AND CAUGHT UP TO HEAVEN. Revelation 11:11-12

The events of verses 11-12 are like the basketball game where the home team was hopelessly behind. There were only five minutes left in the game and they were 20 points behind. Many disheartened fans left and went home. But the game wasn't over yet. In the last few minutes the home team went on a scoring blitz and won the game.

What the Devil and the world see as a victory is short lived. It is not wise to savor the victory before the game is over! God will vindicate His witnesses and after three days they will be restored to life as the world looks on. The Bible says as the rebellious world sees them return to life "great fear fell on them." To the TV cameramen and reporters the event has become old news, but they keep their cameras rolling. They think the matter is about to be over and they have played the event up and got all the sensation and news value out of it they could. They are about to wrap things up and go

on to more exciting things, when in full view of the world, life returns to the witnesses and they stand up! Can you not just see the astonishment and shock in the faces of the reporters as news as it is flashed all across the world? The networks will break in on their scheduled programs and excitedly announce that the two witnesses have come back to life. We can only imagine the shock and dismay shown on the faces of the news anchors. Now clearly they realize the awful truth: *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Heb. 10:31) Then in full view of all these evil men on earth who are rejecting God, they hear Him say, *"Come up hither"* and the witnesses are taken to heaven in a cloud in full view of them all. Surely, the Devil's Christmas ends abruptly!

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE. Revelation 11:13-14

Even as terror grips their souls at seeing the witness restored to life and taken up into heaven, the earth begins to shake and ten percent of Jerusalem is destroyed. This earthquake further kills more people and 7,000 of them wake up the flames of Hell. The Bible says the "remnant," which refers to those living in Jerusalem, probably in gratefulness at surviving the earthquake recognize that it is truly God who is doing all these things. It seems in their great fear they are driven to the place of acknowledging God and they give glory to the God of Heaven. However, many today at times people outwardly give glory to God, but in their heart remain unrepentant of their sins. Praise to God that does not come from the heart of one whom God has redeemed is only vain and of no value to God. Today there is much supposed praising of God that is nothing more than the emotional outbursts of sinful men. The Jews opposed God, but He continued to love them and offer them salvation and forgiveness for sin. This ends the second judgment (woe), and now comes the 7th trumpet judgments.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET JUDGEMENT: Revelation 11:15-19

A sobering announcement now follows. The kingdoms of this earth are become the kingdom of God. (Rev. 11:15) Question? How can this be so if there are still yet seven vial judgments? The answer is that the Seventh Trumpet is the Seven Bowl judgments which when completed end the Tribulation as Christ returns to earth. Even though there are seven judgments left the surety of the outcome is a foregone conclusion. Christ is about to return to earth and the Millennial Kingdom to become a reality.

The twenty-four elders, as stated earlier, are representatives of the Church Age who worship Christ. (Rev. 11:16-17) They rejoice to see Christ taking absolute control. The response on the earth however is vastly different as the nations are angry at Christ's taking control and of His coming. They see their impending doom and Christ's victory. Anger and hate boils up in them. This again shows the depths of wickedness to which the carnal heart can descend some men, madden in self-serving pride, would rather burn in hell than to repent and bow to God. The Greek word used here is "*orgizo*" and means to be "angry with wrath." It is a play on words and shows man's wrath is powerless before our omnipotent God.

The Antichrist, indwelt by Satan and his cronies will desecrate the earthly Tribulation Temple, but they will have no effect on the heavenly temple. (Rev. 11:19) The scene shifts to heaven and *“there is seen in his temple the ark of the testament.”* The word “testament” is the same word “covenant.” This verse is saying that the Ark of the Covenant is in the heavenly temple. The Bible teaches that there is a temple in heaven that the earthy tabernacle and temple were patterned after. Hebrews 9:23 says, *“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”* In the Old Testament Tabernacle the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies and contained the two tablets on which God wrote the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s rod, the golden pot of manna. The Ark was a box covered by a lid and on the lid were the images of two Cherubim facing toward the center which is called the mercy seat. It was on the mercy seat that the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of a perfect lamb which symbolized the shedding of Christ’s blood for the sins of the world.

Taking this passage literally means that Ark of the Covenant is in heaven in the heavenly temple. The Bible only here makes mention of this and does not tell us how it got there or if it is the actually Old Testament Ark. This could be a heavenly Ark of the Covenant that was the patterned for the one Moses built and placed in the Tabernacle. What we do know is in heaven there is an Ark of the Covenant which attests to God’s unbreakable oath to fulfill His promises to the Nation of Israel. This is more evidence that the Amillennialist is totally wrong in saying that God will not carry out His promises to Israel and that He has transferred His promises to Church Age believers who will symbolically receive them.

There now begins lightening, voices, thundering, earthquakes, and great hail. The scene one of great tension as the time is set for the worst time the earth has seen with the pouring out of the terrible Bowl (or Vial) Judgments.

¹ See “Biblical Archaeological Review,” March April 1983

² David Levy, *Up to Jerusalem, Study Guide of Israel’s History*, Bellmavw, NJ:Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc, p37.

³ *The Temple Institute Web Site*, <http://www.templeinstitute.org/current-events/RedHeifer/>

⁴ *Ibid*, <http://www.templeinstitute.org/faqs/ark-faq.html> .

⁵ McGee, p981

⁶ William R. Newell, *Revelation, A Compete Commentary*, Grand Rapids:Baker Book House, 1987, p151.

⁷ J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Vol. V., Pasadena: Thru the Bible Radio, p983.