

John has been commissioned to prophesy (again), about/against many people, nations, tongues, and kings. This cannot possibly be intended only for John – he stands for the whole church in the world. **Chapter 10 flows seamlessly into chapter 11** (an unhelpful and misleading division – there is no “I saw”). The same angel continues to speak to John. 11:1-14 reveals how 10:11 is fulfilled.

In the “interlude” between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Seals the believers were “sealed” - a symbolic way of portraying protection.

In the “interlude” between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpets they are “measured” - another symbolic way of portraying protection.

**John**, acting under the authority of God, (see v3) is to perform the symbolic act. He **is to measure three things**:

- The Temple of God.
- The Altar (from which the prayers of the saints ascend to God’s throne)
- The Worshipers themselves.

It would be totally out of context to suggest that the vision and instruction refers to a literal temple of stone.

**We are dealing with symbols, not literal objects.**

- Jesus was the true Temple, John 2:19-21, Matt. 12:5-6. His earthly experience paralleled that of the witnesses in Rev. 11.
- Each individual believer is a temple of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, 1Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20.
- The church is the Temple, 2Cor. 6:16-7:1, Eph. 2:19-21.
- All the other references in Revelation are about the heavenly Temple.
- The altar in Revelation always refers to the Altar in Heaven, before the throne of God.
- Measuring the physical dimensions of the worshippers makes no sense.

**Ezekiel’s vision of measuring a new temple**, chapters 40-42, is much more detailed. The outer court was included in the measurements, 40:17-27, 44-49. “The whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most holy”, 43:12. The temple is described as a place of blood sacrifices, 43:18-43. In chapter 47 there is a description of a river flowing from the altar, bringing life and bordered by trees that have healing properties – like the river in Rev. 22:1-2. The whole theme continues to the end of Ezekiel’s prophecy and appears to be highly symbolic. A connection with Rev. 11 is very doubtful; the only common features between them are that there is a temple and that measurements are involved.

- The temple is **the sanctuary** – the immediate presence of God where God’s people are secure. For them there is no longer a barrier, Eph. 2:14, and no one can touch them there. Their lives are hidden with Christ in God, Col.3:3.
- The **outer court** surrounds the temple. This corresponds to the “Court of the Gentiles” in Herod’s Temple, where Jews and Gentiles could mingle and there is physical danger. Paul was falsely accused of bringing Gentiles beyond the protective barrier, Acts 21:23-29.

**The outer court is not measured (protected).** It has become a place of **Gentile power and control**.

Note that this power has been given.

**The life of Jesus is the pattern**, John 19:10-11. Pilate was given power to kill His body but he could not destroy Him.

**The same is true for His followers**, John 15:18-21, Luke 12:4-5.

**The religious authorities controlled the outer court** and used it in a corrupt way to enrich themselves. They arrested Peter and John when healed in the Name of Jesus and witnessed to Him as Saviour and Messiah, Acts 4:1-3, 8-12. They continued to do so in spite of persecution, 5:12-21, 40-42.

**The outer court was the place where believers and unbelievers mingled**, together with miracles, witness, and persecution. Physical persecution and martyrdom are ever-present possibilities but there is ultimate security.

**False religion has always been a major source of that persecution** – we will meet the “religious beast” in 13:11-18.

- Both are physically situated within the “**Holy City/Great City**”, v2, 8, probably the same place.

**On one hand it is holy** – the place that God chose for His presence Psalm 48, Zech. 1:14-17, 3:2, 14:16-21. **On the other hand it had become defiled** by its corrupt leadership and was morally and spiritually in the same category as Sodom, Ezek. 16:1-3, 44-52, and persecuting like Egypt, even crucifying the Messiah, Rev. 11:8, Acts 2:22-23. The great city is usually identified as Babylon, (Rome was the current expression in John's day), 16:19, 17:18, 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21. It is the "world city", immoral and persecuting, and Jerusalem has degenerated into the same state.

**The period of "Gentile domination" is stated to be "forty two months"**, v2. Jesus said that "Jerusalem would be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled", Luke 21:24. This began with the fall of Jerusalem in AD70 and lasted much more than 42 months. He spoke of "times" rather than "time" – a situation decreed by God rather than a specific time period.

**"Forty two months"** can mean just that - a specific short period of time. It also acts as a symbol for a particular type of situation – witness and severe persecution, prefigured in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (see Daniel in the previous session).

**On the one hand it is the entire period of the church in the whole world**, Rev.12:6, 14, the world city of Babylon 16:19, 17:18. The message of Rev. 11 is relevant in all places and at all times in history – the presence of God to protect and empower His witnesses in the context of hostility and persecution and the fact that even martyrdom is not the end of the story. God may or may not rescue from physical death, c.f. Daniel 3:16-18, but there will be vindication and resurrection.

**On the other it is a very intense period near the end of the age when the church will seem to have been vanquished**, 11:7, and 13:4-10, c.f. Dan 12:7, 11-13. It is under the control of God, Matt 24:22.

**The two witnesses**, 3-12. There is a specific focus in the activity of the two witnesses in Jerusalem, 11:3-6.

**Two witnesses are required to authentic a message**, Deut. 17:6, 19:15, Luke 10:1, John 5:31-32.

They appear to be two individuals, as their resurrection and ascension to Heaven, v12, seem to predate the "rapture" of the church. It is probably best to see them as a particular focus for widespread witness and severe persecution of the church in the world towards the end of the age, the small scale standing for the universal. In this way their "rapture" is prophetic of the larger one to come later at the return of Jesus – the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet

**They are given (power) to witness (prophecy) during this period**, 3, c.f. 10:11.

**Sackcloth is a symbol of mourning and repentance**, Joel 1:8, Amos 8:10.

**They are symbolised by the vision in Zech. 4:2-6 – as two olive trees and two lamp stands.**

The olive trees were the "two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of all the earth"; Joshua and Zerubbabel were the High Priest and the Ruler at the time. The witnesses function in these two ways – mercy and judgement.

They will level the mighty mountain and build the Lord's Temple in the power of the Spirit. They do so as representative of the witnessing/martyr church, like the two completely faithful churches, Rev. 2:8-11 and 3:7-13. They function in the presence of God.

**Their ministry parallels the experience of Jesus** – three and a half years of witness, protected from His enemies, John 7:30, 8:20 etc. followed by three and a half days of martyrdom.

**They operate in the power of God in a similar way to Moses and Elijah**, Malachi 4:4-6, Luke 9:29-31.

**Elijah** demonstrated God's power through **fire**, 1Kings 18:36-39, resulting in judgement of the idolatrous priests, and 2Kings 1, culminating in the death of an idolatrous king. Here fire comes from their mouths, c.f. Rev. 1:16, Jer. 5:14, c.f. Psalm 18:8. It may also be more than a metaphor, as in the time of Elijah. It is a fire of protection and also of judgement – by God Himself, "must be killed", v5.

**Elijah** also prophesied a **drought**, 1Kings 17:1, 18:1, c.f. James 5:17, lasting three and a half years. This was a judgement on idolatry, with a view to national repentance.

**Moses turned water into blood**, Ex. 7:20-21, c.f. Rev. 8:8, 16:3-4 – a threat to life.

**Both witnesses were given power to repeat these judgements and call down other types of plagues.** We do not know exactly how this process was revealed in practice but **they are said to have "tormented the earth dwellers"**, v10. There is no suggestion that any significant repentance resulted, c.f. 9:20-21. The time scale is not clear as between the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet and the activity of the witnesses.

**The beast from the abyss**, v7. He is introduced without explanation. His origins from the abyss suggest a demonic figure, perhaps Abaddon, 9:11, no doubt acting through a human intermediary He only appears when

the testimony of the witnesses has been completed; God is in control. He then “makes war” on the witnesses and kills them.

He does not seem to be identical to the beast from the sea, Rev. 13:1-8, who will have been present for the whole period of 42 months. He also will “make war” and will overcome the saints, v7, (not just the two witnesses). What is happening in one specific location is paralleled on the worldwide scale.

**The bodies of the witnesses are exposed in the street of the great city, v8-9.**

This is a symbol of victory and a sign of shame. It was the same for Jesus, crucified naked in the public space, Heb.13:12. The whole point is **to degrade, disgrace, and obliterate all dignity**, Isaiah 53:3, c.f. Psalm 79:1-4, Heb.11:36-38. They are exposed to public view in a cosmopolitan city, c.f. 10:11. There is **an ungodly unity**. All this takes place in “the street” in Jerusalem – not a particular street. The Holy City has become one expression of the Great City – Babylon/Rome/the world city described in chapter 18.

**Great rejoicing follows, v10. The “tormenters” have been silenced. The “party” can begin.**

**There is a perverse invocation of the Feast of Purim when the people of God were saved from annihilation, Esther 9:18-22.** Note the emphasis on “those who dwell on the earth” – those who hate the light, John 3:19-20. They are glad because they have victory over the witnesses (martyrs) but it will be cut short.

**Resurrection and ascension, v11-12.** There is a clear **parallel to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus**, c.f. Matt. 12:40. **God, the Creator breathes new life into them**, c.f. Gen. 2:7.

They are restored to life, like Israel to her national and spiritual life in Ezekiel 37:10.

**Those who saw their dead bodies, v9, now see them standing and they are stricken with terror.**

**The witnesses are summoned by a loud voice from Heaven, c.f. 10:8.**

The ascension of the witnesses mirrors the Elijah’s experience, 2Kings 2:11, and the ascension of Jesus, Acts 1:9. Their enemies saw them. The cloud is the cloud of glory – the Shekinah.

**Everything is public** – they are witnesses by word, sign, death, resurrection life, and ascension.

**A final warning sign – a great earthquake, Psalm 18:9, Rev.6:12.** Seven thousand died – about a tenth of the population of a city in John’s time.

**This triggers more fear**, resulting in the observers **giving glory to the God of heaven**. This is usually a positive statement, 14:7, 16:9, 19:7, as being a willing response to the revelation of God. If so it means that the work of the witnesses was effective in a way that the first two woes were not, 9:20-21 – perhaps confined to Jerusalem. It is not clear whether v14 should be included with 1-13. If so, they form a tailpiece to the second woe. The events up to v13 certainly link to 10:7 – **the mystery of God is now complete**.

**All that remains is the close of the age and the coming of the Kingdom in its full expression.**

**The seventh Trumpet sounds v15-18.** This is also the **3<sup>rd</sup> woe**.

John hears loud voices from Heaven and is transported there in his vision – to where the witnesses now are.

- **A Declaration that the Kingdom has come in its complete and final form, v15, Luke 1:31-33, 1Cor. 15:24-28.** The kingdoms of this world are no more.
- **Total, unreserved, worship by the representatives of the people of God, v16.** They abandon their thrones and fall down before the one throne that rules the universe.
- **Thanksgiving to God for all that He has accomplished, v17-18.** He is the Lord God Almighty, the One who was and is (?and is to come), 1:4, 8, 4:8. All that He promised is now accomplished.
  - He who has given power/authority has now taken it into His own hands and is reigning without rivals.
  - The nations have rebelled in resentment and anger against His rule, Psalm 2, but His wrath has eclipsed their anger and all must bow to Him, Phil. 2:9-11.
  - The time has come for judgement on those who have “destroyed the earth”. This is defined as Babylon in 19:2, c.f. Jer. 51:25. The destroyers (contrasted with servants) will be destroyed. The creation has been desecrated by the rebellion of the creature Man. Judgement is part of the prelude to the new creation.
  - God’s servants, the prophets and saints, are rewarded. They have lived in the fear of the Lord, as obedient creatures in God’s world.

**The time – the final time has come and eternity has dawned** – c.f. the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal, 8:1.

Rev. 11:19 launches a fresh series of visions that reveal in more detail how all of this will be accomplished