

Detailed Study of Revelation Chapter 11

Revelation Chapter 11 marks a key moment in the book of Revelation, bridging the events of the **sixth** and **seventh trumpet judgments**. It introduces the **two witnesses**, the **measuring of the temple**, and the **final announcement** of the coming kingdom of God. This chapter serves as a pivotal moment in the prophetic unfolding of God's judgment, the role of His witnesses, and the ultimate triumph of Christ. From a **hermeneutical** and **dispensational** perspective, this chapter focuses on the period of the **Tribulation**, the faithful testimony of God's people, and the **final triumph of Christ's kingdom**. The chapter is also notable for its message of **hope and judgment** and is central to understanding God's purposes during the final days of history.

Exegetical Breakdown of Revelation 11:1-14

1. The Measuring of the Temple (Revelation 11:1-2)

Revelation 11:1-2 (ESV):

"Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, 'Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.'"

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Measuring" (Greek: *metreo*)** – The verb *metreo* means "to measure" or "to take the measure of." This verb carries with it a sense of **evaluation** and **preservation**. In the Old Testament, measuring often symbolized God's **ownership, protection, or judgment** (cf. Zechariah 2:1-2).
 - **"Rod" (Greek: *kalamos*)** – The word *kalamos* refers to a staff or a reed used for measuring or symbolic of authority. The measuring rod is used to **gauge** and **define** boundaries, often as a sign of God's sovereignty over His temple.
- **Theological Insight:**

The act of measuring the **temple** and **altar** symbolizes God's **ownership** and **protection** over the faithful remnant of His people during the Tribulation. It is a sign of God's **preservation** and **security** for those who are faithful to Him, even as the **outer court** is given over to the nations, a reference to **Gentile domination** over the **holy city**(Jerusalem) during a period of **persecution**.
- **Cultural and Historical Context:**

In the first century, the Jewish temple in Jerusalem was a **symbol of God's presence** and the central place of **worship**. The reference to measuring the temple evokes the image of God's faithful care over His people. The mention of **the nations** trampling the holy city refers to **Gentile oppression**, which had historical precedent in events like the **Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem** (586 BC) and the **Roman siege of Jerusalem** (70 AD).
- **Theological Implication:**

The **measuring of the temple** speaks to God's sovereign **protection** of His people, even amidst the trials of the Tribulation. The **outer court** left for the Gentiles and their trampling of the holy city for **42 months** suggests that God's people will face persecution, but His **ultimate control** is not in doubt.

2. The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:3-6)

Revelation 11:3-6 (ESV):

"And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may 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 kind of plague, as often as they desire."

- **Greek Word Study:**

- **"Witnesses" (Greek: *martys*)** – The term *martys* refers to **witnesses** or **martyrs**, those who testify to the truth of God's message. The use of the term emphasizes the role of these individuals as **testifiers** of God's word, even at the cost of their lives.
- **"Sackcloth" (Greek: *sakkos*)** – Sackcloth symbolizes **mourning** and **penitence**. The witnesses' attire highlights the seriousness of their **prophetic mission**, as well as their **association with repentance** and **judgment**.
- **"Olive trees" and "Lampstands" (Greek: *elaia* and *luchnia*)** – These images are drawn from the Old Testament, particularly Zechariah 4:2-14, where the **olive trees** and **lampstands** represent **God's anointed servants** who provide light and power to His people.

- **Theological Insight:**

The **two witnesses** are empowered by God to **prophesy** for 1,260 days (approximately 3.5 years), which corresponds to the period of the **Tribulation** when God's judgment and prophetic witness will be at their peak. The witnesses' ability to perform powerful signs (e.g., **shutting the sky, turning water to blood**) echoes the judgments of **Moses** and **Elijah**, two prominent Old Testament figures who were known for performing miraculous acts in times of divine judgment.

- **Cultural and Historical Context:**

The concept of two witnesses draws upon the **biblical principle** that testimony required **two or three witnesses** (cf. Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16). The **1,260 days** (or **42 months**) corresponds to the time of intense persecution and trial, and the actions of the witnesses parallel the **prophetic ministries** of figures like **Elijah** and **Moses**, who stood as God's spokesmen in times of national crisis.

3. The Death and Resurrection of the Witnesses (Revelation 11:7-10)

Revelation 11:7-10 (ESV):

"And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth."

- **Greek Word Study:**

- **"Beast" (Greek: *therion*)** – The term *therion* refers to a **wild beast** or **monster**, often associated with **evil powers** or **satanic forces** (cf. Revelation 13). The beast from the **bottomless pit** is likely a reference to **Satanic influence** and is a central figure in the persecution of the witnesses.

- **"Rejoice" (Greek: *chairo*)** – The word *chairo* means to rejoice or be glad, but in this context, it emphasizes the **wicked celebration** over the death of God's prophets. It is a sign of the **world's rejection of God's messengers**.
- **Theological Insight:**
The **death of the witnesses** at the hands of the **beast** signifies the temporary **triumph of evil**. Their bodies are left in the streets as a sign of **disrespect** and **defilement**. However, this moment of victory for the forces of darkness is brief, as the witnesses are **resurrected** and **ascend to heaven** in the sight of their enemies (cf. Revelation 11:11-12).
- **Cultural and Historical Context:**
The references to the witnesses' bodies lying in the street of the city symbolically called **Sodom** and **Egypt** (likely Jerusalem) echo the cities of **rebellion** and **idolatry**. The world's celebration of the witnesses' death reflects the rejection of God's truth and the **persecution** of His faithful.

4. The Resurrection and Ascension of the Witnesses (Revelation 11:11-12)

Revelation 11:11-12 (ESV):

"But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here!' And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them."

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Breath of life" (Greek: *pneuma zōēs*)** – This phrase refers to the **divine life-giving power** of God, akin to the breath that God breathed into Adam (Genesis 2:7) and the Holy Spirit's quickening power.
- **Theological Insight:**
The resurrection and **ascension** of the two witnesses demonstrate that while evil may temporarily triumph, **God's power** will ultimately prevail. Their ascension to heaven is a public **vindication** of their testimony, and it reminds believers of the ultimate **victory** of God's kingdom.

Revelation 11:13-14: The Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11:13-14 (ESV):

"And at 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. The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come."

- **Theological Insight:**
The **earthquake** and the **great terror** experienced by those in the city signal the final **judgment** and the **beginning of the kingdom of God**. The destruction of the city is symbolic of the **collapse of human rebellion**, and the **glory given to God** by the survivors indicates that even in judgment, God's glory is recognized.

Questions for Application for Today's Christian Audience

1. **How do we respond to God's messengers?**

The world in Revelation 11 rejects the **witnesses** and rejoices in their death. How do we receive the **truth** of God's messengers today? Are we willing to stand with the faithful, even when they face opposition or persecution?

2. **What is our response to suffering and persecution?**

The witnesses endure suffering for their faith. How can we cultivate a **faithful witness** even in the face of difficulty? How does this chapter challenge us to **stand firm** in our faith?

3. **Do we trust in God's ultimate victory?**

Despite the temporary triumph of evil, God ultimately **vindicates** His servants. How can we live in **hope** and **confidence**, knowing that God's kingdom will come and that He will judge the earth?

Conclusion

Revelation Chapter 11 emphasizes God's **sovereignty** over history, the **faithfulness** of His witnesses, and the **final triumph** of His kingdom. While the world may reject God's messengers and celebrate evil, God's power ultimately prevails in the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses. For today's Christian, this chapter encourages us to remain **faithful**, to trust in God's **judgment**, and to look forward to the **coming kingdom** with hope.