

REVELATION 11

Introductory Comments:

- Chapters 11-13 provide the most in depth explanation in the NT of the work of Satan in the world. These are great chapters for Christians to read and understand, for they show that while Satan does have great powers on earth, he is a defeated, created angel. There is not some kind of dualistic battle occurring between Christ and Satan, in which each party trades blows. Christ has defeated Satan totally and Satan is completely under Christ's rule.

Rev. 11:1-2

- "Measure the Temple . . ." – calls to mind Ezekiel's measuring in Ezek. 40. The point being emphasized here is that there is a church, Christ knows it, and it is quantifiable. The church exists and is identifiable in the world by Christ. Christ knows His Church! This is a re-definition of what Ezekiel saw. There is not some "physical temple" that is measured, but rather the entire Church of Christ, made up of all believers. Christians are the "temple" of God.
- The "outer courts" are reserved for the pagan nations – they do not have access to the sanctuary. There is no middle ground – either one is inside the Temple worshipping the True God or one is outside. Either one believes or one does not believe. Period!
- "Trample the holy city for 42 months" – 42 months, 3 ½ years, 1260 days in Revelation all refer to the same thing – a symbol of escalated persecution of the Church ("holy city") for a limited time which comes before the final vindication (the Last Day). This escalated persecution will occur when Satan is loosed for his "little season." During that time, Satan will be permitted to attack the Church and even to deceive the elect, if that were possible. He will infiltrate the Church with false teachings, thus impeding the proclamation of the true Gospel. This "little season" is relatively short when compared to the "1,000 years" of grace in which Satan is bound (Rev. 20). Note also: 42 months, 3 ½ years, 1260 days is half of 7, the number of perfection, completion. The "holy city" is the Church, which is depicted both as a woman and a city in Revelation, contrasted to the woman and city of Satan (New Jerusalem, holy city vs. Babylon; Woman giving birth vs. the Harlot).

Rev. 11:3-4

- "Two witnesses" – symbolic for the church's witness, especially the pastoral office. They are "clothed in sackcloth," indicating grief and ongoing repentance. During Satan's "little season," God will preserve for Himself faithful witnesses (faithful pastors) to proclaim His Word. This will not be easy, for not only will the world be in opposition to their message, so will a great many who claim to be in the Church. Even members within the flocks they are called to serve will rise up in opposition against them for standing steadfast in the Word, for this will be a time when "men no longer put up with sound doctrine, but gather false teachers around them to proclaim what their itching ears want to hear" (cf. 2 Tim. 2:3-4). But, they will don their "sackcloth" and carry on.
- "Two olive trees" – Zechariah 4 – "two lampstands – Revelation 1 (churches) – Thus, what we have depicted here by John is the church's witness, which is authentic by having two witnesses (OT necessity). As we will see, the background for the image of the two witnesses developed here is the OT prophetic ministries of Elijah and Moses. John is saying that the church continues in their prophetic ministry. It does this through the pastoral office, by which Christ carries out His prophetic ministry.

- Thus, immediately after announcing that the Church will undergo severe persecution during Satan’s “little season” just before the End, God promises that He will preserve His Word through His faithful witnesses. The pure Gospel will continue to be proclaimed, even while most people reject it.

Rev. 11:5-6

- “Fire from mouth” – depicts the power of God’s Word as it is proclaimed. The enemies of the Church are defeated by the Truth of God’s Word. Not only that, but they are “killed” by that Word. The Law kills. If they do not repent, they will suffer eternal death in Hell.
- The “fire” destroying God’s enemies is reminiscent of the ministry of Elijah (so also the rain not coming down, etc.). The “plague” imagery is reminiscent of Moses. What the image is saying is that the prophetic ministry of the pastoral office will provide God’s witness on earth in the midst of Satan’s attacks, and God will protect His witness, even as He protected the OT prophets.

Rev. 11:7-14

- “The beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer and kill them . . .” – During Satan’s “little season,” it will look like he has slain the church, for one will search far and wide and not be able to find the pure Gospel. The light of Christ which shines forth from His Church (His “lampstands”) will appear to be snuffed out, with only a flicker here and there. But, the church will be brought back to life by God after 3 ½ days (see below). Then, Satan will be destroyed forever.
- “Sodom and Egypt” – this is where the bodies of the two witnesses are put on display – refers to the cities and countries who opposed God’s will (Sodom brought judgment upon itself because of its refusal to recognize God’s creative order; Egypt refused to bow to the True God in Moses’ day). These are pagan cities/countries, which represent all unbelief in the world. Thus, the world (and “churches” which, through the influence of Satan, have become worldly) will boast of its defeat of the true Church. They will mock the teachings of the true Church and will publicly defame her, just as the world mocked and defamed the Lord when it crucified Him.
- The “death” of the two witnesses shows that there are consequences to faithful proclamation of God’s Word (a theme throughout Revelation). Proclaiming God’s True Word brings persecution and even death at times. This will be especially true in the last days.
- 3 ½ days – Elijah shutting up the heavens for 3 ½ years is probably the foundation for the use of this time period in Daniel and Revelation – refers to a time of suffering and persecution, which will never be as severe as during this time. Those who dwell on the earth rejoice over the death of the Church because they no longer have to hear the exclusive claims of Christianity. Instead, they can bask in their own self-made spirituality, which allows them to define reality as they please.
- The breath of life from God brings them back to life – cf. Genesis 1; Ezekiel 37. This happens on the Last Day when Christ returns. The enemies watch as the Church is resurrected and united to her Lord. They watch in great fear, for the realization that they have been wrong will hit them like a ton of brick and they will know that they are about to receive their judgment.
- Judgment Day will be a Great and Terrible Day. Great for believers, who are finally vindicated and shown to be victorious; terrible for unbelievers, who will experience unbelievable fear and anguish when they hear the trumpet sound and see Christ, the One

they denied, coming on the clouds. The cosmos will react to this great and terrible event with earthquakes and other disturbances (cf. Ezek. 38-39; Zech. 14:1-5; Heb. 12:26). That “a tenth of the city” and “seven thousand people were killed” by these cosmic disturbances indicates that some unbelievers will experience physical death on the Last Day, only to be raised and judged, and then experience spiritual death for eternity. Those unbelievers who are not physically killed on the Last Day “were terrified and gave glory to God. The problem is that their giving glory to God is too late. Their fate is already sealed.

- “The second woe has passed, third woe is coming soon” – This third woe is depicted immediately for us in the last section of chapter 11. It occurs when the seventh angel blows his trumpet.

Rev. 11:15-19

- This is a scene of worship in heaven due to the fact that God is faithful to His witnesses and has protected His Church and her mission throughout the entire NT era and even during the last days of immense persecution during Satan’s “little season.” This is the result of Judgment Day – Christ’s kingdom is established forever and His enemies are destroyed and will suffer eternal punishment, while the saints, who witnessed amid persecution, even unto death, celebrate their place in His kingdom. The same celebration and worship goes on throughout the NT era, even while the church on earth is under immense persecution. We join in this celebration even now during the Divine Service. However, on the Last Day, we will experience the culmination of this celebration, which we only experience in part now. The reward is given to believers here, for they have confessed Christ in this sinful world, even though such a confession brought them persecution.
- How can this scene of worship in heaven as a result of Judgment Day be considered the third woe? Because not everyone will experience the celebration in Christ’s kingdom. In fact, the great majority of people will not. Thus, this is the third woe because it depicts what unbelievers will be missing, for they will be experiencing just the opposite in the flames of Hell. In 11:12-13, the scene of Judgment Day is depicted. Here, in 11:15-19, the result of Judgment Day is depicted. The result: Believers will experience eternal joy in Christ’s kingdom; unbelievers will experience eternal suffering in Satan’s kingdom.