

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 6-23-13 PM NOTES
"THE TEMPLE, THE TWO WITNESSES, AND THE THIRD WOE"
REVELATION 11:1-19
#18 in Series, Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

Revelation 11:15b (NKJV) "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

I. The Temple (vv. 1-2)

Matthew 24:1-2 (NKJV) "1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'"

Check out the website of The Temple Institute www.templeinstitute.org

"At this site, you may view photographs of the actual sacred Temple vessels that have been produced by the Temple Institute. Each vessel has been created by accomplished craftsmen. These vessels and priestly garments are being fashioned today according to the exact Biblical requirements, specifically for use in the future Holy Temple. They await the day when they will be called into the Divine service of the Holy Temple."

—The Temple Institute Website

Measuring symbolizes taking ownership of something.

Luke 21:24 (NKJV) "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

II. The Two Witnesses (vv. 3-13)

A. The Ministry of the Witnesses (vv. 3-6)

Prophesy primarily refers to "forth telling" God's message—often a message of judgment.

Malachi 4:5 (NKJV) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

The miracles that these witnesses perform remind us of Moses and Elijah. They destroy their enemies with fire (2 Kings 1:10ff), withhold the rain (1 Kings 17:1), turn water into blood (Exodus 7:14-18), and strike the earth with plagues (Exodus 8:12). Also, Moses and Elijah both left the earth in their time here mysteriously. Elijah was taken up in a chariot and Moses body was secretly buried by God in an unknown location.

These two witnesses are indestructible until they have accomplished what God sent them to do on earth.

B. The Martyrdom of the Witnesses (vv. 7-10)

The one referred to in verse 7 is the antichrist of 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7. He is the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2. He is the beast of Revelation 13.

Luke 6:26 (NKJV) “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

C. The Resurrection of the Witnesses (vv. 11-13)

III. The Third Woe (vv. 14-19)

Revelation 8:13 (NKJV) “And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!’”

1 Corinthians 15:52 (NKJV) “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at **the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Instead of calling for the momentary event of the catching up of the church as the last trumpet does, the 7th trumpet calls for prolonged judgments on the ungodly.

A. The Third Woe Consummated (vv. 14-15)

Matthew 4:8-10 (NKJV) “⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, *‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’*”

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) “In their case **the god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

B. The Thankful Worship in Heaven (vv. 16-19)

The elders represent the glorified Church.

1. They Give Thanks That Christ Reigns Supremely (v. 17)
2. They Give Thanks Christ Judges Righteously (v. 18a)
3. They Give Thanks That Christ Rewards Graciously (v. 18b)

“The message of the seventh trumpet is that Jesus Christ is the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. He will one day take the rule of the earth away from the usurper, Satan, and from the earth’s petty human rulers. History is moving inexorably toward its culmination in Christ’s earthly reign. When He returns, He will bring covenant blessings to the redeemed, but eternal judgment to those who reject Him.”

—John MacArthur

2 Peter 3:11b (NKJV) “...what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?”

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Let me remind you where we are in the book of Revelation. The Lord Jesus has come in the air for His church and the church is caught up to be forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). With the church gone there breaks out on the earth tribulation like the world has never known. Chapters 6-19 of Revelation deal with this 7 year period called the tribulation. God’s people have always experienced tribulation, but this tribulation is so intense and widespread that other times of tribulation pale in comparison. We have seen the judgment of God during this period spelled out by looking at 7 seals on a scroll, 7 trumpets that are blown, and 7 bowls of wrath that are poured out. It is really just the judgment of the 7 seals, but the trumpets and the bowls of wrath are both telescoped in the seal judgments. The 7th seal is the 7 trumpet judgments and the 7th trumpet judgment is the 7 bowl judgments. Chapter 11 (like chapter 10) is an interlude. In this chapter 11 we are taken all the way to the end of the tribulation and we see in **Revelation 11:15b (NKJV)** "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" Like an artist who paints a broad landscape without a lot of details, the broad landscape in chapter 11 is filled in as we study Revelation 12-19. We are going to see in weeks to come that things keep getting worse and worse as each one of the seal, then the trumpet, and finally the bowl judgments are unleashed.

With that short introduction, let’s jump right in to the text. The title of the message is also the outline of the message.

I. The Temple (V1-2)

No plot of ground in the entire world is more historically and prophetically important than the plot of ground where Solomon’s temple was built. Historically, two temples occupied the soil on the temple mount in Jerusalem. The first was Solomon’s temple. This was the original temple that was planned by David and had the materials required to build it largely procured by David. This temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in about 587 BC. The second temple was built by the Jews returning from exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. This temple was later enlarged and beautified by Herod the Great to the extent that some call it a third temple. Herod’s Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman General Titus. Typically, the Romans didn’t destroy the temples in the lands they conquered. Titus declared that Herod’s Temple should not be destroyed, but somehow it caught on fire as the Romans destroyed the rest of Jerusalem. When the soldiers saw that the temple was on fire, they looted the treasures of the temple. There were rumors that gold was hidden in the temple. Parts of the temple were overlaid with gold and as the fire spread, the gold overlay melted and ran down the crevices of the stones in the walls of the temple. The soldiers pried apart each stone to try to find the gold, and in so doing they unknowingly fulfilled prophesy spoken of Jesus in **Matthew 24:1-2 (NKJV)** “¹ Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’” When we look at what the Bible says about the future, we see that there will be two more temples built. One will be built during the millennial reign of Christ and another will be built before or toward the beginning of the 7 years of tribulation. This is the temple referred to in our text in Revelation 11:1-2. Many of the Jews today believe that this temple will be built. Today, young Jewish men are being trained to offer sacrifices in the coming temple. Kathy and I, along with some others from our church have seen with our own eyes at the Temple Institute the garments that are being made for the priests to wear. Artisans are making vessels for temple worship. Carpenters are fashioning musical instruments to replicate the worship described in the Old Testament. You can go to the website [www.templeinstitute.org] and see for yourself artist’s renderings of the priestly garments, replications of musical instruments, and much more. The website’s home page says, “At this site, you may view

photographs of the actual sacred Temple vessels that have been produced by the Temple Institute. Each vessel has been created by accomplished craftsmen. These vessels and priestly garments are being fashioned today according to the exact Biblical requirements, specifically for use in the future Holy Temple. They await the day when they will be called into the Divine service of the Holy Temple.” You may ask why the temple isn’t rebuilt today. There is a slight problem. On Mount Moriah, the site of Solomon’s temple, stand two structures that are sacred to Muslims. One is the al-Aqsa Mosque and the other is the Dome of the Rock which is supposedly the place where Mohammed ascended into heaven. It is a pilgrimage site and considered one of the three most holy sites of Islam. How is the temple going to be rebuilt? I don’t know, but it will be rebuilt! If this is what God has determined, it will be done. It may involve a war, a lightning strike, an earthquake, or any number of other means. We know that the antichrist will win favor with the Jews in the first part of the 7 years of tribulation. Perhaps he will be empowered by Satan to broker a deal with the Muslims to allow the temple to be built. Some of the antichrist’s actions in his deceit of the Jews will involve this rebuilt temple, so it is in his interests to get it built.

Let’s examine the instructions that John was given. Chapter 11 is a continuation of chapter 10. He is likely dealing with the same angel that we met in chapter 10. The angel gives John a reed that was used as a measuring rod. The word translated “reed” referred to a plant that grew in the Jordan Valley to a height of 15-20 feet. It was hollow and light and was often used as a measuring rod like we would use a tape measure. The part that he was to measure was the holy place and the Holy of Holies, not the whole temple complex. Why is John told to measure the temple? The measuring was a symbolic act. It symbolizes taking ownership of something. God is saying, “I own this temple”. Probably the temple signified the Jews. God is proclaiming His protection of the Jews during the tribulation to keep them from annihilation by the antichrist and his people. John was told not to measure the courts of the temple because outside the temple is given over for a time to the Gentiles (non-Jews). The angel is referring to what Jesus said in **Luke 21:24 (NKJV)** “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Notice the time that these unredeemed Gentiles that have aligned themselves with the antichrist will trample down Jerusalem. It is for forty two months – 3 ½ years. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the Turks, the British, and the Arabs have all occupied and controlled Jerusalem. In the end, the antichrist will, but he will fail in his efforts to wipe out the Jews and will control Jerusalem for only 3 ½ years. This is what God has determined and this is what will be done.

II. The Two Witnesses (V3-13)

In these verses we are introduced to two mysterious witnesses. We will see how they proclaim and even carry out some of God’s judgment during this latter time of tribulation where the Gentiles trample on Jerusalem.

A. The Ministry of the Witnesses (V3-6)

These witnesses prophesy. In the Scriptures, that doesn’t necessarily refer to foretelling the future; it primarily refers to “forth telling” God’s message – often a message of judgment. These men declare God’s words and do God’s works. They were clothed in sackcloth – similar to burlap, a rough garment that is the garb of a prophet sent out to proclaim judgment while grieving over the sin of the people he would be preaching to. Notice how long their ministry lasts – 1260 days. That is 42 months or 3 1/2 years. Their ministry will be in the last half of the great tribulation.

Who are these witnesses? John simply says they are “the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.” That description is drawn from Zechariah 4:1-14. The olive tree speaks of fruitfulness and the lampstand speaks of light or truth. I don’t think that we can say for sure who these witnesses are, but I think we can be almost certain of whom one of them is and a little less certain of whom the other is. I believe that one of these prophets, these witnesses in the latter half of the great tribulation, is Elijah. I think this appearance of Elijah is the final, complete fulfillment of **Malachi 4:5 (NKJV)** “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of

the Lord.” Jesus tells us that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah before the public ministry of Christ, but he certainly wasn’t the reincarnation of Elijah as some new age folks say. I believe that one of these witnesses is literally Elijah. Who is the second witness? Some say that it is Enoch since he, like Elijah never died. That could be, but I lean toward Moses. Here are some reasons. It was Moses and Elijah that appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. Also, the miracles that these witnesses perform remind us of Moses and Elijah. They destroy their enemies with fire (2 Kings 1:10ff), withhold the rain (1 Kings 17:1), turn water into blood (Exodus 7:14-18), and strike the earth with plagues (Exodus 8:12). Another reason I believe that these witnesses are Moses and Elijah is that they both left the earth in their time here mysteriously. Elijah was taken up in a chariot and Moses body was secretly buried by God in an unknown location. While I believe that this is good evidence, the bottom line is that we cannot be dogmatic about the identity of these two witnesses.

These two witnesses are going to be supernaturally protected by God. They need this protection because they are going to be proclaiming God’s wrath and the need for repentance. Those aren’t popular topics in any time, but especially in these last 3 ½ years of the tribulation period. In verse 5 we find that when someone desires to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth to destroy their enemies. That probably refers to their calling down fire with their words from Heaven as Elijah did in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 1:10. There is no reason to doubt that this is literal fire. In verse 6, we see that they have the delegated power to stop the rain and turn water into blood, and to call down plagues on the earth. The havoc that these two prophets of God wreck on the earth will make them hated men by those who are unrepentant.

These two witnesses are indestructible until they have accomplished what God sent them to do on earth. I think the same thing can be said of everyone of God’s servants. I am not saying that He will keep us from harm. There may well come a day that one of our mission team members is killed while sharing the Gospel in West Africa, Western Heights or Broadacres. What I am saying is that we are invincible until it is God’s time to go. I heard the story of an evangelist who had a man pull a gun on him and threaten to kill him. The evangelist said, “You’re not going to scare me with Heaven. And if you pull that trigger and it is not God’s time for me to go He might just have the gun explode in your face and kill you.” The man left.

B. The Martyrdom of the Witnesses (V7-10)

I love the first phrase, “When they finish their testimony”. No one could touch them until this time came. When we finish our testimony, why would we want to stay here in this place? The “beast” referred to in verse 7 is the first of 36 references to him in Revelation. We will get a more detailed description of him in chapters 13 and 17. He is the “antichrist” of 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7. He is the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2. He is the “beast” of Revelation 13. He is a Satan possessed and demon empowered man who will supernaturally rise to power and rule the world for a short time. He is ready and willing to kill God’s servants. He accomplishes his desire only when our sovereign God is finished with them here on earth. When the 2 witnesses are slain, they are not even buried; they are thrown into the street of Jerusalem and a camera is kept on them while their bodies bloat and begin to decompose in the sun. It is interesting that John tells us that Jerusalem, the holy city is at that time no better than two places known for their hatred of God and His Word – Sodom and Egypt. When John was told by the Spirit to write that these witnesses’ dead bodies would be watched by those from peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations, it must have seemed incredible to him. For us it is very believable. I have been in many undeveloped nations in remote places and when you turn on a TV, there is CNN showing what is going on in the world.

Notice the glee of the world over the deaths of these witnesses who have proclaimed the Word of God. The world celebrates and shares gifts just like it is Christmas. It was “Happy Dead Witnesses’ Day”. This sin soaked world will celebrate their death. What a commentary on human depravity. Those who speak God’s truth will not always be the most popular people on earth. Jesus told His disciples in **Luke 6:26 (NKJV)** “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” This “success” in killing these witnesses is a great achievement for the beast, the antichrist.

C. The Resurrection of the Witnesses (V11-13)

The great rejoicing turns into great fear. As the people of the earth gloated over their bloated bodies, something began happening. I can picture it. Someone is up late somewhere in the world watching the live feed and suddenly there was a twitching. The bodies began to shrink from their bloated condition. Color began to return to the skin. Muscles began moving and they stood to their feet. Millions watching gasp and begin to turn pale themselves. Then a voice came from Heaven, "Come up here", and slowly they began to rise as a cloud enveloped them until they could be seen no more.

The resurrection of the two witnesses was not the end. Within the same hour that these two were raised, there was an earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city. The 7,000 that were killed literally says that 7,000 prominent people were killed – probably people in the antichrist's key leadership. The result is that some in Jerusalem (probably Jews) gave glory to God. It is likely that a large number of Jews were converted. Giving glory to God is normally a mark of genuine repentance and / or worship in other parts of Scripture (Revelation 14:7; 16:9; 19:7; Luke 17:18-19; Romans 4:20).

III. The Third Woe (V14-19)

What is he referring to with the phrase "the third woe"? It refers back to **Revelation 8:13 (NKJV)** "And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!'" The three "woes" refer to the last three trumpet judgments (#5, 6, and 7). The 7th trumpet judgment sets in motion the final consummation of God's plan to take back the universe from the curse of sin and death and establish the earthly kingdom of Christ.

This would be a good place to say that the 7th trumpet, while it is the last in the sequence of 7 trumpet judgments, it is not synonymous with the "last trumpet" in **1 Corinthians 15:52 (NKJV)** "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The seventh trumpet judgment takes a longer period of time than the "last trumpet" which is instantaneous ("in the twinkling of an eye"). Instead of calling for the momentary event of the catching up of the church as the last trumpet does, the 7th trumpet calls for prolonged judgments on the ungodly.

A. The Third Woe Consummated (V14-15)

Although the 7th trumpet sounds in verse 15, the judgments associated with it are not described until chapter 15. The loud voices in verse 15 are probably coming from Heaven's choirs. This dramatic proclamation is the result of the 7th trumpet and the joy that Satan is defeated and his power is forever broken. It is interesting that in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan tempted Jesus by promising to give Him the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would bow down and worship him. Jesus refused. **Matthew 4:8-10 (NKJV)** "8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' 10 Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Now in verse 15 we see Jesus taking these same "kingdoms of this world" back legitimately! We see a title of Satan in **2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)** "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Now, at the end of the 7th trumpet, the god of this world is dethroned and the kingdoms of this world have been legitimately taken from the usurper, Satan and have become the property of the Lord God in flesh – Jesus Christ. His reign will not just be for 1,000 years, but forever and ever!

B. The Thankful Worship in Heaven (V16-19)

The Elders represent the glorified church. As Christ takes back that which was lost through man's sin, the elders prostrate themselves before God's throne in worship. They give thanks for three specific blessings: First, they give thanks that Christ reigns supremely (V17). Second, they give thanks that He judges righteously (V18a). Third, they give thanks that He rewards graciously (V18b) [From Warren Weirsbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament*, page 600]. Verse 18 is actually a loose outline of the balance of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 11:19 is an assurance of God's faithfulness. The temple symbolizes God's presence and the ark symbolizes God's communion with His people because it was on the ark that the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement symbolizing that the blood of Christ had satisfied the wrath of God and atoned for our sins.

CONCLUSION

John MacArthur gives this excellent summary: "The message of the seventh trumpet is that Jesus Christ is the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. He will one day take the rule of the earth away from the usurper, Satan, and from the earth's petty human rulers. History is moving inexorably toward its culmination in Christ's earthly reign. When He returns, He will bring covenant blessings to the redeemed, but eternal judgment to those who reject Him." [*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Revelation 1-11*, page 321]. Peter asks this question of us in light of this truth in **2 Peter 3:11b (NKJV)** "...what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness"?