

Chapter Eleven

The Two Witnesses

Chapter 11 provides a good example of having to stand back and view Revelation from a distance. Herein lies The Big Picture. The difficulties found here become clearer in chapter 12. Chapter 11 describes the plan, execution, and fulfillment of God's redemption, painted in language not discernible to the fleshly mind. Misconceptions concerning the doctrines of judgment and resurrection will hamper understanding of what this chapter is dealing with. The key to understanding is that **nearly all of chapter 11 deals with Jewish symbolism**: the temple, the altar, olive trees, lampstands, the Holy City, the outer court, 42 months, prophets in sackcloth, etc. It follows then, that **the circumstances and events told here deal primarily with the nation of Israel**.

11:1 And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it.

Measuring rod: To measure something in spiritual terms is to affect a *standard*. The Law was the standard of God's righteousness, to which He expected the Israelites to adhere. "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity." (Lev 19:35) God's desire for consistency is seen in the OT tabernacle: "...every one of the curtains shall have one *measure*," meaning they were to be the same *size*. (Exo 26:2) It can also refer to the duration of one's life: "Lord, make me to know (realize) mine end, and the measure of my days (how short my life really is)." (Psa 39:4) Ezekiel saw a vision in which the temple was measured in great detail by an angel of God. (Ezek 40) However, the measuring rod Ezekiel saw had a specific length of six cubits. (40:5) We are not given the length of John's measuring device. This is because, in Ezekiel's vision, a physical measurement was done on every wall, doorway, and so on. In John's vision, we see that this measuring includes God's temple, the altar, *and those who worship in it*. This is a spiritual measurement of people.

Temple of God: Jesus referred to Himself as the temple of God. (John 2:19-21) The church is also called the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16), wherein God dwells. (2 Cor 6:16) This is the first thing John is to measure to see if it conforms to God's standard. Since it the first thing measured, it follows that the remaining things (altar and people) should conform to it.

The altar: This is the place of worship and sacrifice. John is to see if the worship is acceptable. Acceptable worship is done in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), not in mere ritual and ceremony. Spiritual measurement regards those things which God determines to be in accordance with His standard, which is Christ. Christians are to be "conformed to the image (standard) of His Son" (Rom 8:29), not some church creed. How does one measure up to Christ? Note:

- In matters of righteous judgment: For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (Matt 7:2)

- In matters of discernment: Take care what you *listen* to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides. (Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38)
- In matters of personal humility: For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you *not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think* (out of measure); but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a *measure of faith*. (Rom 12:3)
- In matters of self-judgment: For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. (2 Cor 10:12-13)
- In matters of grace: To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Eph 4:7)

Being conformed then to the image of God's Son is done through the Word, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, *to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*. (Eph 4:13) This is how those who worship in the temple are measured—by the standard of Jesus Christ. How is this done? Through the Gospel:

He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge (measure) him at the last day. (John 12:48)

In Ezekiel's temple, a river comes from beneath its threshold (Ezek 47:1). Where does this water go? It flows out into the land, giving life. (47:8, 9) The church is supposed to be Christ's temple—His body. The water—God's Word—issues from the church as the Good News, providing life and healing for the nations. The 144,000 were sealed with God's mark to identify them as His own. Here, the measuring also determines who are God's people.

11:2 “And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

Court outside the temple: Also named the *outer court*. Solomon's temple did not seem to include an outer court, though one does appear in Ezekiel. (Ezek 10:5) This was an area where “common” folk were permitted. Priests preparing the sacrifices were not allowed to do this work in the outer court, so as to “not transmit holiness to the people.” (Ezek 46:20) Ezekiel 42 provides a detailed function of this area.

Josephus described the temple as possessing four courts:

- One which only the priests could enter.
- One for males of the congregation who were not defiled according to the law.
- A court for women.
- A court for Gentiles, which was considered ‘common’ or ‘unclean.’¹

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XV, xi, 5; cf. Deut 23:1-7; Lam. 1:10; Ezek 44:9.

The act of measuring is symbolic of dividing between the clean and unclean, the holy and the profane. (Ezek 42:20) ‘Measure’ is to spatial relationships what weight is to mass. Balshazzar was weighed in the balances and found wanting. (Dan 5:2 7) So here, John is told to measure the temple and altar, but to leave out the court of women and Gentiles as profane (common). The term translated ‘leave out’ is the Greek verb *ekballo*—‘cast out.’ The same term occurs in John 9:34, 35, where the rulers “cast out” the man born blind for his testimony of Jesus. This is the meaning here. John is told to remove common people—those represented by the outer court.

In Paul’s allegory of the two covenants and the competing claims for inheritance between national and spiritual Israel (Ishmael and Isaac), he wrote, “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” (Gal 4:30)

John is told not to measure this area. The reason—*it has been given to the nations*, implying that the nations have authority to occupy it. No mention is made of who authorized this transaction. The outer court seems to be Jerusalem itself. The *court outside the temple* is given to the nations, where they then subdue the *holy city*.

Holy city: Considered to be Jerusalem (Neh 11:1), the only city called holy scripture. (Matt 4:5; 27:53)

A city is made up of those who live in it, not so much the buildings and infrastructure. The Israelites “called themselves after the holy city.” (Isa 48:2) It was the community of God’s righteous people. (Isa 52:1) Satan took Jesus “into the *holy city*” to tempt Him (Matt 4:5), and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple. When Jesus was crucified, dead people came from their graves and entered the *holy city*. (Matt 27:53) Although Jerusalem was supposed to be a type of the church (Heb 12:22, 23; Rev 3:12; 21:9, 10), this is the apostate form of the city. Israel was the court given to the Gentiles to tread under foot. Instead of being a “city set on a hill,” providing salt, light and direction to the world, they had become worthless, good for nothing except to be “trampled under foot by man.” (Matt 5:13)

42 months: This number refers to *a time of great chaos and distress*. Its equivalents are 3½ years, 1,260 days, or “a time, times, and half a time.” Note how this number always accompanies a time of distress:

- Saints *persecuted* by a ‘different’ king (Dan 7:25)
- Power of the holy people *shattered* (Dan 12:7)
- No rain fell, causing a severe *famine* (Luke 4:25; James 5:17)
- Nations *tread* the holy city under foot (Rev 11:2)
- Two witnesses *prophesy* (Rev 11:3)
- Woman in the *wilderness* is “nourished by God” (Rev 12:14)
- Beast given *authority* (Rev 13:5)

If ‘7’ is the symbol for spiritual completeness, then half of 7 (3½) means *breaking in half* that completeness—a *time of distress*. The things in the list above also underscore persecution, famine, abolishment of good, the holy city trodden, Satan in control, etc. Another instance of 42 (3½) is found in Matthew’s genealogy. (Matt 1:1) It is broken down into 3 lists of 14 (14 x 3 = 42) God’s people (the holy city) may be seen as a time of trampling during the entire timeline of Jesus’ ancestry. Not only was the lineage riddled with disobedient kings, but also efforts to destroy Christ’s family tree were employed, as in the case of Athaliah. (2 Kgs 11:1)

Forty-two is used twice in Revelation, here, and in reference to the time of the beast's authority to rule. The treading of the holy city by the nations may equate to the beast's rule; one event described from two different angles.

He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for *a time, times, and half a time.*" (IE, 3½ years, or 42 months) (Dan 7:25)

I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for *a time, times, and half a time*; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people (treading the holy city), all these events will be completed. (Dan 12:7)

Note then the similarities:

- Speaking out against God; wearing down the saints.
- Shattering the power of the holy people.
- The outer court trampled by the nations.
- The beast allowed to rule.

As a result, John did not measure this area. If it was being trampled (defiled), there was no reason to measure it. Being defiled, the apostate Jews did not measure up to God's standard any how. Note how this was described concerning Israel's blatant idolatry:

I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the level; then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the secret place. And your covenant with death shall be canceled, and your pact with Sheol shall not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, *then you become its trampling place* (given to the nations to trample). (Isa 28:17-18)

Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus predicted the Jews' subjugation by the Gentile Roman armies due to their rejection of God's salvation:

They shall fall by the sword's edge and shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the nations until the times of the nations is fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

The "times of the Gentiles" began with the captivity of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chr 36:1-21), and ended when the Romans destroyed the city in 70 AD.

11:3 "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Two witnesses: Since Christ is given all power and authority, it is He who grants authority to others as He sees fit. Death and Hell were two other witnesses given authority over a fourth of the earth. (6:8)

Those who overcome are given authority over the nations. (2:26-27) Here, two witnesses are given authority to proclaim, or provide witness to God's word.

The term, 'two witnesses,' is found in the OT: On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. (Deut 17:6) Mankind stood guilty before God; the two witnesses provide testimony to affirm that guilt. Two angels were sent into Sodom to provide token witness of their wickedness before God destroyed them. God was not ignorant of what was happening. Man's condemnation could only be confirmed by dual testimony. One witness was the Law; the other was the Holy Spirit.

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase. (Rom 5:20)

Through the commandment sin (became) utterly sinful. (Rom 7:13)

When (the Holy Spirit) comes, (He) will convict the world concerning sin...because they do not believe in Me, and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (John 16:8-11)

The Lord told Isaiah that He would take for Himself two witnesses for testimony. (Isa 8:2) The apostles were witnesses of Christ's mission. (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 2:32, etc) Witnesses appear twice in Revelation: the two witnesses in this chapter, and the witnesses of Jesus, whose blood was spilled by the Great Harlot. (17:6) These witnesses prophesy for the same length of time the nations trample the outer court and as long as the beast rules. Whether or not this preaching goes on simultaneously with the trampling by the nations and the beast's rule is open to conjecture. However, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2 = 7$ years (7 'periods'), signifying completion. This conforms to Jesus' prediction of Jerusalem being trampled by the nations until the times of the nations is *fulfilled*, or complete. (Luke 21:24)

Clothed in sackcloth: They are preaching doom and repentance. Sackcloth was a rough, coarse cloth, from which a garment was worn as a symbol of mourning, repentance (2 Sam 3:31; Est 4:2-4; Amos 8:10), or humility. (Psa 35:13) It was often used in the case of mourning, either over a death (Gen 37:34; Joel 1:8), or other calamity. (Est 4:1-4; Job 16:15) The Israelites showed confession and grief over sin by wearing sackcloth and ashes. (1 Kgs 21:27) Prophets wore sackcloth to advertise their sorrow during proclamations of judgment and doom. (Isa 20:2; Rev 11:3) It is associated with doom and darkness. (Isa 50:3; Rev 6:12) Being clothed in repentance and sorrow shows their *condition* or *attitude* (See notes on 3:18).

11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

The *two* witnesses now become *four* things, illustrating Revelation's use of numbers to describe *conditions*, not literal entities. There is *one* symbol—two witnesses—being described as two *other* symbols.

Two olive trees: Olive trees were a source of oil for lighting lamps. These two olive trees are identical to those found in Zechariah 11, identified as "the anointed ones." The olive trees represent the family trees of the Davidic and Aaronic lines; the olive branches represent Zerubbabel, the governor, a descendant of David, and Joshua, the high priest, a descendant of Aaron. (Zech 3:1) The lampstand is

Christ. In chapter 3, Christ is called the Branch.

“Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,” says the Lord Almighty, “and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.” (Zech. 3:8, 9)

The term ‘branch’ signifies Jesus would spring from the Davidic line.

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. (Isa 11:1, 2; cf. Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech 6:12)

The significance of the two branches of Joshua and Zerubbabel feeding oil to the lamp points to the fact that the families of Joshua and Zerubbabel would be joined through marriage to produce the Christ, and that Jesus would thus carry both Davidic and Aaronic blood in his veins. The presence of both kingly and priestly blood in Christ’s veins is suggested by the promise in Jeremiah:

David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor will the priests, who are Levites, ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices. (Jer 33:17, 18)

As Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning the Davidic throne contemplates fulfillment in Christ, so, it would seem, does the prophecy regarding the Levitical priesthood. Jesus was to be king *and* priest upon his throne. (Zech. 6:12, 13) Affinity between the Davidic and Aaronic lines in Jesus may be seen from the fact that Mary was cousin to Elizabeth, whom Luke says was a daughter of Aaron. (Luke 1:5, 36) This is not to suggest that Jesus’ legal descent was counted from the tribe of Levi, “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah.” (Heb. 6:14) Although Mary possessed both Aaronic and Davidic bloodlines, legal descent followed the father, not the mother. Hence, Jesus’ legal descent and claim to the Davidic throne is traced through Joseph, his adoptive father. (Matt 1:1-16)

Having identified the olive trees as the Aaronic and Davidic family trees, it seems apparent that the two witnesses are spiritual members and extensions of this class. In Romans 11:16-24, spiritual Israel is portrayed as an olive tree into which believers from the Gentiles are grafted in, but unbelievers from the Jews are broken off. (Rom 11:17) Hence, the non-Jewish nations (Gentiles) that are grafted into the tree are made partakers “of the root and offspring of David.” (22:16)

Paul used the olive tree as a symbol of the body of believers. (Rom 11:17) In Zechariah, the olive branches hung over the two bowls of the lampstands, dripping oil into them, which would become the fuel for light. The anointing of the Holy Spirit and God’s word is the most likely interpretation. “It is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.” (1 Jn 5:7) The number ‘2’ is indicative of agreement or witness confirmation:

The Spirit Himself (witness #1) bears witness *with* our spirit (witness #2) that we are children of God. (Rom 8:16)

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience (witness #1) bearing me witness

in the Holy Spirit (witness #2). (Rom 9:1)

Two lampstands: In chapter one, there were seven golden lampstands, symbols of the complete church or body of believers. Now, we see two lampstands. They are not golden, as the seven are. The focus is not on their precious worth (golden), or their perfection (7), but on their *testimony*, symbolized by the number ‘2.’

Stand before the Lord of the earth: Not the heavenly and holy form of God, but on He who rules the land of men. The Holy Spirit and believer’s testimony are confined to the earth, where they exercise their witness. Just as Moses and Elijah stood in God’s presence while in the midst of the rebellious Israelites, these two witnesses stand before God in the midst of the unrepentant Jews of Jerusalem. However, they provided a sufficient witness, proclaiming God’s word, and causing the ‘death’ of their adversaries.

(The Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (John 16:8-11)

How was the Holy Spirit to do all of this? Some imagine Him flying around like some ghost, zapping people. While this may fit in the realm of science fiction, it is done by the simple proclamation of faithful human beings in whom dwell the Spirit. The two olive trees and two lampstands are the church. Like Christ, they are in a state of humiliation (sackcloth).² Unlike Christ however, who did not kill anyone while on the earth, they “destroy” their adversaries. It is only after they complete their testimony that the beast is allowed to “slay” the two witnesses.

11:5 And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed.

There are intentions to thwart God’s testimony. The text doesn’t say, “*if* anyone harms them,” but “*if* anyone *desires* to harm them.” Attitude is being condemned, not action, though the former is no less offensive than the latter. A person who hates (attitude) is a murderer. (1 Jo 3:15) Jesus used the same principle in describing lust: if a man *looked* at a woman with ill intent, he was already guilty of adultery. (Matt 5:28) If anyone *desired* in his heart to hurt God’s witnesses, judgment was upon them.

Fire comes from their mouth: God’s judgment issues from their testimony, thus consuming the enemy. This is a judgment of *words*, yet results in their *death*. It is spoken testimony designed to destroy those opposing God’s will. Moses declared the *word* of the Lord to the children of Israel, but they were afraid because of the *fire*. (Deut 5:5) Joshua was to set the city of Ai on *fire*, but they were to do it according to the *word* of the Lord. (Josh 8:8)

As a tongue of *fire consumes stubble*, and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. (Isa 5:24)

² In comparing this picture of the church—a humble witness in persecution—to today’s church, there stands a stark contrast. Trying to discern Christians from among the world can be difficult in our materialistic and worldly society.

Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making *My words in your mouth fire* and this people wood, and it will consume them. (Jer 5:14)

“Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?” (Jer 23:29)

It is easy to see the metaphor in these verses. Fire is judgment. The Word of God judges men. Peter wrote the present heavens and earth *by His word* are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Pet 3:7) Therefore, it is the disobedient who desire to harm those who carry forth God’s word. The mere fact that they reject the truth in their hearts is, in God’s eyes, the same as actually harming His servants. As Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Matt 10:30; Luke 11:23) There were only two sides to this confrontation: God’s testimony and those who opposed it. The nations are enraged, yet God judges.

We need to ever keep before us that Time has little meaning here. When men refuse God’s word, they are not *immediately* transported into hell and eternal damnation. Yet because of the *certainty* of their fate, it is as if it happens now. Many people bewail and blame God because of wickedness in the world. If there was a God, why does He allow all of this evil? However, justice delayed is not justice denied. A Day of Reckoning is coming. In God’s eyes, it is happening now. While we tend to view things from a nominal and linear perspective, reward and punishment appear far off. This is thrust of Peter’s meaning when he says a thousand years are as one day to the Lord. (2 Pet 3:8)

11:6 These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

Elijah had the power to stop the rain from falling for 3-1/2 years. (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1) What was a *physical* miracle in the OT, is now a *spiritual* one in Revelation. The fire from these witnesses mouth is not literal—it is words. In keeping with our context, the rain is also spiritual, as are the waters, blood, etc.

Rain may not fall: In a literal sense, rain was a symbol of blessing that caused the “land to yield its produce and the trees to bear their fruit.” (Lev 26:4; Deut 11:14; Acts 14:17) Withholding rain was a sign of warning (Amos 4:6-7) or God’s judgment. (1 Kgs 17:1; Jer 3:3) In prophecy however, it is yet another symbol for God’s Word:

Let my *teaching* drop as the rain, My *speech* distill as the dew, as the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. (Deut 32:2)

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; *so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;* it shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (Isa 55:10-11)

The manna given in the wilderness *rained* down from heaven upon the people (Exo 16:4), a type and shadow of Christ coming down to earth to give life to men. (John 6:32ff) Here, there is no spiritual rain providing spiritual growth. The two witnesses are not here to impart truth leading to life, but to

warn of judgment and destroy those in opposition to Divine Authority. Israel sought enlightenment from the prophets, but because of their wicked and rebellious hearts, God said, “They will fall and not rise again.” (Amos 8:14) Since the Jews had rejected the Good News from her own prophets and from their Messiah—whom they killed—the same word that was supposed to *save* them now comes to *destroy* them.

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. (2 Cor 10:3-6)

Powers to turn the waters into blood: This symbol appears also in chapter 16. It is not to be confused with the sea being turned to blood (See notes on 8:8). The sea represents nations. Here, it is the *waters* that the witnesses turn to blood, and refers to the lack of rain (word of God). If no rain falls, the waters dry up. If there is no truth forthcoming, men die spiritually as a result. What is supposed to bring life (water) now brings death (blood).

Smite the earth with every plague: They possess God’s power. It was God who brought the children out of Egypt by striking the land with many plagues. Here, the same is happening: men are tormented from lack of truth, from want of refreshment leading to life, and their sole gain is to suffer for it. They cannot *obtain* life, and are *given* suffering instead. Although seen primarily as disease, plague can be any calamity, such as a “plague of hail” (16:21). Hail is a symbol God uses to erase falsehood and knock down the walls (false doctrines) men have built up to reassure themselves:

So I shall tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the Lord. Thus I shall spend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I shall say to you, “The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone, along with the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,” declares the Lord God. (Ezek 13:14-16)

As often as they desire: “For He whom God has sent (two witnesses) speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.” (John 3:34)

11:7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

Kurt Simmons’ observations are worth considering here:

It was the lot of the apostles to live as men “appointed unto death.” (I Cor. 4:9) But, despite the effort of the Jews to kill Peter, Paul, and the apostles, God stood with them pending completion of their testimony: “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” (II Tim. 4:16, 17) The testimony of the gospel was to be published in all the world before the end would come: “But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be

brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be preached among all nations.” (Mk. 13:9, 10; cf. Matt. 24:14) It is clear from the epistles that the gospel had been published to every creature (*i.e.*, nation) while the apostles were yet alive. (Col. 1:6, 23; cf. Rom. 10:18; 16:25, 26; Tit. 2:11, 12) This was Paul’s life work; when he had completed it he could say: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” (II Tim. 4:6, 7) Peter and Paul finished their testimony by martyrdom under Nero.

Unfortunately, many interpret Paul’s words of fighting the good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith, as never missing a Sunday church service. It refers in greater measure to the apostle completing the task God had given him—delivering the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The beast that comes up out of the abyss: Now is the hour of the beast, when God’s testimony is finished. This is the messenger of the abyss, the Destroyer who appeared in chapter 9. The abyss is symbolic of the nations; it is the place of the spiritually dead. (Rom 10:7) The unbelievers who make up the nations are *dead in their sins*. (Eph 2:1) It is the beast that comes up out of the *sea*—out of the nations. The abyss is also known as *the deep*, the same term given to the *sea* (See notes on 4:6). Of this beast, more will be said in chapter 13. For now, however, it springs from the *attitudes* of those opposed to God. During their testimony, this beast is bound or chained; after their testimony, it is let loose. Note the similarity to chapter 20:

He laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years (an indeterminate length of time), and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed (until the witnesses finished their testimony); *after these things he must be released for a short time*...when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations...to gather them together for the war. (Rev 20:2-8)

The beast released from the abyss is almost identical to Satan being released in chapter 20. The only difference is that in chapter 11, the beast actually overcomes and kills God’s people, while in chapter 20, the nations only *gather* to make war against God. Not a shot is fired, however, and the devil and his followers are cast into the Lake of Fire. False prophets and those who follow them interpret this beast as the Antichrist. It is not a person, however, but a nation:

I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And *four great beasts were coming up from the sea*, different from one another. These great beasts, which are four in number, *are four kings who will arise from the earth*. ...The fourth *beast* will be a fourth *kingdom* on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. (Dan 7:2-3; 7:17, 23)

The fourth kingdom was Rome, which answers to Revelation 11 and 13. While the sea is a geographical metaphor for the Gentile realm, the Bottomless Pit is a *spiritual* metaphor describing the worldly kingdom’s association with sin and death.

Will make war with them—to overcome—to kill: Note that this is a spiritual warfare against the righteous. War is a dominant theme in Revelation. In the next chapter, the dragon wars against the woman’s offspring in order to kill them. Authority was given to the beast to wage war against the saints

in chapter 13. The kings of the earth, inspired by demonic influence, go forth to make war against God. (16:14) They wage war against Christ Himself (17:14), yet it is the Word of God who wars against the nations in chapter 19. Satan deceives these nations into battling against God. (20:8) Therefore, the war is actually a battle of truth against falsehood, of light against darkness, and in the grand scheme of things, Christ against Satan.

11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem. (Matt 16:21) The name of the city is here *mystically* called ‘Sodom’ and ‘Egypt.’ One city is described as having a dual-nature. Jerusalem is the only city in scripture called Sodom, other than Sodom itself, (*cf.* Ezek 16:46) which was destroyed for gross immorality. (Jude 1:7) Egypt is the “house of bondage” (Jer 34:13) from which the house of Jacob (Psa 114:1) was delivered by God. (Hosea 11:1; 12:14) From this we can determine that the rejection and opposition of the Jewish leadership (Jerusalem) crushed these witnesses. Much has already been said that it was the Jews—and later, the Roman politicians who were stirred up by the Jews—who persecuted the apostles and early church. The apostles and many Christians were killed, as were the OT prophets. In each and every case, it was the *religious* members of the Jewish society who sought to exterminate these trumpets of God’s word.

11:9 And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

Peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations: The world. This is not the *entire* world, but those *from* the world. Remember that John beheld a great saved multitude *from* every nation. From the same world come the saved and unsaved.

Dead bodies: Lifeless bodies. Note David, paying heed to the text in *italics* which closely correlates to chapter 11:

They have given *the dead bodies of Thy servants* for food to the birds of the heavens, the *flesh of Thy godly ones* to the beasts of the earth (*they lie exposed; not buried*). They have poured out their blood like water *round about Jerusalem (the city where their Lord was crucified)*; and there was no one to bury them. We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a scoffing and derision to those around us. How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou be angry forever? Will Thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations which do not know Thee, and upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his habitation. (Psa 79:2-7)

Psalms 79 and Revelation 11 both describe a condition where God’s people *appear* to be dead. John says they are dead in the “street,” while David says “we have become a reproach to our *neighbors*, a scoffing and derision to those *around* us.” Both imply a *public* view. Thus, being dead and being a reproach (an embarrassment) are tied together. Their *testimony* has no effect, and so the unbelieving rejoice over them for their lack of power (life). The bodies are said to *figuratively* lie in the street of Jerusalem because the Jews publicly instigated persecution against Christians in Asia and throughout the empire. Upon the Jews therefore, was required all the righteous blood shed on earth from Abel to Zachariah the son of Barachiah. (Matt 23:34-36; Luke 11:49-51)

Three and a-half days: ‘Day’ doesn’t always mean a literal day in the bible. Thayer says *hemera* has different meanings. Eastern usage of this term differs from our Western understanding. Any *part* of a day could be counted as a *whole* day. A key passage for the present time is Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, which declares, “There is... a *time* (day) for every purpose under heaven.” One day was the 24-hour period between two successive sunrises. The Jews reckoned their day from evening to evening, the period of time between two successive sunsets. (Gen 1:5, 8; Exo 12:18; Lev 23:32)

Some scholars interpret the 3½ days to be 3½ years, since a prophetic day is supposed to equal a literal year. They base this on the usage of “time, times, and half a time,” which translates to “1 year + 2 years + ½ a-year.” As already seen, 3½ implies a period of chaos or great distress, during which time believers are seemingly powerless in the midst of unbelief. The more important issue is what takes place afterwards.

Will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb: Burial is a rite of closure. It is a respectful *putting away* of someone’s life on earth. Under the Mosaic Law, burial was to take place within 24 hours, probably due to the hot climate of the region and the need to avoid disease. When someone died the oldest son or nearest of kin closed the eyes of the dead relative. (Gen. 46:4) The mouth was closed and the jaw bound. (John 11:44) After the body was washed, (Acts 9:37) it was usually wrapped in cloth. The wealthy used linen with spices placed between the folds. (John 19:40) An unburied body was considered a great shame and a sign of God’s judgment. (1 Kgs 14:11) Unburied bodies polluted the land. (Ezek 39:11-16)

Revelation is dealing with spiritual concepts, so the idea is that the faithful dead are being treated with contempt and disrespect. They are not afforded a decent closure, but are left exposed in order to give occasion for gloating and delight. The martyrs were a public display and proof to the Jews of victory. The seeming defeat of Christianity became a source of laughter, derision and celebration to their enemies.³

11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Those who dwell on the earth: Who are actually the Jews, since this is where the witnesses have been “slain.” “Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations” (11:9) are the Gentiles. Those who “dwell upon the earth” are the Jews. The church’s mere existence caused the Jews tremendous aggravation and they vigorously sought to exterminate her. It was they who rejoiced when the apostles and Christians were killed. It was during Pilate’s and Herod’s administrations that the Roman government tried to appease the Jews by accommodating their desire to eliminate the church.

There are two groups in Revelation: those who dwell on the earth, and those who dwell in heaven. There are those who live according to the flesh (earth) and those who live according to the spirit (heaven). (Rom 8:12-13) Of the earth, there are 10 references in Revelation, while there is only one mention of “those who dwell in heaven.” (13:6) The ones “dwelling” on the earth are those who invest their efforts and expend their energy towards an earthly existence. *Earth* and *Adam* come from the same word, and they are those who are in Adam’s likeness—they possess a sinful nature, an *earthly* nature. To this end, they are lost. Jesus only saves those who have the faith of Abraham, a trust that reaches up

³ It’s difficult for us to understand how much the 1st Century Jews despised Christians. History tells us that the one thing that really got under their skin was that Christians used the scriptures, which they considered inviolate and entirely their inheritance.

to heaven. It is to Abraham's seed that Christ extends salvation, not Adam's seed. (Heb 2:16)

The souls beneath the altar cried out to God to judge and avenge their blood on *those who dwell on the earth*. (6:10) It was national Israel who slaughtered their own prophets. Here, we see the dead witnesses (like the souls under the altar) also needing God's help. In 8:13, God's judgments fell upon *those who dwell on the earth*. It is these who worship the beast and whose names don't appear in the Book of Life. (13:8) They are the ones deceived by the "lamb-beast" who spoke like a dragon (13:14) and also made the image of the beast. Those who dwell on the earth became drunk from the Great Harlot's wine of immorality (17:2), who wonder about the beast "who was and is not and is to come." (17:8)

Rejoice—make merry: Celebration at snuffing out the truth is the occasion for happiness here. Jesus indicated that the Jews would be drinking, marrying, buying, selling, and building, when He returned. (Luke 17:26ff) Rejoicing comes with a new king (1 Kgs 1:40, 45), at receiving truth (Neh 8:17), and happy circumstances commonly experienced by people of all ages. The term *making merry* means to eat and drink (Jud 19:22) or celebration after victory. (1 Chr 15:29)

Sending gifts: This was a Jewish tradition practiced during occasions of national celebration and dated from as early as the captivity. (Est 9:22; Neh 8:10) In scripture, there were holy gifts given to the Lord, which were to be pure and without defilement. (Lev 22) Gifts were a tribute (2 Chr 17:11; Psa 68:29) and a sign of respect. (2 Chr 32:32; Matt 2:11) They are the natural bounty and sustenance given by God. (Matt 7:11) They could be construed as a bribe (Prov 29:4), or to mitigate one's crime. (Prov 6:35) They also were a means to secure friendship. (Prov 19:6) In religious rites, they were sacrifices, as when the Israelites burned their children as gifts to idols. (Ezek 20:31) Every good gift is from God. (James 1:17)

These gifts, however, were of human origin, and not good. The idea here is that once they perceived Christianity as being squashed, they could celebrate. They would present offerings or give tribute to one another. Again, it is speaking of *attitude*. The source of their trouble was gone, giving occasion to congratulate one another. It is not the crime committed that brings despair, but the torment of conscience. Get rid of the accusing voice and sinners will rejoice. Make sin acceptable, legal, and popular, and sinners will celebrate publicly.

11:11 And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.

The Jews had sought to kill Jesus since He began preaching in the lands surrounding Judea, Galilee and Samaria. When they finally crucified Him, they rejoiced at their supposed victory. Christ's resurrection did not have an immediate effect on the Jews, however. Through the preaching at Pentecost, the Gospel began rolling over the land, soon stirring up the Jews' anger, and causing fear that the kingdom would be taken from them. After a short time, the persecution slowed down and the church revived. The *little season* and number of bond-servants who should be killed (6:11) are now fulfilled. The two witnesses rise up victorious against their enemies.

Although the imagery can be taken from Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, it also bears a strong resemblance to the saints who came out of their graves after Christ's resurrection and "entered the holy city and appeared to many." (Matt 27:53) They were a sign of Christ's triumph over His enemies. This resurrection was a sign of their certain doom. Assured of a victory over God's people, Haman sought approval for their destruction and erected a gallows for Mordecai. (Ester 8:7) This is the same scenario. Like Haman, the unbelieving Jews would be figuratively hung on a gallows they themselves had built.

Breath of life from God: The Holy Spirit. The Word that gives spiritual life.

11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.

“*Come up here*”: A command from God to move from the earthly realm and into the heavenly. This is a fulfillment of what Jesus said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (John 5:25)

None except God and the heavens *see* this resurrection, similar to what happens at a person’s baptism. Yet it is real. Paul’s words speak this same truth:

When we were dead in our transgressions, (God) made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:4-6)

We can’t see this resurrection (making alive) at baptism, nor do we experience being seated with Christ in heaven. Yet it happens. Revelation is not speaking of a persecution of believers on an *individual* level, but speaks of an attitude towards the *corporate* church. The Jews did not want this kingdom raised up, and so, thought to crush it. Even so, what is true of the church is also true of the individual. The church endured a baptism of suffering and persecution. (Matt 20:22, 23; Mark 10:38, 39)

The seven churches were told that the Christian who overcame would receive a reward. “He who overcomes” will receive a reward. (21:7) In the letter to the Laodiceans, it says that the Lamb overcame. (3:21) Thus, the exalting by God (“*come up here*”) implies the need to overcome, not only as *congregations*, but also as individuals.

In chapter 6, the rider on a white horse went out conquering and to conquer—overcoming. The beast that came out of the abyss *overcame* the two witnesses. In chapter 12 the brethren *overcame* their accuser, the Devil. In chapter 13 the beast sought to overcome the saints. In chapter 15 there were those who came off victorious against the beast.

The context clearly shows this to be a rebellion against God’s testimony fixed in Jerusalem. In application, however, there are similarities. Those who deny Christ—followers of the beast—are those opposed to God. Whoever overcomes the world—which is passing away—gets a reward. Before His crucifixion, Christ said, “I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) This correlates with Romans 12:21—overcoming evil with good. But overcoming the world really means overcoming Satan, death, and the Judgment. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matt 4) it was not that He overcame *temptation*, but that He overcame the *tempter*.

Overcoming the world equates to *going to heaven*, which is what happens to these two witnesses. Although this appears to be a legitimate interpretation, there may be a more subtle and finer understanding: *the kingdom of God was transferred from an earthly (fleshly) kingdom to a heavenly (spiritual) one.*

Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; for it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen. (Prov 25:6-7)

Those who held to Christ's testimony (two witnesses) could be exalted (brought to heaven), but only after the Spirit of God "breathed life into them." It ties to one of Jesus' parables:

When you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, "Friend, move up higher" (*Come up here!*); then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted. (Luke 14:10-11)

John *saw* a door open in heaven, yet he could not see heaven until he was told, "Come up here." (Rev 4:1)

Their enemies beheld them: Note the similarity between Revelation 11 and Isaiah 18:

All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth (*those who dwell on the earth*), as soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see it (*their enemies beheld them*), and as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear it. For thus the Lord has told me, "I will look from My dwelling place quietly like dazzling heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." For before the harvest, as soon as the bud blossoms and the flower becomes a ripening grape, then He will cut off the sprigs with pruning knives and remove and cut away the spreading branches. They will be left together for mountain birds of prey, and for the beasts of the earth; and the birds of prey will spend the summer feeding on them, and all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on them. (Isa 18:3-6)

...and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. (Matt 24:30)

This is in reference to the kingdom being removed from the Jews and transferred to the Gentiles. 'Seeing' the Son of Man was realized when their nation was destroyed, along with their temple, sacrificial system, and ability to worship God in accordance with the Law. *Seeing* means *understanding*. Once the hammer fell, they finally got it. They finally understood. They *saw*.

The image here of persecution followed by resurrection and ascension has several points of contact with Paul's letter to the Thessalonians: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (I Thess. 4:16, 17) Paul's language has long been associated with the notion of an instantaneous rapture and transmigration of the saved to heaven at the world's end. The better view, however, is that the language is purely accommodative. Based upon the present passage, the language of rapture may speak in part to the victory the church would share in following the persecution and destruction of its enemies. As the image here of the witnesses' resurrection and ascension is figurative of their triumph over their enemies, so being caught up together with the risen saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air may speak to the glorification of the church following its passion and suffering. Paul suggests something like this when he says, "And if children, then

heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together.” (Rom. 8:17) The spiritual reality of the church’s reign with Christ, though unseen by human eye, is nevertheless perceived and beheld by her enemies. The image signifies the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to the church at Philadelphia: “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” (Rev. 3:9)⁴

11:13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

In that hour: At the same time God’s people are moved to a spiritual kingdom, a great shaking up of the Jewish nation took place.

When they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. (Mark 13:11-13)

The context in Mark deals with Jerusalem’s destruction. Those Jews who professed Christ had to deal with friends and relatives who refused to relinquish their grip on traditions and the Law. Paul addresses this problem in Romans 7, where Jews, who had come from generations of followers of Moses, struggled with having to “divorce” themselves from that same Law. (Rom 7:1-3)

Tenth of the city: To the Jews, a tenth of everything belonged to the Lord. (Lev 27:32) Things devoted to the Lord were *sacrifices*. They were destined for holy destruction.

City means people. (Esther 8:15) It is a place where people collect together. (Gen 11:4) The city carries privileges, security and belonging, as opposed to isolation. (Psa 107:4) A city is compared to the “wealth of a rich man.” (Prov 10:15) In other words, a portion of God’s people was shaken (earthquake) and fell from their position of security. They were no longer exalted, but brought to a state of humbleness. This correlates closely with Daniel’s vision:

Some of those who have insight will fall (*tenth of the city*), in order to refine, purge, and make them pure. (Dan 11:35)

Seven thousand killed: A complete (7) and widespread (1,000⁵) destruction. It’s not *quantity*, but *quality* that is implied. The shaking up of the Jewish nation had far-reaching spiritual consequences to those who did not accept God’s testimony of the Messiah.

Rest were terrified...gave glory to God: They were terrified of what had happened. The lofty position they had held for so long as God’s chosen people was suddenly removed from them. The kingdom had been uprooted in their sight and transferred to a heavenly realm, one which was suddenly out of their reach. Keeping the Law could not bring them to it.

⁴ *The Consummation of the Ages*, pp. 224, 225

⁵ See comments on chapter 20 for the meaning of the number ‘1,000.’

He has made us (Christians) to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever...Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him (*they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them*). (Rev 1:6-7)

These are all spiritual principles, not to be taken literally. They address spiritual conditions and position.

11:14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

The first woe (8:13) dealt with spiritual apostasy and widespread misunderstanding of the scriptures (IE, *false doctrine*). It is heralded by the announcement, “Woe to *those who dwell on the earth*.” These were the disobedient Jewish religious class who had set their minds on earthly rewards and means.

The second calamity (brought in by the sixth trumpet) summarized the removal of God’s kingdom from the Jews and the establishment of the church. Here, *those who dwell on the earth* rejoice because they believe they have suppressed the truth through persecution.

The third woe comes quickly, and is ushered in by the last trumpet. It summarizes the eventual fate of *those who dwell on the earth*. They are deceived (13:14) and their names are not written in the Book of Life. (13:8)

11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

The last trumpet. The only other place in scripture that mentions “the last trumpet” deals with the resurrection spoken of by the apostle Paul:

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Cor 15:50-53)

The “flesh and blood” and “the perishable” speaks to the Jewish idea that obedience to the Old Law could, in no way, bring a person into a condition satisfactory to God’s requirement of holiness. “At the last trumpet” simply means “the final call.” This last trumpet announces that “the kingdom of the world *has become* the kingdom of Christ.” In Corinthians, it signals two events: the resurrection of the dead *and* others being changed. The difficulty is trying to understand the mechanics of these events. As humans, we tend to see them as singular, final, and typically, futuristic incidents. Note Peter here:

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Pet 1:10-11)

Peter suggests that if a person practices or possesses certain virtues, they will be guaranteed eternal

life. It sounds like salvation by works. However, he is saying that *entrance* into the kingdom will be *abundantly supplied*, something apart from redemption. This ties closely to what Jesus told the church at Sardis:

Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for *I have not found your deeds completed* in the sight of My God. (Rev 3:2)

In other words, the church at Sardis lacked those qualities of which Peter spoke. They were not ready for entry into the kingdom in their current *condition*. Why? Because *justification* deals with a person’s standing before God—a one-time event secured when a person is saved. The Holy Spirit’s work of *sanctification* lasts during the remainder of our life. Sanctification prepares the person for heaven, making us into the likeness of Christ. (Rom 8:29)

Bearing fruit (a result of sanctification) by the Christian is an important doctrine (John 15; Rom 7:4; Gal 5; Phil 1:11), demonstrating that God desires mature and complete individuals. Although the Thief on the Cross is used to pooh-pooh the need for sanctification, it must be remembered that the Thief was redeemed *before* Christ’s resurrection, while the Mosaic system was still extant.⁶

He will reign forever: In chapter 11, the transfer of the righteous into the kingdom is portrayed, bringing about the establishment of Christ’s kingdom. In the next chapter, a different side is told:

The great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (*The witnesses were exalted into heaven and Satan was cast down to earth*) And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come (*the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Christ* (11:15)), for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. (Rev 12:9-11)

Who was brought up? Christ and His followers—the New Israel. Who was brought down? Satan, the apostate Jews, and all others opposed to God’s will. The two traded places, so to speak. The Jews looked for a physical kingdom and Messiah, an unfortunate view still alive in Christendom today. It’s difficult if not impossible to understand spiritual concepts using human reasoning. Yet these are spiritual processes described in highly poetic and figurative language. Note the similarities between Old and New Testament:

Exod 15:17-18	Rev 22:3-5
Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for <i>Thy dwelling</i> (God’s kingdom), the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever (Where? In His dwelling! In His people!)	The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it (in the mountain), and His bond-servants shall serve Him...they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

⁶ The purpose of Christianity is not to make us good, but to make us holy, preparing us for an eternity with God.

Concerning Christ's reign, note the scriptures:

To (Christ) was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (Dan 7:14)

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, from then on and forevermore. (Isa 9:7)

...then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (1 Cor 15:24-25)

“The end” doesn't mean the end of time or the end of Christ's earthly millennial reign, but to *the time of the end* (1 Cor 1:8), the consummation of the ages (Heb 9:26, and the fulfillment of all things written. (Luke 21:22)⁷

11:16-17 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.

Again, the transfer of those who carry God's testimony from the earthly to the heavenly initiates Christ's rule and authority. Satan is cast down (seen in the next chapter), and Christ begins to rule. But it only begins after the witnesses leave their earthly *condition* and enter a spiritual one.

Thou has taken Thy great power: The taking of the witnesses into heaven is on a par with the taking of power (authority) by Christ. Satan, having been removed from heaven, can no longer stand before the throne and accuse men like before. (Job 1 & 2) With Christ as their Savior, there is no longer any room for accusations. This is the meaning of justification. The righteous can enjoy the spiritual blessings that reach down from heaven. The idea that Christians will endure a heavenly courtroom, where Satan hurls accusations at us is totally bogus. Our security was settled forever at the cross. You don't get saved, enter heaven at death, and then have the devil drag you into some sort of appeals process.

11:18 “And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

Nations were enraged: Elsewhere in Revelation, the devil became enraged. He is the leader of the nations. In scripture, the term *nations* typically refers to the non-Jewish population. When men's devices are revealed as worthless, anger is the result. Note the similarity between the dragon persecuting the offspring of the woman (chapter 12) with King Asa's folly:

⁷ *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 227

“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.” Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. (2 Chr 16:9-10)

Because of Asa’s rebellion, he sought revenge on certain ones. Because Satan was cast out of heaven, he became enraged at those living on the earth. He is like a wild and wounded animal, lashing out at anything or anyone who gets too close. The Jews tried to usurp the kingdom by their own power, and were angry because it was taken from them. A parity is seen when King Uzziah tried to usurp the temple priests’ authority:

“It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful, and will have no honor from the Lord God.” But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense....And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. (2 Chr 26:18-21)

As Uzziah was made leprous and cut off from the Lord’s house, so too was Satan cut off from the heavenly realm. Disobedience to God’s word and being cast out of the kingdom results in the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” to which Jesus referred. (Matt 8:12; 13:42, etc) Note:

They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness. (Isa 8:21-22)

Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. (Dan 11:14)

Time came for the dead to be judged: At Christ’s assumption of power, the kingdom is delivered, a resurrection takes place, and the dead are now ready to be judged. The Greek word for ‘judged’ also means ‘avenged.’ Thus, it was time for the dead—those who died for Christ’s testimony—to be avenged. It’s important to note that the time for judgment *began* with Christ’s taking of power. For those expecting these events to be in the future, Peter’s words may profit:

For the Gospel *has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead*, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (1 Pet 4:6-7)

Peter states that the “end of *all* things is *at hand*.” John said, “...*now* many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it *is* the last hour.” (1 John 2:18) To suggest that the “last hour” was thousands

of years in the future does not jibe with scripture. The NT bears out that the Jews still held legitimate power while the gospel was being spread; they had not yet been overthrown. The Mosaic economy was gradually giving way. When John wrote, “the end of all things is *at hand*,” one can hardly deduce that he meant the distant future. *At hand* meant it was knocking at the door. Scripture never uses words to say one thing and mean something else. If *black* really means *white*, and *quickly* really means *glacially slow*, then words are meaningless and our understanding is compromised. To imply that God said *now* when He really meant *later* removes understanding and leaves us to endless speculation.

Time to give their reward to...prophets...saints...the small and the great: This parallels with chapter 20—the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Rev 20:12-14) Part of the *reward* to those judged is seen in Death and Hell being destroyed.⁸

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ. (Rev 20:6)

Time to destroy those who destroy the earth: Those who bring others to spiritual ruination with false teachings. Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders, “you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” (Matt 23:13) He also said, “you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” (Matt 23:15) The Jews were corrupting and destroying the entire earth by teaching traditions and also by refuting the gospel. We can compare it to today’s cults, who roam the neighborhoods, trying to subvert folks with their false teachings.

11:19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

God’s temple was opened, or *revealed*. The symbol of His promise is also *revealed*. This is more Jewish symbolism. The temple of God that John measured in verse 1 is now *revealed*. The two witnesses, having been called into the spirit realm, are now the temple of God *revealed*, along with his promise of salvation, seen in the ark (Christ). The literal ark, which once sojourned on the earth, is now in heaven. This is a transfer of the temple from the earthly to the spiritual. It has little to do with *location*, and everything to do with *condition*. God’s people “ascend” to reign with Christ in *spirit*, whereas before, they dwelt within the constructs of the Jewish nation. This is the meaning of Christ’s Second Coming, not a literal event seen with physical eyes.

The popular concept among the Jews about the resurrection and kingdom was that it would subsist in the material realm. They looked for an earthly kingdom and a physical resurrection from the dead. This basic error persists until this day in the Christian church, having come down to us through the creeds. Men’s preconceived notions about the nature of the second coming and the resurrection prevent them from understanding the eschatological climax of the ages spread before them in the holy scriptures. Yet, Paul was very clear: “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” (I Cor. 15:44) The resurrection is spiritual, not physical. Like the kingdom, “it cometh not with observation.” (Lk. 17:20)⁹

⁸ Time has no meaning to God nor to the dead. For all we know, the Final Judgment is taking place now, or it is yet to take place. Whenever it happens is not as important as its reality and the need to be prepared.

⁹ *The Consummation of the Ages*, pp. 229, 230 The creeds to which Kurt Simmons refer are The Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus (c. 215), Marcellus (340 AD), Rufinus (c. 404 AD), the Apostles Creed, and the Nicene Creed.

Lightning, sounds, thunder: God's power, majesty, and voice. They originate from His throne, and are *recognizable* atmospheric metaphors describing *unrecognizable* heavenly events (see notes on 4:5).

Earthquake and a great hailstorm: The moving of earthly powers and the removal of mankind's security and false hopes (see notes on 6:12 and 11:19). Christ is now reigning. The world is judged (or, more accurately, the righteous dead are *avenged*). Men's devices are made impotent and the Gospel is established.

The vision of the temple in heaven indicates the destruction of its earthly shadow and replicate. The lesson of the temple was that God was holy and unapproachable by sinful man except through his chosen representative and the sprinkling of blood. God was secreted away in the Most Holy Place. His presence was symbolized above the ark of the testament. Man had to worship through the mediation of priests. However, the temple in Jerusalem was merely a figure of the true. (Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:24) It was a shadow of the substitutionary death and atoning blood of Christ. (Heb. 9:12; 10:1-4) In his death, the veil of the temple was "rent in twain" (Matt. 27:51; Lk. 23:45), signifying that the way into God's presence was opened by the death of Christ. The Christian thus has "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." (Heb. 10:19; cf. 4:16) Nevertheless, true to the "already-but-not-yet" character of the transition period between the cross and the coming of Christ, the "way into the holiest of all was not yet manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was yet standing." (Heb. 9:8) The Christian's access to the presence of God was forestalled pending passage of the Mosaic age. Thus, the Hebrew writer calls Christ a High Priest of "good things to come." (Heb. 9:11; cf. 2:5; 6:5; 10:1) At the time of his writing, they were not yet come, but they were very near. "For yet it is a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10:37; cf. 9:28) During the interim, in token of God's promise, the church was given miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost in earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. (Eph. 1:13, 14) The church was the purchase of God (Acts 20:28); its redemption was tied to the fall of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:28), not in terms of expiation of sin, but from the persecution attending those days, and the consummation of the ages and culmination of God's redemptive purpose in Christ.

The continued ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jerusalem temple were an implicit denial of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and served to obscure the place of the church in God's redemptive scheme. Isaiah speaks to the temple services after the sacrifice of Christ as an abomination before God and points to the destruction of the city and temple: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?..He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies." (Isa. 66:1, 3, 6) Stephen's defense that he had blasphemed the temple by saying Jesus would come and destroy it and change the customs Moses delivered to the people was based upon this passage and averred to the destruction prophesied by Isaiah. (Acts 6:14; 7:48-50) The present passage indicates that that destruction was now come. With removal of the old typical system of Judaism, the way into the Holy of Holies was made manifest. The veil concealing the ark and presence of God has been removed by the death of Christ. The presence of God that man enjoyed in the garden, but lost through sin, is restored in Christ. The natural phenomena of lightning, thunder, earthquake, and hail serve to emphasize the greatness of the events, as did the like displays at Sinai and the Savior's death. (Ex. 19:18, 19; Matt. 27:45; 51, 54)¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Consummation of the Ages*, pp. 230, 231