

Revelation 11
The Two Witnesses and the Seventh Trumpet

<p>1) In verse 1, what was John given? 2) What was John told to measure? 3) What was John told not to measure? 4) What was going to happen to the place that was not measured?</p> <p>5) In verse 3, how many witnesses are there? 6) What was given to them? 7) How long will they prophesy?</p>	<p>Revelation 11 (NKJV) ¹ Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot <i>for</i> forty-two months. ³ And I will give <i>power</i> to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. ⁷ When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies <i>will lie</i> in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ Then <i>those</i> from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰ And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those</p>
---	--

REVELATION 11

In chapters 11–12, we are definitely on Jewish ground. We see the Jewish temple (11:1–2), Jerusalem (11:8), the ark (11:19), the ruling Christ (12:5), Michael (12:7), and Satan’s persecution of the Jews (12:17). If we spiritualize this passage and apply any of it to the church, we will be in serious trouble. At this point, we are at the middle of the Tribulation.

I. The Ministry of the Two Witnesses (11:1–14)

A. *The period of their ministry (vv. 1–4).*

By now the Jewish temple has been rebuilt, and the nation (though in unbelief) is worshiping Jehovah again. It seems likely that the two witnesses will minister during the first half of the Tribulation, preaching to the Jews and having access to the temple. At the middle of the Tribulation, Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and take possession of the temple area (2 Thes. 2; Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15). He will set himself up as god, thus bringing about the “abomination of desolation” that both Daniel and Christ predicted. We see the temple overrun by the Gentiles for three and one-half years. God asks John to measure the temple area, a symbolic action that goes back to Ezek. 40–41 and Zech. 2. To measure something means to claim it. Though the forces of Satan have taken over the Jewish temple, Christ will claim it again and restore it to His people. Note the allusion in v. 4 to Zech. 4–5 concerning Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest. These two men were God’s servants for reclaiming and rebuilding the temple and the nation after the Babylonian Captivity, a time of national troubles.

B. *The purpose of their ministry (vv. 5–6).*

They will display God’s power to unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, and many will be saved through their witness. They are called prophets (vv. 6, 10) as well as witnesses. They will announce to the world the great events to come and will incur the wrath of the Beast and his people. Because of the miracles they perform, these men have been identified with Moses and Elijah. Moses turned water into blood in Egypt, and Elijah prayed for drought and for rain, and also brought fire down from heaven. Malachi 4:5–6 promises that Elijah will come to minister again. However, some believe the two witnesses are Enoch and Elijah, since neither of these men died, but were both taken to heaven alive.

C. *The persecution in their ministry (vv. 7–10).*

Sinful men have never wanted to hear or obey God’s Word (cf. 9:20–21). These two witnesses will be divinely protected until their work is finished; then God will allow the Beast to oppose them and slay them. Certainly Antichrist could not take possession of the temple unless these two prophets were out of the way. The citizens of Jerusalem will not even give them proper burial (see Ps. 79), and the whole world will see their bodies and rejoice. This period of three and one-half days will be a “satanic Christmas” celebration. People will host parties and exchange gifts and rejoice that their tormentors are dead.

D. *The panic following their ministry (vv. 11–14).*

God raises them from the dead! Think of the fear that will come to hearts around the world as people see two dead men come to life on the streets of Jerusalem! And then the two men will be

caught up to heaven as their enemies stand and watch! Then will come an earthquake that will destroy one-tenth of the city and kill 7,000 people. What a day that will be!

II. The Testimony of the Seventh Trumpet (11:15–19)

We have been waiting since chapter 8 for this “third woe” that was promised. The seventh angel sounds the trumpet, and great voices from heaven announce that the kingdom (not kingdoms, for now the Beast has a united kingdom, 17:13) of this world is in Christ’s power. Christ does not gain control of the world until 19:11ff, so this is a declaration of events to come. In this section, we also have the anticipation of heaven as the elders look ahead to see what will happen. How wonderful it is to have the vantage of heaven, and not of earth! All that happens from this point on leads up to the Son of God taking the reins of government and conquering His enemies.

This prophecy is followed by praise, as the elders glorify Christ for His power. This is the third of the heavenly praises. In 4:10–11, they praised Him as Creator; in 5:8–10, they praised Him as Redeemer; and here, they praise Him as the King and Judge. The prayers of the martyrs will now be answered (6:9–11), as well as the prayers of God’s people, “Thy kingdom come!”

Verse 18 outlines what will happen in the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation period:

A. National and international hostility.

“The nations (Gentiles) were angry!” Read Pss. 2, 83, and Joel 3:9–13. This means that the nations will show their hatred for Christ and His people and that persecution will increase. Of course, Satan is on the scene (see 12:12ff), making a special effort to destroy the Jews. He has sought to destroy God’s people ever since Cain killed Abel (1 John 3:10–13).

B. Resurrection.

The Tribulation martyrs will be raised (20:4) as well as the wicked dead (20:2ff). Daniel 12:1–3 seems to indicate that the OT saints will be raised after the Tribulation.

C. Judgment.

The saints will have their works judged, and the wicked will be judged and condemned for their sins. It will be a time of reward for the saints and of wrath for the sinners. Note that the lost are described as “them which destroy the earth.” Satan is the Destroyer (9:11), and all who follow him share in his program of destruction. God commanded man to care for the earth and use its resources for his good and God’s glory; but Satan has led men into destroying the earth and using its resources selfishly for evil.

The final three and one-half years of the Tribulation will climax the program of God. There will be delay no longer (10:6). The chapter begins with the temple on earth, and closes with the temple in heaven. We have again the evidences of the coming storm: lightnings, thunderings, voices. We saw this in 4:5 coming from the throne; in 8:5, coming from the incense altar; and now coming from the holy of holies in the temple. Some believe that the ark here is the literal ark from the OT temple, which vanished after the Captivity. But this is not likely, since none of the other temple furnishings in heaven have an earthly origin. The ark is the symbol of God’s presence and God’s covenant. It is called “the ark of the covenant.” On earth, Israel is going through intense suffering, and God is reassuring them of His government and His care. There were thunderings and signs when the Law was given at Sinai; there are thunderings now as God is about to judge the world for breaking His Law.

“Thy wrath is come!” is the statement of v. 18, and this judgment will be fulfilled in chapters 15–16 when God pours out the vials of His wrath. The first three and one-half years are a period of

tribulation, but the last three and one-half years are known as “the wrath of God” (14:10; 14:19; 15:7; 16:1).¹

11:1 John is given a **reed like a measuring rod**, much like that used by Ezekiel (Ezek. 40:3, 5) in his vision of the measuring of the temple (Ezek. 40—48). **measure the temple ... altar**: This is the temple of the tribulation period that will eventually be desecrated (13:14, 15; Dan. 9:27; Luke 21:24; 2 Thess. 2:4). The measuring of **those who worship there** may mean that those who worship the Lord in the temple will be protected, while unbelieving Gentiles will not.

11:2 Luke 21:24 prophesies that **the Gentiles will tread the holy city underfoot** until “the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Apparently the period of **forty-two months** is the conclusion of “the times of the Gentiles.” *Gentiles* here may also be translated “nations” (v. 9; 10:11).

11:3 Forty-two months (v. 2) is the same length of time as **one thousand two hundred ... sixty days** (12:6). Almost certainly “a time and times and half a time” (12:14) is also a period of three and a half years made up of forty-two thirty-day lunar months. These expressions draw from the prophecies in Daniel (Dan. 12:6, 7, 11, 12). The **two witnesses will prophesy** for 1260 days with astounding **power** (vv. 5, 6). Therefore, it seems that the beast’s period of domination (v. 7; 13:5) follows the ministry of the witnesses, each occupying roughly half the tribulation period. The two unnamed witnesses are striking similar to Elijah (vv. 5, 6; 1 Kin. 17; Mal. 4:5) and Moses (v. 6; Ex. 7—11), who appeared together with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:29—32). It is also possible that these two witnesses symbolize all faithful believers testifying during the tribulation. **Clothed in sackcloth** means the witnesses are mourning for the unrepentant world to which they prophesy (Matt. 11:21).

11:4 The witnesses are described as **two olive tree** and **two lampstands**, linking them to the vision in Zech. 4 of “the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth” (Zech. 4:14). There the two anointed ones are Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest. But the overarching principle for these and all other witnesses for the Lord is that their testimony to the truth is “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” (Zech. 4:6).

11:5 **Fire** coming out of the **mouth** of the two witnesses so that **anyone** who opposes them is **killed** is close to the description of the plague of death brought about by the army of horsemen in 9:16–18. Apparently their ministry is unstoppable for three and one-half years (11:3) until “they finish their testimony” (11:7). The fire is also reminiscent of two of Elijah’s miracles (1 Kin. 18; 2 Kin. 1).

11:6 The two witnesses have the authority to prevent **rain** during **the days of their prophecy**, identifying them with Elijah, whose prayer caused it not to rain for three and one-half years (James 5:17). Turning the **waters** into **blood** (Ex. 7:17–21) and striking **the earth** with **plagues** (Ex. 7—11) is reminiscent of Moses in Egypt.

¹Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 372

11:7, 8 Finish translates the same word Jesus shouted climactically and triumphantly from the Cross: “It is finished” (John 19:30). **The beast** is allowed to **kill** the two witnesses in the same city where Jesus was put to death. The beast, who emerges as the satanically empowered world ruler in chs. 13; 17, emerges from **the bottomless pit**, as did the demonic locust plague of the fifth trumpet (9:1–10). **The great city** in Revelation is often Babylon (14:8), which possibly represents Rome (1 Pet. 5:13). But the further description **where also our Lord was crucified** seems to refer to Jerusalem. Some see the phrase as symbolic, meaning the sinful world in which Christ was crucified. **Sodom** was the prototype for the moral degeneration of this great city (Gen. 19); **Egypt** was the prototype for its rampant idolatry.

11:9, 10 The peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations are those to whom the gospel witness must continue until “the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19, 20). **Those who dwell on the earth** are those upon whom God’s judgment falls (6:10, 8:13). Being **dead** for **three-and-a-half days** recalls the three and one-half year ministry of the witnesses (v. 3). The death of the **two prophets** (v. 7) will set off a global celebration among unbelievers who have hated their message of truth.

11:11 Breath ... from God entered them recalls Ezekiel’s prophecy of the resuscitation of the dry bones (Ezek. 37). Such a public resurrection could cause **great fear** worldwide if it were broadcast by means of modern satellite technology. The entire sequence of events would serve to remind Israel of the ministry of Jesus Christ—His death, resurrection, and ascension.

11:12 Come up here is the same command given to John in 4:1. **Ascended ... in a cloud** recalls the description of Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:9) and Paul’s teaching about the Rapture in 1 Thess. 4:17. Some hold that the rapture of the church takes place at this point. But it is difficult to reconcile this description of death and resurrection (11:9–11) with the taking up of living believers (that is, the Rapture).

11:13 In the same hour: Soon after the two witnesses ascend to heaven, **a great earthquake** (6:12) will destroy **a tenth of the city**, resulting in **seven thousand** casualties. Those who survive will be terrified and will glorify God.

11:14 The second woe includes the sixth trumpet (9:12–21) and a second interlude (10:1—11:13). **The third woe** is apparently the seventh trumpet (vv. 15–19), since it is said to be **coming quickly**, and since 8:13 relates the woes to the last three blasts of the trumpet. The final woe may extend further since the word *woe* recurs in 12:12.

11:15 Our Lord ... shall reign forever anticipates the return of Christ (6:12–17; 19:11–21).

11:16–18 The twenty-four elders were previously seen as continually worshiping God (4:10, 11) and the Lord Jesus (5:8–10). Here their thanksgiving to the **Lord God Almighty** enters a new phase: they praise God’s **power** and **wrath** and the corresponding distribution of **reward** and judgment. This stanza of heavenly thanks seems to reflect on the fulfillment of the great messianic prophecy in Ps. 2.

11:17 Reigned may refer to a present rule in heaven, or to the fact that Christ has already come to earth to subdue the nations (v. 18) by this point. It is also possible that this is a past tense of certainty, signifying a future event as good as done in God’s plan for the world. For example, in

Rom. 8:30, the believer is said to be *justified* and already *glorified* (past tense), although glorification in fact takes place later, when the Christian comes into Jesus' presence.

11:18 Here God's **wrath has come** (6:16, 17). The wrath of Satan will also be seen in 12:12, but the divine wrath cannot be rivaled (14:19). **The time of the dead** includes the bestowing of rewards upon God's people, His **servants, prophets, and saints** (2 Cor. 5:10), and the pronouncement of everlasting judgment on the unbelieving **nations** (Matt. 25:46). This is what the martyrs prayed for in 6:10; it is not completed until 20:12–15. **Those who fear God's name** are those who have responded by faith to "the everlasting gospel" (14:6, 7), possibly including those who feared and glorified God in v. 13.

11:19 **The temple of God** here is not the one in vv. 1, 2. That earthly temple had an outer court "given to the Gentiles" (v. 2); this temple is **in heaven**. An **ark of the covenant** is spoken of here, even though the ark of the covenant made by Moses was probably destroyed by the Babylonians when they looted and burned the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 36:18, 19). The ark represented God's presence, leadership, and protection of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 10:33–36) and in the Promised Land (Josh. 3:3, 15–17). The ark here may represent similar blessings related to the New Covenant and Christ's return (Heb. 9:1, 4, 11, 23–28). It may also look ahead to God's protection of "the woman" who gave birth to the Messiah in "the wilderness" in 12:5, 6, 14. **Lightnings ... thunderings** proceed from God's throne in heaven (4:5), and were poured out on earth at the beginning of the trumpet judgments (8:5), along with **an earthquake** (8:5), then **hail** (8:7).²

The two witnesses (11:1-14).

While it is clear that 11:1-14 continues the parenthetical section begun in 10:1, an amazing variation of interpretations of this portion of Scripture have been offered. Alford calls this chapter "one of the most difficult in the whole Apocalypse" (*The Greek Testament*, 4:655). The best guideline to follow in interpreting this section is to take each fact literally. In line with this principle, a literal temple will be in existence during the Great Tribulation, and the city should be considered the literal city Jerusalem in keeping with its identification in 11:8. The time periods of 42 months (v. 2) and three and one-half days (vv. 9, 11) again should be considered literally. The earthquake will kill literally 7,000 individuals, and the two witnesses should be considered as two individual men.

1. THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE (11:1-2).

11:1-2. John was given a **reed**, a lightweight **rod**, to be used as a measuring instrument. John was instructed to **measure the temple and the altar** but not **the outer court**, meaning he was to measure the holy place and the holy of holies. While others could come into the outer court, only priests could enter into those two temple rooms. The explanation was given that this would be under the control of **the Gentiles** who would **trample on the holy city for 42 months**.

Why should John measure the temple? Measurement is usually taken of one's possessions, and the temple belonged to God. In a similar way the temple of Ezekiel 40 was measured and the

²Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1999, S. Re 11:1-19

v. verse

vv. verses

New Jerusalem was measured (Rev. 21:15-17). The temple here will be constructed so that orthodox Jews can offer sacrifices according to the Mosaic Law in the period in the first half of the seven-year period known as Daniel's 70th week. At the beginning of the 42-month Great Tribulation, however, the sacrifices will stop and the temple will be desecrated and become a shrine for the world ruler of the Great Tribulation who will put an idol in it and proclaim himself to be God (cf. Dan. 9:27; 12:11; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15).

John was also instructed, however, to count the worshipers who came to the temple. Here the thought seems to be that God will evaluate both the temple and those in it.

The tendency of some is to spiritualize the 42-month length of the Great Tribulation, but this should be taken as a literal period, as confirmed by the 1,260 days of 11:3 which are 42 months of 30 days each. From this it is also clear that "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) will not end until the second coming of Christ to the earth to set up His kingdom. Though Jews may possess Jerusalem temporarily, as they have in this century, they will lose possession in the Great Tribulation.

Some believe that the 42 months refer to the first half of Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:27). While it is not clear, the evidence surrounding this passage in Revelation seems to refer to the final three and one-half years. This also seems to be confirmed by the fact that in the first half of the last seven years the Jews will actually possess the city of Jerusalem and worship in their temple, whereas here the context indicates that this is the period when Gentiles will tread down the Holy City, implying ill treatment of the Jews and desecration of the temple.

2. THE MINISTRY OF THE TWO WITNESSES (11:3-6).

11:3-6. It was revealed to John that the **two witnesses** would be empowered by God to serve as prophets for 1,260 days or 42 months. They would be **clothed in sackcloth** and would be called **two olive trees and two lampstands**.

Numerous and varied interpretations have been given concerning the two witnesses. Some have suggested that they are not literal individuals. However, in view of the fact that they die and are resurrected, the implication is that they are actual people.

Another problem is their identification. A common interpretation is that they are Moses and Elijah because the judgments inflicted by Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament are similar to those of these two witnesses (11:5-6). Further support is given the identification of Elijah because of the prediction (Mal. 4:5) that he will appear "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes." Christ said this prophecy of Elijah was partially fulfilled in His lifetime (Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; cf. Luke 1:17). And both Moses and Elijah were involved in the transfiguration (Matt. 17:3), which anticipated the Second Coming. But a problem with this suggested identity is that Moses had already died once. Some have identified the two witnesses as Enoch and Elijah inasmuch as they did not die but were translated (cf. Heb. 9:27).

While there is room for considerable discussion of these various views, the fact is that the passage does not identify the two witnesses, and they probably do not have historic identification.

The description of the two witnesses as olive trees and lampstands has an Old Testament background (Zech. 4:2-14). The two witnesses in this passage were Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor. Their connection to the lampstands was that they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the olive oil. In a similar way the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

cf. *confer*, compare

Like prophets of old the two witnesses will be able to do supernatural miracles, and fire will destroy those who will try to harm them (Rev. 11:5). Like Elijah they will have power to stop rain, and will have power like Moses to turn water into blood and to bring on plagues (v. 6). In the midst of the unbelief, apostasy, and satanic power of the Great Tribulation these two witnesses will be a threat to the entire wicked world for a literal period of 1,260 days.

3. THE DEATH OF THE TWO WITNESSES (11:7-10).

11:7-10. With the ministry of the two witnesses ended, God permitted **the beast that comes up from the Abyss** (cf. 9:1-2, 11; 17:8; 20:1, 3) to overcome them. The beast, that is, the Antichrist, is mentioned nine other times in Revelation (13:1; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3, 13; 19:20; 20:10). After the witnesses were killed, their bodies were left unburied in Jerusalem, **figuratively called Sodom and Egypt**, because of the people's apostasy and rejection of God.

For three and one-half days the whole world gloated over their dead **bodies**. This implies some worldwide display, now made possible by television. Their deaths were considered a great victory for the world ruler and Satan, and were celebrated by people **sending each other gifts**.

4. THE RESURRECTION OF THE TWO WITNESSES (11:11-12).

11:11-12. After three and one-half days in the street, however, suddenly the two witnesses were resurrected and **stood on their feet**. They responded to the invitation, **Come up here, and went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on** with great fear.

5. THE RESULTING JUDGMENT OF GOD ON JERUSALEM (11:13-14).

11:13-14. At the same moment an **earthquake** occurred in Jerusalem with **a 10th of the city** collapsing and **7,000 people were killed**. In contrast with previous judgments where revolt and rebellion against God continued, **the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven**. So ended **the second woe**, leaving only the seventh trumpet, the final and **third woe**, to come.

H. *The sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15-19).*

11:15. Though the full results from the sounding of **the seventh . . . trumpet** are only introduced here and not brought to finality (as they will be in chap. 16), the introduction of the seventh trumpet itself is dramatic. As the trumpet sounded, voices were heard in heaven: **The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever**. (Cf. predictions of the earthly kingdom of Christ in Ezek. 21:26-27; Dan. 2:35, 44; 4:3; 6:26; 7:14, 26-27; Zech. 14:9.) The fact that this will be fulfilled at the Second Coming makes it clear that the period of the seventh trumpet chronologically reaches to Christ's return. Therefore the seventh trumpet introduces and includes the seven bowl judgments of the wrath of God revealed in chapter 16. In contrast with previous trumpets where a single voice was heard, here a mighty chorus from heaven joined in the proclamation.

11:16-18. After this announcement, **the 24 elders**, who appear frequently (4:4, 10; 5:5-6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4) and **who were seated on their thrones before God**, were seen by John as falling **on their faces** to worship **God**. Their song of praise indicates that the time had come for God to judge **the nations**, to judge **the dead**, and to reward God's **servants**.

God was described as the **Almighty** (*pantokratōr*; also used in 1:8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22), eternal (**who is and who was**; cf. 1:8; 4:8), and possessing **power** (*dynamis*) (11:17). In general their hymn of praise anticipates the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His rule on earth.

11:19. The chapter closes with another dramatic incident. John wrote, **Then God's temple in heaven was opened.** At the same time John was able to look into the **temple** where he saw **the ark of His covenant.** This refers to the heavenly temple rather than to a temple on earth. The corresponding results in the earth, however, included **lightning . . . thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm** (cf. 8:5).

The dramatic introduction of the events relating to the seventh trumpet concluded here and will be resumed in chapter 16. Chronologically the time was close to Christ's second coming.³

³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:955