

Revelation 11

The Church's Role in the Present Age

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The background of this chapter is the matter of the scroll. It had been in the very hand of God unapproachable and was received by Christ Who was worthy to open it. He has done so; all seven seals have been opened. In this vision the angel of Christ came to earth holding that scroll in John's sight (chapter 10). God commanded John to take it; the angel ordered John to eat it. But, if he is to eat it, as a prophet he is to speak it, and reveal its message to the churches. Note the Lord's words in the epilogue of the book: "*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you [John] about these things for the churches ...*" (22:16). The angel appeared to John with the scroll in chapter 10. So we naturally expect that what follows will show to us the content of that crucial and unique revelation. If this is so, and I think it is, then the seals and the trumpets in earlier chapters have provided background, but not the content of the scroll. Just as the vision in heaven (chapters 4 & 5) gave the foundational perspective on all reality, we now have opened to us God's strategy for taking away from the Evil One the kingdom of this world and making it the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. I hope 11:15 resonates in your minds and creates a stab of joy in your heart.

So far in the frightful judgments of the seals and trumpets, we have not seen any repentance in the human heart. The repeated "*did not repent*" of 9:20,21 shows the chief obstacle/resistance to the reign of Christ. We really ought to be convinced by the previous chapters in Revelation of the anti-God disposition of the heart of the unregenerate. Apart from regeneration depravity is the never ending condition of the human heart. Its default setting is "NO" to God. In regeneration the Holy Spirit changes the setting. Never think that God cannot or should not do that, as if it were a violation of the creature for the Creator to change the heart of the creature He made for His glory. We would all go to hell if God did not exercise His right to intervene as He chooses in our depraved hearts. Revelation is realistic about the nature of the natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14). Repentance is not natural to us.

Chapter 11 contains a striking parallel to chapter 7. There the servants of God were sealed and thereby identified as the Lord's. They, therefore, were immune from the wrath of God to be unleashed on the earth. After that, John saw the multitude in heaven which had experienced the trauma of the great tribulation, which is the wrath of the devil against the church. Revelation 7 joins together our spiritual safety and our physical danger. This contrast is repeated in chapter 11. Those measured in the temple were safe, but outside where the proclamation of God's message was proclaimed, the reaction of the population of the earth and the appearance of the beast spelled the death of the saints. They will be conquered. The other side will be allowed to indulge its devilish desires but only for a specific time (11:3), the 42 months in 13:5-8.

This Satanic activity, lest we miss it, plays into the hands of God by deliberate design and predestination. By being conquered, the saints conquer. They win in the cosmic conflict with no sword in their hands, but allowing the sword of sinners to take from them their lives. If their lives depend on not confessing Christ, they simply forfeit their lives. At the moment of death, they do not love their lives so as to take the one way available to preserve them – worshipping the beast (12:11; 13:15). We are getting ahead of ourselves slightly, but death for the Lord's people has come up already in 6:11 and it will be before us again in 11:7: "*...the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them*". This is the first mention of the beast. The prediction of those who are to be killed (6:11) is not simply prediction;

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it is the divine strategy, God's battle plan. The fight is on; Satan has been thrown down to earth. Chapter 12 enlarges on this.

What we might easily consider a tremendous setback, Revelation, by the opened scroll, now shows is the Lamb's victory. In God's wise design, Satan's moves backfire to trigger the loss of the kingdom he so greatly yearned to keep from Christ. We are dealing with very holy, very serious, and very delightful truths. These prophetic "things to come" appear to us wrapped in the imagery of this vision from God. These images grip our minds in a way more powerful than words alone. Revelation not only informs the intellect, it spawns within us our own visualization of the very things spoken *without showing us photographs*. This is the kind of apocalypse (1:1) that Revelation is. It stirs visualization in our minds from words alone without sensory visual input.

One feature that has not been seen before within Revelation is that in chapters 10 & 11 John does not simply report what he was seeing. At this point he participates in action within the vision. In chapter 10 he eats the scroll and measures the temple and the worshippers in it. Maybe that shows that what is before us in chapter 11 was not reserved for some distant time alone, because this participation by John indicates immediacy for the church in the very "*things that must soon take place*" (1:1).

11:1,2 In chapter 10 John was called to be a prophet. Quickly, chapter 11 will dwell on the prophesying done by others. That service for the Lord will provoke violent resistance, so before that is addressed, God's people need assurance. We need a decision as to what the temple is. There is an inside and outside here. Outside this temple, the nations will trample the holy city. There is something they can trample and something they cannot. If the nations can assault only what is outside, it is clear that the reverse is true: the inside is safe. It is like God saying of the raging of the ocean, "thus far and no farther". (Note Proverbs 8:9 & 29.) The measured temple is God's. The Most Holy Place was the location of His throne between the cherubim. The devil can no more attack the people of God in the Presence of God than he can attack God Himself (12:7-9). Our lives are securely hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-4). We cannot be destroyed as persons, but "the body they may kill" (from Luther's hymn; see also Matthew 10:28). Our status and inheritance are secure. No danger or sword can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39).

One place is safe. Satan is confined to the earth and the sea (12:12). "*And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*"

The measuring instruction in v.1 is odd. A measuring rod is normal, so is measuring a building or land, but measuring people with a stick is unexpected in the world outside a vision. The implication is that those who worship in it are as safe as the sanctuary itself. The height or width of these worshippers is irrelevant. What is decisive is whether they are in or out. That is the sense of their being measured.

In Revelation, both the temple and the holy city refer to the people of God. Frequently, we rely on Revelation 3:12 to grasp the imagery: "*The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*" The holy city, composed of redeemed people, is the Bride of the Lamb (21:9,10). Christ's bride is His human people. To change from

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the city metaphor, His church is the temple He is building (Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-6). In the vision of the New Jerusalem, there was no temple within the city, because the city and temple are two ways to refer to the dwelling place of the Lord. He is the temple of the New Jerusalem. The city was not only foursquare in length and width, because that same dimension was its height (21:16). This makes it a cube, just as it was with the Holy of Holies in 1 Kings 6:20. In Revelation it is clear that His city is His people. As in the epistles mentioned above, His temple is His people. When this is combined, with no mention at all of any physical temple in the epistles, we have little trouble interpreting 11:1,2. In one sense God's people are *in it*,¹ sheltered; in another sense as the holy city in the world, they are out there, exposed. That is an important distinction to maintain for an understanding of our time until the coming of Christ.

The significance of measuring, rather than simply counting² (as in the NIV), is that measuring indicates a right to a piece of property. There is much measuring of the Lord's Temple in Ezekiel 40-48. Note Ezekiel 45:1: "*When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set apart for the LORD a portion of the land as a holy district ...*" When 11:1 orders measuring the worshippers there, it communicates the possessiveness of God's claim. Not measuring the court is a way to show that something will be allowed outside the inner chamber of God's presence. Inside He shelters His untouchable people. Satan, ejected from heaven, has no access there (12:9,13). This apparent contradiction is not irrational. In one sense the devil can attack, but as persons they are also out of reach. Just as the seal in 7:2 meant that the people were marked as God's, the measuring in 11:1 means they stand within God's impregnable security zone.

In Zechariah 1:16 measuring showed the divine intention. In Zechariah 2:1-5 the analogy continues with a prophecy that Jerusalem will be inhabited and protected. The Lord will be to Jerusalem a wall of fire. Jewish believers hearing Revelation read in their churches in the time of John would recognize this prophetic comfort for the measured city.

Being sealed and measured indicate divine claim and ownership. Revelation employs multiple images for the same thing. Revelation uses other imagery when it picks up on Daniel 12:1: "... *But at that time [of trouble] your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.*" We find this in Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27. So the measuring of 11:1 sets a possessive boundary, just as the seal was God's Name on the forehead, and the book of life is an eternal book belonging to the Lamb Who was slain to save the persons named in that book. This includes their deliverance from all alien possession in the time of trouble (Daniel 12:1). In this faith we live and are quite ready to die. Nothing and no one can separate us.

11:2 The Trampling of the Holy City (holy city = holy people) is purposeful and limited in time. At this point a specific time is stated, plus the nations will *trample*. Note the word

¹ Both the ESV and the NIV end v.1 without saying *in it*. "... and count the worshippers *there*" (NIV), and "... those who worship *there*" (ESV). It would maintain a sharper distinction if these translations had stayed closer to the text with the two words *in* and *it*. This would support John's distinction of inside vs. outside. The imagery of location returns in 21:24-27. The throne of God is "in it" (22:3), the two words appearing again. This time the ESV does render them as "in it". This contrast being inside or kept *outside*, appears for the last time in 22:14,15. This repeated imagery should help us maintain the distinction of "in it" from "outside" in 11:1,2.

² The NIV says, "and *count* the worshippers there". The imagery of counting was used in Revelation 7. The Greek verb for *measure* is never used for counting elsewhere in the NT (though the noun can be used that way). With so much measuring of the city going on in Revelation 21:15-17 (city=bride=people), it would be better for the NIV to retain the language of measuring, so we might align the two texts as intended.

“trample” in Daniel 7:23; 8:7,10 & especially 13. “As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces” Daniel 7:23. In Revelation it is the holy city that is trampled. In Daniel 7:25 it is the saints who are oppressed “*He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.*” In Revelation 11:2, the trampling stretches for 42 months. Daniel has the trampling of the saints, and Revelation, the holy city. The two terms refer to the same entity. Daniel’s “a time” (one year) + “times” (two more years) + “half a time” = 3½ years is the same as 42 months x 30 days (in Revelation 11:2) and the 1260 days (in Revelation 11:3). (See below **The Impact of Daniel 7 on Revelation 11.**)

11:3-6 The Two Witnesses Revelation 11 now turns to what is going on *outside* the measured sanctuary. We already know that the scene will include trampled saints. We may be surprised that what we find at first is ineffective trampling by opponents of the church; the forceful resistance is not fully successful. The picture suddenly changes in 11:7 where the killing takes over without restraint. The world will view these witnesses as relentless and irritating losers, but in the end, losers. With their death it seems that Satan has won. Not so fast; God has a different plan. We come to that soon in Revelation 11. The nations do not simply trample the holy city, they *are given* (another divine passive) the opportunity to do so, and so they do. Likewise, the Lord *gives* two witnesses commissioned to speak for Him. This divine decision, of trampling and prophesying, means that the conflict is on. The Lord’s word to the devil in Genesis 3:15 is coming to a head, “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring ...*” This confrontation is between the multiplied offspring of the serpent, and the entire people of God who are the redeemed offspring of the woman. The battle, fought on opposite principles, will, according to Revelation 12, envelope the earth and sea because there is no other venue where the confrontation can take place. The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet are leaders of the evil side. What appears to be a testimony limited to two persons, is really the confronting ministry of God’s side. Later the imagery will change. It will become the climax of engaged conflict as the kings of the earth (and the armies they lead) are assembled by demons for the great battle on the great day of God the Almighty (16:13,14).

The Identity of the Two Witnesses

Those who do not read Revelation as apocalyptic literature interpret the two witnesses as a prediction about two specific individuals witnessing under divine protection for a literal period of 1260 days. Those days equal 42 months x 30 days. I am saying that both the witnesses and the time frame are symbolic.

The identity of the two witnesses depends largely on **Zechariah 4**. There we find one lampstand and two olive trees. The two olive trees are “the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (v.14). One is clearly Zerubbabel, whose power is God’s Spirit (v.6). Before Zerubbabel the great mountain would become a plain (v.7). He would finish building the temple. The other anointed one in Zechariah 3 is Joshua the high priest. In the presence of great Gentile power, these “two anointed ones” would effectively carry out the plan of the Lord. Men, weak in themselves, stand by the Lord of the whole earth. Zechariah gives some idea of the role of the two witnesses. Many say that Revelation 11 refers to Moses and Elijah. Because of similarity in ministry that interpretation has some reason for it, but that conclusion does not fit Zechariah 4.

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This is not the first mention of **lampstands** in Revelation. In the first vision in the book, Christ walks among the lampstands, and the lampstands are churches (1:12, 20), not individual Christians. The imagery of Revelation is consistent; the witnesses who appear in the vision as individuals represent the church. But there are two lampstands in Revelation 11, not seven. Seven is a way of showing that Christ walks among all His churches, but two is a fitting number to accent the role of the two as witnesses. They will prophesy (11:3) which means they speak for the Lord. In related texts: John bore witness to the word of God (1:2). Christ is the faithful and true witness (1:5; 3:14). Antipas was God's faithful witness who was killed (3:14). The martyrs were those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had given (6:9). The parallel reason for the deaths of the martyrs under the altar and the death of the two witnesses contributes to establishing the identity of the two in Revelation 11.

There is good reason **that the number is two** in the context of establishing valid testimony. It was very well known in Scripture (and in all execution of justice) that the testimony of one witness is insufficient as the basis of a judgment (Deuteronomy 19:15). There must be two or three. Two witnesses prophesying (11:3) on behalf of the Lord is consistent for their role.

In the parallel passage (13:7) the beast was *“allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.”* In 11:7 *“the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them.”* This is the same activity from the same source on the same people. In 11:2 the nations will trample the holy city. In Revelation the holy city is the full number of the bride of the Lamb. Then soon in chapter 11 we find it is the two witnesses who are being “trampled”, though trampled is not used. The text reverts to “conquer them and kill them”.

So, in light of all the factors above, these human lampstands who stood before the Lord of all the earth represent the witnessing church throughout all the earth.

Their prophesying covers **the same time frame** as in the vision of Daniel 7 where the little horn with the big mouth will wear out the saints over the symbolic period of 3½ years. This is the time stretching from the coming of the kingdom in the first coming to the time the kingdom of this world changes hands.

11:3 If the two witnesses are symbolic of the entire church of Christ, a view I accept, then we have a paragraph that shows the nature of our interaction with the world. The church speaks with the authority of God. Our task is to give the word of God. That involves calling for repentance. Sackcloth represents repentance. It is uncomfortable material to have next to our skin. The imagery of irritation allows no sense of comfort in sin. Like the anointed Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:6, the two witnesses are powerful in the Spirit of the Lord.

11:5,6 We come across a surprising statement in v.5: those who seek to harm the witnesses find themselves so harmed that they are killed. What they attempt to do to the witnesses comes back on them. The text sounds as if godly ministry contains an element of personal vengeance. Elijah once called down fire from heaven on a company of soldiers sent by the king of Israel against him (2 Kings 1). Elijah had opposed the king consorting with a false god. The issue was over who is truly God. The fire was from heaven; it was from God and came in the name of God according to the prophet. The more one looks at it, the more similar the other conflicts in the OT are with Revelation 11. The two witnesses were to give an unwelcome message. Opponents would eventually kill them, but only when their prophesying was complete. Before that no one could silence them.

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In the case of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord was like fire within the prophet (23:29). It was God's wrath that was like fire not Jeremiah's (4:4). Yet that word of the Lord was in the prophet's mouth. From his mouth words were like fire, which unlike a weapon in Jeremiah's hand, would consume those rejecting the word of the Lord (5:14). It was God, not Jeremiah, making His word a fire in Jeremiah's mouth; it was God consuming those who opposed the Lord Who spoke through His prophet. That is already in Scripture, and Revelation leans heavily on Old Testament precedence. The story of the church through the ages is that it has faced high resistance coupled with divine protection. Its people may die, but the message continues. Christian ministry is a two-edged sword. The word of God accepted gives life, but rejected it brings certain death (2 Corinthians 2:15,16). This conflict with sin is played out in Revelation 11.

Moses and Elijah as Models The Old Testament gives an account of fire consuming people who dared to oppose a prophet of the Lord. Those who knew the Old Testament would naturally think of Elijah. Elijah also announced the divine denial of rain (1Kings 17), another part of the story in Revelation 11. Then too these two witnesses can do what Moses did in Egypt. At the command of God, Moses struck the Nile and it turned to blood. This is part of the parable in Revelation 11. We do not have two Old Testament prophets back on earth doing the church's work for us. Note that both witnesses do the same things. Both have fire pouring from the mouth to devour; both turn off the rain; both turn the waters into blood, plus the other plagues. So things not said of each man in the Old Testament are part of the vision.

The view that these witnesses as identical to Moses and Elijah is accepted by many in our day, therefore more response is needed. John the Baptist was the Elijah of the time of the Lord on earth. John served in the spirit and power of Elijah, without being the historical person Elijah. The Old Testament spoke of remembering the law of Moses and, in the same context, predicted that God would send Elijah before the great and awesome day of the Lord (Malachi 4:4,5). The Lord said of John the Baptist, "*...if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come*" (Matthew 11:13,14). Obviously, we should not always insist on a literal reading of that OT promise in Malachi 4:5. One does not need to have the identity of Elijah to be an Elijah, because John the Baptist, as the fulfillment of Malachi's Elijah prophecy above, was not really Elijah! And John the Baptist said so in John 1:21.

The beast will conquer and kill the two witnesses (11:7). The word *conquer* is used of both sides. In the end, the conquering by both sides is total; it is not limited to two individuals being overwhelmed. 11:7 should be understood in light of Daniel 7:21 where the beast wars *with the saints*, all of them. The *saints* in Daniel 7 are the church. I am saying that these two lampstands are the witnessing church represented in this parable by two witnesses. When they are killed, the entire world gazes on their dead bodies. The testimony of the two was throughout the world, so there was worldwide rejoicing at their death, and worldwide amazement at their resurrection. They die in the great city (an expression for worldwide Babylon, always in contrast to the holy city, the New Jerusalem). That it is the city where their Lord was crucified shows the unity of opposition to Christ.

My conclusion: What we have is the total witness of the church presented as the ministry of two men. Their experience will be the experience of all. Their call to "Come up here!" is an intervention in history for all who are the Lord's, not just two. He is the One Who is, Who was, and Who is to come. His coming and His call to His murdered church happen together.

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**Confrontation dominates Revelation 11:1-13** The church's role is not passive. We do not give out the word of God only if asked for it, but we give it even though it irritates those to whom we speak. Our ministry is not designed to irritate or with a motive to torment; it is to speak for the Lord. Accepting God's message is eternal life! That it does irritate is due to the natural rebellion of the human heart. The call includes a call for repentance. They will "prophecy for 1260 days"... "during the days of their prophesying", they have power to do certain things. We should not miss that this is a window that will close. Representing Christ to an unbelieving world, and suffering for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, is a limited privilege. This opportunity will pass, never to return again.

We contend for a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17-19). Our gospel of peace holds out peace even to those far off and separate from Christ (Ephesians 2:17; 6:15). We strive for peace and holiness (Hebrews 12:14). The only sword on our side of the conflict is in the mouth of Christ (19:15); in our mouths is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. In Revelation no weapon appears in the hands of the followers of the Lamb. That is not how we overcome.

*"... 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..."* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

### The Impact of Daniel 7 on Revelation 11

"But do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months." (Revelation 11:2).

In Daniel 7 there is trampling going on (vv.19 & 23) by a Gentile nation. Eventually, a specific individual emerges within that nation. His ability to wear out the saints is limited to a time, times and half a time. This period of time is introduced in this verse. *"He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."* (Daniel 7:25) All three things (trampling, the time frame, and Gentile agency) are present in both Daniel and Revelation.

But there is a fourth, for it is the *saints* who are worn out. In Revelation, the city where Jesus died is never called *the holy city*. That term is reserved only for the New Jerusalem. The Jerusalem of unbelief (Galatians 4:25) is called "the great city" sharing this repugnant label with Babylon. (See 18:10.) When we see what it means to be "*given over to the nations*" and trampled, the correspondence of Daniel 7 and Revelation 11 increases. In Daniel the wicked king "*made war with the saints and prevailed over them*" (7:21). In the vocabulary of Revelation, he conquered them (13:7). To wear out the saints (Daniel 7:25) is to kill them (Revelation 13:15). The killing of Revelation 11 (of the two witnesses) is the same killing in chapter 13 (of the saints).

In Daniel 7 the other side seems to have the victory. But v.18 says the saints "*shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever...*" After they are trampled and worn out – words to indicate defeat – the Lord intervenes and the kingdoms ... shall be "*given to the people of the saints of the Most High*" (v.27). The defeated ones win.

All this fits in with the all-wise plan of God. When the court outside is given over to the nations, that is again the divine passive. It is God Who allowed them their temporary victory for His good reasons. This has come up before (6:11). So Gentile opposition for a specific time overwhelming the saints is all part of what earlier Scriptures affirmed; that was in the open. What was to remain sealed until the end times (Daniel 12:4) in the seven-sealed scroll must be different from what we see in Revelation 11:1,2. It is obviously related, and yet some new element has not yet been opened.

Daniel 12:7 fits in clearly now: *“And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.”*

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Getting from Here to There

There will be a great multitude clothed in white robes “from every nation, all tribes and peoples and languages” (7:9). In a very great contrast, Revelation also says *“the rest of mankind [who did not perish under the judgment of God]... did not repent”* (9:20). And *“those who dwell on earth”* (13:14) are deceived. This expression, *“those who dwell on earth”* is used as a label for unbelievers only. Universal language is used of those captive to Satan, yet Revelation assures us that *“All nations will come and worship you [the Lord]”* (15:4). And yet concerning all nations we read, *“For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living”* (18:3).

These are not contradictions, for while the conflicting statements speak of the nations on earth, the perspective and time are different. Revelation moves from here to there. The kings of the earth will mourn the destruction of Babylon (18:9,10). But in the end the tree of life is *“for the healing of the nations”* (22:2). At one time all these were the *“kingdom of this world”* and not the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (11:15). Eventually, the nations enter the holy city and eat of that tree of life bypassed by Adam and Eve. By then, they have washed their robes and gained through Christ the right to the tree of life (22:14). They forsook their idolatry for the true Lord God.

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.
(Revelation 21:23-27)

This shows that the nations have been wonderfully converted. The plot of Revelation moves from the here and now of deep darkness to a there and then of the light of the Lord. The change involves the nations, but we have not yet seen how this transformation happens. That begins in chapter 11. The answer is not given anywhere in Daniel 7, though it has themes similar to what we have seen in Revelation so far. There is another factor that comes from that open scroll. Of the

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moment of transition it says, “... *The rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven*” (11:13). But even that does not give the full picture. We must persist in our study of 11:11-13 to consider this awesome event, and then we must still consider the explanatory statements coming later in Revelation about HOW the saints conquer.

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**11:7-13** We move from the successful ministry of God’s prophets to the s reaction against it. The prophetic ministry was unstoppable extending throughout the timeframe of 1260 days, equal to the time of trampling in 11:2. This means while the trampling was happening, the prophesying continued. But when it was finished, the plan of the Lord was not to take His faithful servants from the scene, but that they should remain and die for the Lord. Revelation 6:11 is clear that God’s plan included more to be killed, and as such, it is from His wisdom. Whatever the Lord does is right. In advance we see or accept that by faith, even if we are confounded. In the end, we shall see God’s decision as the unfathomable wisdom of our Lord, pleased He never debased His majesty as God by seeking our unworthy counsel.

The instigator of this killing spree is the beast from the abyss. The abyss is the abode of demonic forces shown in the fifth trumpet (9:1-11). This is the first mention of the beast who will be the devilish alternative to our Lord Jesus Christ. He emerges from the sea with all the characteristics of his master the devil (13:1). Revelation never uses the label *Anti-Christ*, preferring instead the language of Daniel and his vision of a devouring *beast* in Daniel 7:23. The beast is the blasphemous king of Daniel 8:23-26, presented as the destroyer of “*people who are the saints*” (Daniel 8:24).

Opposite successes are set before us: one of faithful ministry and the other of diabolical reaction. God has ordained this diabolical success, and allows the wicked their little party, but one ever so brief. It appears that they have the last laugh. The symbolic three and one half years of prophetic preaching is followed by rejoicing of a mere three and one half days. To keep the contrast sharp, the terminology is that the beast will *conquer* the witnesses. Different kinds of conquering will occur simultaneously: the killing by the beast and the faithful allegiance to the Lamb, preferring death to worshipping to the beast. Allegiance to Christ is conquering.

Satan’s true colors now show. His consuming hatred for Christ extends to all those who are His (John 15:18-21). That is, to all who are Christ’s, not just two individuals.<sup>3</sup> With contempt they leave their bodies uncovered in the open that people might gawk and celebrate. They have no sense that very suddenly their party will be over.

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<sup>3</sup> This is another passage where there is some danger that the pre-tribulational rapture view *could be* desirable as escapism from danger, and worse as escapism from evangelism. If the great multitude in 7:9-17 is converted entirely by Jewish evangelists after the rapture, then it is not done by us. I reply that the job gets done by a faithful church. Here in Revelation 11, it is two men only who take on the world as prophets. Then too, some dispensationalists have an angel literally flying above the earth proclaiming the gospel (14:6,7). At times the problem is a failure to understand apocalyptic, and other times it is from teaching that there are two people of God (Israel and the church) not one. In all three cases evangelism is successful only through others. This could mean that we do not need to be serious. I say that avoidance of duty has possible support *in the view*. Dispensationalism has no place for the church in the culmination of the battle on earth. They believe the church is removed (raptured) at the outset of this final conflict, and that the Lord’s loyal agents on earth are others, not “us”. Yet every dispensational brother who is a true believer will stand firm when it happens and not buckle to the pressure of the beast. We may not all have the same viewpoint now, but within the body of Christ there will be a godly unity.

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**11:8** The great city is called Sodom, because, historically, that is the classic example of moral corruption. Isaiah calls Jerusalem “Sodom” in Isaiah 1:10. It is also Egypt, because that nation was the first national persecutor of the people of God. It is the city where their Lord was crucified. The literal Jerusalem in New Testament times rejected the gospel, and here it serves symbolically to enhance the parallel between the sacrifice of Christ in the great city and the witnesses laying down their lives in the same city in its opposition to the city of God.

**11:9** The repeated scope of earth’s population appears again: peoples, tribes, languages and nations. This is the world, the prize for which each side strives, and Christ shall win. A great multitude will come from the population of earth, but at this point in chapter 11, it appears that the witnesses with divine authority (11:3) are facing irreversible rejection. The reaction to their ministry is a repudiation of the Lord Who commissioned them. When it comes to the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, all we can see when the world dances around the corpses of the godly is that the Lord’s attempts have turned into utter failure. The devil wins; God is defeated; He cannot take man, the jewel of our creation, away from the devil. Or so it appears, while the merriment of God-haters fills the rafters. However, let it be known that God does not take lightly the loss of His glory as God, as Creator, as Redeemer, and as reigning Lord. The divine reaction is about to be shown by the One Who is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). The testimony of the witnesses is finished; God is not.

**11:10** *Those who dwell on the earth* is a phrase used twice here. Within Revelation, it is always used as a description of those who side with Satan against the Lord. With such a pervasive consensus against the Lord, Revelation gives the sense of the world’s universal rejection. The Lord intended this as the prelude to the greatest spiritual turnaround there will ever be. What God has in mind is that all who dwell on earth shall be worshippers of the true and living God.

In Esther 9 the Jews slaughtered their enemies and celebrated with a day of feasting and gladness and sent food as gifts to one another. Here the godless do a similar thing, but the occasion in Esther was a celebration of God’s deliverance. That deliverance is about to be the subject of Revelation 11. The world’s party is over.

The prophetic message *tormented* the world. The law of God is written on the hearts of men, so when it is declared in the ear it stirs an unwelcome sense of guilt. The world wants that message turned off. They say it *torments* them. They prefer peace by removing the disturbers of their guilty consciences. The witnesses demand repentance and seeking from God forgiveness and cleansing in the blood of Christ. Those who dwell on the earth have a different program for the kind of peace they desire – simply murder the messengers.

**11:11,12** It is God’s turn to show His mighty strength.

**Grace** But first, consider that the promise of God is that all who receive Jesus Christ gain because of Him the entire package of benefits. This includes eternal life and an everlasting resurrection. The principle on which all divine benefits comes to us sinners is the grace of God. God’s grace is loving grace, thus the Lord Jesus prayed, “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*” (John 17:24). The loud cry of 6:10 is always before the Lord. Now that the complete number of those who were to be killed (6:11) has been reached, it is God’s moment to show His care for His own.

**Vindication** There is another angle in considering the resurrection of the saints. Repeatedly in the book of Acts the apostles charged their countrymen this way: You killed Him, but God raised Him. (See Acts 2:23,24; 3:15; & 5:30.) Peter was arguing in Acts that the resurrection of Christ was a matter of divine justice. It would be wrong for that obedient Servant to be left in His grave. In the case of Christ, His was a resurrection fully deserved. It was therefore not a matter of grace, but pure justice. In our case, every benefit we ever receive is gracious without exception. In Revelation 11 more than one feature of God's holy ways comes into play. If anyone serves the Lord, the Father will honor him (John 12:26). God has declared, "*Those who honor me I will honor*" (1 Samuel 2:30). How long will God restrain Himself when His witnesses served Him faithfully and were rewarded with death and contempt?

Just as He made the time of the Lord Jesus' body in the grave to be brief, the raising of the witnesses comes with similar timing. The parallel continues; Christ ascended into heaven to the Father's welcome, and the honor of being seated at the Father's right hand. We might argue in a colloquial way that God is like that, for He is. The passion of God to vindicate His witnesses now comes into full view. There is nothing half-hearted about it. His witnesses are raised immediately and publicly. This is a message to the world by a miraculous deed. This is an awesome vindication, for this is God's policy (Isaiah 50:7-9). It is also a matter of justice, as it says in Hebrews 6:10, "... *God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name ...*" The rejoicing in their death was widespread, so this resurrection was as observable worldwide as their death.

**The Ultimate Combatants** There is another element here that we must not overlook. All that has happened in Revelation 11 – powerful prophetic ministry, unrestrained murder, the world's consummate rejection of God, followed by widespread glorying in sin – all this is the cosmic conflict coming to a climax. This is clear in Revelation 12 and later chapters. Remember that it was the beast who killed the witnesses. Satan is going all out. He knows his time is short. He cannot keep his devilish agenda out of sight by acting as formerly through human intermediaries so his hand would not be observed. It is all out in the open. The church has been wasted; the saints have been trampled (Daniel 7). They have been conquered. The beast is being openly worshipped as God. And God has chosen that it be this way. The pus in this worldwide boil is about to be squeezed and the earth cleansed. He said concerning His people, "*If anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain*" (13:10). That has now happened. The challenge in the very face of God is so defiant that it provokes His devastating response. Note the wrath of God in Psalm 2:5. The time has come for God to terrify. At that hour there was a great earthquake (11:13). People were killed in this judgment, and the church was raised to life. The church was taken up to heaven in a cloud. Their enemies saw all of this. Because of it, it became impossible to maintain any rational allegiance to the farce of 13:4, "... *Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?*" Well, God can fight against the beast. In a flash Satan's charade is shown to be utterly false. His power is broken. The beast is helpless before the power of God. Those the beast killed do not stay dead, but are raised by God and removed from further distress. It is idiotic to continue to say "who can fight against the beast!" In one act of vindication for those slain 3½ days earlier, God has exposed the great deceit. What can Satan do in response to this? How can he hold people in his grip when God has publicly reversed all that he could do against the witnesses? The devil's sword is broken. He lost the battle in heaven, and was *thrown down* (12:9). Now he has lost the battle on earth. His great assault against Christ through Judas was to have the Son crucified. Three days later it was clear that the devil's victory was short-lived. The movement of God against him was unstoppable. In Revelation 11:13 the supremacy of God suddenly becomes clear to the world.

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In an eternal covenant, the Father said to the Son, *“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession”* (Psalm 2:8). Well here are the peoples, and tribes, and languages, and nations (11:9). They were dancing in joy around the corpses of God’s chosen and faithful people. The beast they worshipped has now been exposed; the power of Satan has been vanquished, God brings *“the rest”* to fear Him. Naturally they would be terrified, but the big picture is that the united kingdom of the world under the beast was always the property of God which He had promised as a deserved gift to the Son. This is the moment it will be delivered to Him. Dagan has fallen face down before the ark of the Lord! (1 Samuel 5).

*“The rest”* in 11:13 constitutes a vast multitude no man can number. It is the opposite of *“the rest”* in 9:20,21 who do not repent. In 11:13 they are brought to an appropriate fear, when earlier there was no repentance. They then do what no idolater will do, they give glory to God: *“and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.”* The witnesses held out the testimony of Jesus. Now by the Holy Spirit, the massive number of survivors say that Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3).

This brings us to a weighty debate on how to interpret this response of “the rest”. This is unavoidable if we are to follow the plot of Revelation. Is the fear a natural fear out of self-preservation because they were scared silly? And then giving glory to God was not a matter of a changed heart genuinely giving glory to God? The God who knocked Saul of Tarsus off his horse (if he was on one) with his face in the dirt, is the Lord at work here. How we understand 11:13 is greatly debated.

I take the flow of Revelation to be a major factor in interpreting this passage. As already said, we have *the rest* not repenting and now *the rest* give glory to God. In chapter 16 the final judgment is presented with no interlude after bowl six, and no indication of God’s judgment having any restraint. That is no fraction like one quarter and one third, as was the case respectively with the seals and trumpets. Another very notable feature in chapter 16 is the response of the wicked to the final judgment. There is not a sniff of glory to God. *“And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe”* (16:21). Glorifying has been replaced by cursing.

And so I understand that the nations have been snatched from the devil and his loathsome beast. The unnumbered multitude of Revelation 7 has finally been converted. Four things seized their attention.

1. The saints conquered the beast by the *“by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death”* (12:11). They had a message which was communicated throughout the world, and their certainty of its truth was plain for all to see. In that certainty they died.
2. The quick resurrection of the martyrs, a sudden reversal, seen by the world.
3. Their being called up to heaven.
4. Then combine that closely in time with the divine judgment universally observed. That so many survived it is a surprise. Here was a great earthquake with only a tenth of the city falling with only 7000 souls killed – amazing!

Other mentions of a *great* earthquake in Revelation are in the context of final judgment (6:12 & 16:18). This is no mere foretaste of the end. It is the climax where God had delayed and then turned all that His enemy has lied for on its head. Satan will never be able in his everlasting agony to rejoice that at least he has kept the world from Christ. No indeed, for he loses it and

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Christ has the nations. This was the Father's promise in Psalm 2, and this great turnaround is prophesied in many places. In what appears to be a contradictory stroke, God saves as the martyrs in death conquer in a testimonial sense by the blood of the Lamb. By the blood of the Lamb God saves, in an atoning sense, all whose names are written in the book of life. And that is a vast number. Clearly as the seventh trumpet is about to sound (note 11:14,15), the angel's words show what is about to happen: "... *in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets*" (10:7). The seventh trumpet brings news that the conversion of the nations has happened. This is nothing less than "*the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ ...*" (11:15). By this we understand what happened in 11:13. The words of the 24 elders concur; they praise the Lord for things that have happened, expressed naturally in the past tense:

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. (18) The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

Note in 11:18 that God's servants, prophets, and saints are joined by "*those who fear your name*". Those are "the rest" mentioned in 11:13, whose conversion is reported to us by their fear and their glorifying the God of heaven. Within Revelation to speak of these God-fearers as comprising "*both small and great*" (11:18) is sweeping language to encompass all who are small and great, and everyone in between. See 6:15 where the range is from great ones to slaves. Small and great is a form of universal language in 13:16. 19:5 has "*You who fear him, both small and great*". In that statement the "*small and great*" describes all of His servants. We should not miss the repeated occurrences within Revelation of a group who have God-respecting fear. 11:13 should be interpreted with this in mind.

When Revelation shows universal rebellion and universal salvation (both are there!), we know it is moving from one to the other. By stating it in such sweeping terms, it highlights the grandeur of God's saving intervention in human history. It goes from deepest black to blinding light. Now we ought to ask, "Where is the great transition from one to the other?" If 11:13 is not it, what is? It seems to me that the storyline of Revelation requires some point of transition, be it ever so modest. The great turnaround is referred to in 14:14-16, and 15:4, but 11:13 gives it a setting, reporting it as an event. I take the murder in 11:7 to be the killing that fulfills the complete number to be slain (predicted in 6:11). In Revelation 13:7 this same thing is the killing of the saints. Revelation 11 has a reversal from their murder to the blessing of the resurrection and ascent of the two witnesses (11:11,12). Then, in my opinion, we should read this as a time for reversals, not only for the saints, but also for the rest of the number God had in mind to save. Their names were eternally located in the book of life. It was the Lord Who put them there. With the beneficial display of judgment on others, God gives "the rest" proper fear. By resurrecting the saints He amazes and brings them to glorify the God of heaven. In a chapter like Revelation 11, we must not fail to take into account the oral evangelistic testimony of the witnesses, which remained in the minds of those seeing their resurrection.

### Other Evidence to Support this Interpretation

The language “*the God of Heaven*” was frequently used in the Old Testament when the context included a situation where there are non-Israelites who did not know the God of Israel. (Examples are: Ezra 1:2, Daniel 2:18,19.)

The fear/glorify combination is used in 15:4 to say that this is exactly what has happened with the nations: “*Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*” This is a powerful support when what happened in 11:13 is precisely fear turned to glorification of the God of heaven.

Three angels appear with messages in chapter 14. This is apocalyptic literature, not a prediction of how the conversion of the nations will come historically. The first angel “*said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water’*” (14:7). What God called for in 14:7 is what He received in 11:13.

The mighty angel of chapter 10 announced before the scroll was eaten “*that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets*” (10:7). That mystery includes the nations coming to Christ just as Isaiah 49:6 makes clear. A specific time has been promised. According to 10:7, we cannot move beyond Revelation’s presentation of the seventh trumpet without this key element in place. So before the angel sounded the seventh trumpet, 11:13 shows that the nations have come. The angelic announcement requires that this mystery of massive conversion must be included, because without it the mystery of God cannot be fulfilled. As the text moves on, it reports as fact that the kingdom of the world has [already] become the kingdom of God. Note the past tense in 11:15. It is therefore very relevant that 11:13 immediately precedes the seventh trumpet. 11:13 and 11:15 are saying the same thing.

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Dr. Dennis E. Johnson, another PCA minister, a professor at Westminster Seminary California disagrees with the explanation of 11:13 which I have adopted under the influence of Dr. Richard Bauckham. Johnson rejects any interpretation which allows for a “postresurrection period in which God offers sinners further opportunity to repent” (p.175). Surprisingly, I would agree with that, because a postresurrection period is not what I am trying to defend. My readers should know that Dr. Johnson is a scholar and I am not. I have benefitted greatly from his writing, and I recommend it unreservedly.

Revelation 11:13 appears in an apocalyptic vision, and that means there is a certain fluidity of events. Elsewhere I have listed the various “events” which show how Babylon is destroyed.⁴ It could not really happen all those ways in life outside the vision. We should not even try to make all the images of Babylon’s destruction fit together. It is enough for the events (events in a vision, not historical events) to create a sense of what God is doing, without it being interpreted as predicting a chronology. The “*come up here*” can be as non-literal as the imagery of God riding

⁴ This appears in a paper titled “Revelation 20, Why not Premill?” p.4. I have added that page at the end of these notes as a temporary appendix.

a cloud. This may be a figurative way to show the active intervention of God to vindicate His people. (Note the first half of Psalm 18.) I accept the view that the text portrays vindication without showing just how that happens in the events of history. Sudden divine action reversing the evil of the nations is how the Lord convinces them of the falseness of their idols, the reality of His sovereign power, and the truth the witnesses spoke. If we were interpreting a text like 11:13 outside an apocalyptic passage, we could not handle it as I suggest.

On p. 176, Johnson says,

It seems most consistent ... to see the witnesses' resurrection as portraying the bodily resurrection of all who belong to Christ's true church by faith at his return, accompanied by the great earthquake of judgment that will compel fear-filled praise even from God's enemies (see Phil. 2:9-11). Just as the vision genre sometimes compresses vast historical eons ... so also a split-second in time may be expanded in visionary description and simultaneous climactic events presented as successive, in order to help hearers to see different facets of Christ's victory.

I do not mean to ridicule this attempt to provide an explanation of a challenging and surprising text. The idea of "fear-filled praise" is hardly in accord with the other reactions to divine judgment found in chapters 9 and 16. Further, I can only wonder if there any example in apocalyptic literature of expanding into successive events things that actually occur simultaneously. There may be; I do not know. The "split second" does not carry much weight when the mystery of God is to be fulfilled "*in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel*" (10:7). This is the only trumpet of the seven to give the leeway of days. A split second does not fit with days. It seems to me that the explanation is as difficult as the position he rejects, and it does not conclude from the flow of the narrative within Revelation. I daresay that this text is one which will receive much attention in days to come. May the Lord help us and bless the teaching ministry of Dennis Johnson.

Appendix 11A: God's Ways vs. A Way More Agreeable to Us

No Christian hearing Revelation read would fail to notice how parallel the experience of the martyrs is in chapter 11 to the passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. In Revelation this is deliberate; it is even meant to be instructive, showing to us how God will accomplish salvation for the nations through our death. In vv.7-12 we have a public repudiation of the witnesses' ministry, a public death, an observed resurrection after 3½ days, and a worldwide view of their ascension. Our Lord endured public rejection of Himself and His word. His own disowned Him throughout His ministry. The message is that the denial of Christ is the kind of response that will come to our message. In other words, we will share with Him the same repudiation. The Lord explicitly taught this (John 15:18-21; 16:2,3). Furthermore, this kind of reaction extends to physical death. The Lord said,

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." ... "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the

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Father and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:22-26). “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

The resurrection was not after 3 days, but on the third day. The 3½ days is used to contrast with the 3½ years of rejection. Unlike 11:11 the raising of Jesus by the Father was not observed by any human eye. No unbeliever ever saw the Lord after He was laid in the tomb. His humiliation was over; therefore no rejecter of Christ was allowed to see Him. Their next view of Christ will not be until His second coming (6:16,17 & Matthew 26:64). The Lord ascended to the welcome of the Father and all heaven with Him (Psalm 24). That was a tremendous vindication. Peter taught this same sequence and model of ministry. We are witnesses of “the sufferings of Christ”. We are also partakers in “the glory that is going to be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1; suffering and glory are repeated in that chapter). Revelation 11 is leading us to expect great benefit for those to whom we bear witness, and divine intervention and eternal kindness to all who endure shame and bloodshed for His holy Name. In Matthew 10 the faithful are assured of the Lord’s personal affirmation. In Revelation 7:14-17 the comfort is not through the agency of an angel; it is directly delivered by God Himself to His children.

The idea of suffering in general and especially going through the Great Tribulation is resisted by a comfortable and lethargic church. That a great multitude who belong to the Lord will face such a thing is clear in 7:14. Many evangelicals do not want to be one of “*the ones coming out of the great tribulation.*” (Note Hebrews 10:32-39). Without understanding Peter said to Christ of the coming cross, “*Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you*” (Matthew 16:22). In the next verse the Lord sternly rejected Peter’s counsel. Today the mood is, “Far be it from us!” There is more than one way to treat the cross as folly (1 Corinthians 1:18). Beware lest the Lord declare of us: “Your ways are not my ways; my ways are higher than yours” (deduced from Isaiah 55:8,9). Very close to the day of His passion the Lord gave the essence of Revelation 11:7-12 in different words:

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:23-26).

11:14 This brief note that the second woe (the sixth trumpet) has passed, and that the next one is imminent, would be a help to those hearing Revelation read to them (1:3). When we read the next woe (the seventh trumpet), it makes us wonder why it is called a woe. It speaks of the end, and while that includes the kingdom being snatched from Satan, it remains that God’s wrath is not fully unleashed and the dead finally judged until the third woe (11:18). The content of the remaining woe is dominated by triumph, but only from the perspective of the Lord’s people.

11:15 The seventh trumpet has finally been blown. No seal and no other trumpet had such a high buildup as we have in this last trumpet. This is similar to another seventh trumpet when Israel marched around Jericho and the city fell. There were words about what would happen (Joshua 6:2,3), not empty words, but God’s words, words that preceded action. Then came fulfillment (Joshua 6:16-20). Likewise, the predictions of 10:7 come in advance of the seventh trumpet in Revelation.

The loud voices show immense joy. The world cheers at trivia whether a touchdown, a homerun, a sale, or victory at the polls. The saints and angels cheer the long awaited victory of God. The world has changed hands. The context will not allow this to be understood as just the punishment of the wicked and vindication of the saints. Stated that way it could simply be punishment without any salvation. Revelation shows a loss of the kingdom by it *becoming* the kingdom of our Lord. This is not a change limited to the improvement retribution brings, but a change of ownership. The right Lord reigns. His anointed Son reigns with Him, as in 22:1. There shall be no more opposition, and the reigning of Christ shall be without break and without any contesting enemy forever and ever. The lovely prediction shall be fulfilled in every detail: *“And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:14).

11:16-18 I have concluded that the 24 elders are angels. (See the notes on Revelation 4 & 5.) One way the angelic hosts of heaven worship God is by following His decisions and actions in the battleground we call earth. God’s actions are simply His decisions implemented. Angels do not worship because of their salvation but because of ours. Simply to be created to be allowed to know God and observe His wonders in creation and redemption satisfies these grateful and glorious creatures. Their worship is not just that of wondering beings, but of thankful persons. How can they be thankful for something in which they are not direct beneficiaries? It is because they love God and want to see all things subject to Him, so they can all get back to normal, and that comes when sin is removed from the earth. In this way their large desire is fulfilled.

When they say, *“Who is and who was,”* they have not forgotten to add “who is to come”. In the seventh trumpet that Lord has come. The longed for takeover has happened. The Lord God Almighty has used His great power to effect the changes they yearned to see. They need say no more, “Thy kingdom come,” for here it is.

Increasingly today in theological circles it is better understood that the kingdom has come in the first coming of Christ in the sense of the reign of Christ over His own. That is a powerful, widespread, and advancing kingdom. God has always ruled in the providential control of earth which He never relinquished for a moment, as seen in Psalm 97:1 & 99:1. This beginning to reign in 11:17 is the ultimate taking back of all creation, with nothing opposed to His will remaining. His will done on earth will be fully consistent with His reign in heaven.

These capable and informed observers of history now give their review and summary: Yes, the nations raged, a situation reduced to a bad memory, because His wrath once restrained, was held back no more but unleashed on the unrepentant. This will be elaborated later in the seven bowls of chapter 16, the destruction of Babylon, the consuming fire from heaven (20:9), the removal of the evil three (dragon, beast and false prophet), and the great white throne. The angels praise from the stance of all this judgment as justice implemented. The wrath came, the dead are judged. There really is a woe in the third woe. The destroyers of the earth will themselves be destroyed. This includes the angel king of the abyss whose name is *Destruction*. The vacuum cleaner of divine judgment is cleansing the earth.

God’s replacement of rebels and rebellion switches to His faithful servants being rewarded. Possibly *“servants, the prophets and saints”* are two sets. All saints and prophets are servants. (This is debatable if Revelation has *servants* as another label for prophets). Not all saints are prophets, so the word “saints” includes all, while prophets are chosen spokesman specially called to minister the Word. The point is that all have suffered, and now all are being rewarded for their

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faithfulness. Their works follow them (14:13), and so do their rewards (22:12). We have seen how those who fear God's name are true believers. Of that there is no doubt in this verse (11:18). And these who have come to fear the Lord are the entire people of God from the small to the great.

Four times in Revelation we find a kind of thunderstorm to express the majestic presence of God. Each mention has an increase over the previous one:

4:5 has the first three elements

8:5 adds an earthquake

11:19 adds hail,

16:18-21 adds both the greatness of the earthquake, and the weight of the hail.

Such imagery shows the power of God, His authority and control, and that He is not passive, but One Who exerts His will to produce what He pleases. With good reason, some call this a "storm theophany". (See Psalm 29.)

For heaven to be opened so that the Ark of the Covenant was visible is a scene that spells death for sinners (22:12), or divine reconciliation to them. In the OT anyone even looking into the most holy place which contained the ark would die. One man died because he sought to balance it from falling (2 Samuel 6). The high priest approaching that ark of the covenant had to have the smoke of burning incense hide his view of the Lord God Who sat between the cherubim; if not he would die (Leviticus 16:13). But when there is reconciliation, and when all sin is removed from His people, then the opened sanctuary expresses the glory of God and man accepted into His fellowship again, just as it was before our first parents sinned. 11:19 comes as the tail of the seventh trumpet. That is the end, the time when the wicked are judged and God's people rewarded (11:18). The open temple is the new setting of the Lord's people forever. This like Revelation 21,22 is another scene of the goal to which Revelation is moving; except this one is shown to us in the middle of the book. The seals and trumpets have now reached their final point. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord (11:15). We cannot be satisfied with anything less. Revelation ends with heaven opened and the tabernacle of God with man (21:3).

Because Revelation has reached its high point and goal in 11:19, it will proceed next to another cycle. When we turn the page to chapter 12 we find a different perspective, showing more material Christ ordered to be transmitted to the churches. Revelation moves back from a vision of the kingdom consummated (11:15) to the beginning of the conflict which began in heaven and later enveloped the earth. Here comes the sin in which we were born, the serpent who sought to take God's place, the hatred of Christ, the relentless assault against the Lord's people on earth (earth only), and all enmity overcome by the saving intervention of the Lamb Who shed His blood for us (12:11).

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### **A Temporary Appendix which will not remain at this location in my Revelation Notes (see footnote 4, p.14)**

Teachers who affirm the premillennial order of events never (to my knowledge) view the seven bowls (resulting in the seven plagues) as having reference to anything after Revelation 19. This becomes another difficulty for the premillennial position, because if the seven bowls *complete* the wrath of God, but do not refer to events after the Second Coming, how can the devouring fire of Revelation 20 be the completion of God's wrath in history if it is 1000 years after the Lord's Coming? The outpouring of

the seven bowls preceded the Second Coming of Revelation 19, therefore, it cannot have another completion 1000 years later. The wrath of God may appear many times, but it is not finalized over and over. Then, lest we miss it, at the seventh and last bowl a voice from the throne says, “*It is done!*” (16:17). So the seven bowls complete God’s wrath, and at the seventh bowl it is done.

**Recapitulation Is the Explanation** It is held by pre-millennial teachers that Revelation 19 is a kind of narrative followed in chapter 20 by things to happen afterwards. I am saying that Revelation 20 comes back to the one battle reported in chapter 19. It is recapitulation, a going over the event again from a different angle. Recapitulation is not foreign to Revelation; in fact, it is typical of it. Here is an example to track, one with no controversy attached to it among evangelicals.

**The various pictures of the fall of Babylon** This is a recurring theme appearing in a number of visions. In 14:8 an angel says, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great...” That is an announcement that it has happened. Then Revelation 16:19, as part of the seventh bowl and as part of a different vision, describes God giving Babylon the cup of His wrath. This is in the context of God’s announcement “It is done!” (16:17). That sure looks like recapitulation. But then a new vision in chapter 17, with John being carried off in the Spirit into the desert, Babylon is the harlot on the beast. Within chapter 17 she (i.e., Babylon) is destroyed (17:16). Then in Revelation 18, yet another recapitulation occurs. It follows the picture of Babylon’s demise in the teeth of the beast in chapter 17. Next Babylon is consumed by fire from God (18:8); her smoke rises forever (19:3). Within that vision her end is like a millstone taking her to the bottom of the sea (19:21). The last mention of Babylon returns to the imagery of smoke rising without being extinguished (19:3).

Someone might say, “But look how different they are; these must be different events!” The visions vary with Babylon destroyed by God on one hand and by the beast on the other, yet the various pictures are of one thing, the fall of Babylon. Babylon does not fall over and over.

- Babylon has fallen, a simple announcement in 14:8;
- Babylon drinks the cup of wrath from God; Babylon does the drinking (16:19).
- But then she is consumed by the beast; Babylon is the one eaten (17:16);
- Then in the last vision of her judgment, Babylon is destroyed by fire (18:8,9).

This example of recapitulation is not strained. The words that open Revelation 20, “*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven*” are virtually identical to Revelation 18:1 “*After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven.*” In both cases Revelation begins a new vision, yet what follows 18:1 is not later than the events in chapter 17. The premillennial argument, that Revelation 20 is a sequential continuation of the narrative in which the 1000 years follow the Second Coming in time, overlooks how Revelation recapitulates. If Revelation 18, using the same introductory words, can bring up the same event as chapter 17, Revelation 20 can do the same.

**And the point of all this is:** Babylon will not be destroyed again and again. Revelation simply repeats the same judgment with a variety of images. Those different visions focus on an event so crucial it needs repetition. Revelation recapitulates. It is incumbent upon us to consider that the battle (or in some translations the *war*), is the one battle of Revelation 16, 19, & 20, an event returned to in different visions. Note too that the different visions may even appear to be contradictory. Was it God’s wrath or the beast’s hostility that destroyed Babylon? It was both. By turning the page to Revelation 20 after we have read of the Second Coming in chapter 19, we have not necessarily turned to a later event.