

Can I Get a Witness?

The Two Witnesses of Revelation

Revelation 11:1 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,

² 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.

³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

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

⁵ And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed.

⁶ They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

⁷ And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,

⁸ and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

⁹ For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,

¹⁰ and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

¹¹ But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.

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

(Revelation 11:1-13)

Can I Get a Witness?

Many years ago, Marvin Gaye and the Rolling Stones both sang versions of a song that I've heard many times—on oldies stations! The chorus goes, "[Can I get a witness?](#)" Since it was running through my head, I started to wonder what the rest of the song was about, because I never really listened to it. [At first, I couldn't figure it out.](#) I had to read the lyrics a couple of times. I found that in the first verse, I had to make sure I read them right. I wasn't doing that. I read it as if it was about a man who treated his girl bad, and the singer was in love with her watching it. Then I realized,

I really got that wrong. It's about *his* love gone bad. His woman done treated him wrong. “**Listen up,**” he begins. “**Everybody knows, especially you girls, Love can be sad. But I have a love that's twice as bad ... Can I get a witness!**”

The song's catchy chorus comes straight out of the American black church (the song's writers all came out of this), both in its old-times Gospel style and in its central lyric. When the preacher has made a point that he wants people to remember, he calls for a witness. “**Can I get a witness?**” His request is often met with “Amen!” One time a friend told me that hopefully it isn't met with, “**Lord, help him!**”

This idea that getting a witness comes out of **a church setting** is interesting, because the Bible talks about this. The most important thing to say about this today is that **witnesses are legal representatives**. Moses gives the law: “**On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness**” (**Dt 17:6**). If someone has done something wrong, impartial witnesses are to be brought to discover the truth of a matter and to establish a legal and binding authority for punishment if needed.¹

¹ **Going Deeper:** Matthew 18 gives a NT application in a church setting. If a brother sins against you, you are to go and tell him his fault, alone. Just the two of you. If he listens, then

God actually sends two witnesses like these on several occasions. He sent Enoch (Gen 5:23; Jude 14-15) and Noah (Gen 6:8; Heb 11:7) to testify against the world prior to the Flood. He sent two angelic witnesses to visit Sodom (Gen 19:1) prior to destroying it. He sent Moses and Aaron to witnesses against Egypt prior to its judgment (Ex 5:1). (Both Sodom and Egypt appear in our passage today!) He has Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim stand at witnesses against Israel for when they break the covenant (Dt 11:29; 27:4). Heaven and earth are witnesses against Israel (Dt 30:19). Importantly for our Joshua typology, he sent two spies to Jericho prior to its destruction (Josh 2:1).² Just after this, Joshua had the people go up on the two mountains to yell the covenant to one another as witnesses (8:30-35).³ He sent John the Baptist and Jesus, two great lights (John 5:35; 8:12), to expose the darkness of Israel. Again, we will see two lamps in our

the matter is settled, and reconciliation has happened the best way possible. But if he will not listen, “Take one of two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses” (Matt 18:16). This is not referring to bringing your two best friends along who will only take your side of the story. Consider Jezebel who sent two evil witnesses to lie about Naboth which ends up getting him killed so that Ahab could steal his vineyard (1Kg 21:10). The point of the witnesses is to bring about reconciliation, just like the point of going alone the first round was. The witnesses are to try to establish the truth of the matter. They are legal representatives to bring about justice. As someone therefore says, “A thorough investigation of the matter merits the finding of true witnesses to approach the accused.” (Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21:9, Revised*, vol. 6A, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2001], 370.)

² We will look at this typology much more next time (pick up the ark in vs. 19 and the two spies).

³ Similarly, Jesus had a mountain of beatitude/blessing (Mt 5:1) and a mountain of curses/woe (Mt 24:3-4). Gage makes his observation.

passage today. All of this is relevant to Rev 20, but perhaps the most relevant is, as Gage says, “How awesome is the justice of God! His judgment is always preceded by his messengers of mercy!”⁴

For our passage, I want to begin with a word from Gentry. He says, “Before engaging this section, the reader should understand that we are entering a part of Revelation which is ‘universally recognized’ (Mounce 211) as perhaps the most difficult portion of the book.” He then shoots off several rounds of quotations. It is,

“One of the most difficult in the whole book” (Trites 1977: 164; Jauhianinen 2002: 507) being “most enigmatic” (Barker 184; Reader, 407), “most perplexing” (Metzger 68), “most abstruse” (Desprez 242), “most obscure” (Baker 190; Ben-Daniel 84), “most complex” (Carrington 181; cp. 195), “notoriously difficult” (BEB 4:1852), “extraordinarily difficult” (Morris 140), and “especially complex” (Fee 146) because of its “insuperable difficulties” (Farrar 1884: 458–59), “which resists all attempts at an explanation” [Leivestad].”⁵

⁴ Warren Austin Gage, *Gospel Typology in Joshua and Revelation: A Whore and Her Scarlet, Seven Trumpets Sound, A Great City Falls* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: St. Andrews House, 2013), n.p.

⁵ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. *The Divorce of Israel: A Redemptive-Historical Interpretation of Revelation* (Dallas, GE: Tolle Lege Press, forthcoming), 2:73-74.

The questions surrounding it include: What temple is in view (**Rev 11:1**); what is the meaning of the times frames (forty-two months, **vs. 2**; 1,260 days, **vs. 3**; 3 ½ days, **vs. 9**); who are the two witnesses (**vs. 3**), what's with the metaphors of calling them “two olive trees and two lampstands” (4) or saying that fire comes out of their mouths (6), what is the beast from the bottomless pit (7), what is “the great city” (8), who are the people killed in the earthquake and who are “the rest” and are they repenting or being forced to give glory to God (**vs. 13**)? When you look at the interpretation of only the witnesses you can see why scholars say what they say. They fall into three categories. Here is a list:

Symbolic Interpretations:

- Jew and Gentile united in Christ (Bede, Oecumenius, Leithart).
- Law and prophets (Carrington/preterist)
- The Old and New Testaments
- The Word of God and the Spirit of God
- Even two volcanoes

Corporate Interpretations

- Apostles and prophets (Eph 2:19-20; preterist)
- The church in its function of witness-bearing
- Smyrna and Philadelphia (Beale, Witherington)
- Paulikians and Waldenses

- Believers who suffer martyrdom
- The Christian church and Christian state
- East and West against the Papacy
- Believing Jewish remnant during the tribulation

Literal Interpretations

- Moses and Elijah
- Elijah and Enoch
- Elijah and John the Baptist
- Jesus and John the Baptist (Gage)
- Peter and Paul (Quodvultdeus, d. 450)
- Peter and James
- Peter and John
- Historical figures that we do not know by name, probably members of the church of Jerusalem (Gentry)⁶
- Wesley and Whitfield (Blake)
- Two unknown persons in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future⁷

We see all the views of Revelation represented. Some focus on the early church and see the fulfillment in 70 AD ([preterist](#)). Some focus on church history and see a fulfillment in the Reformation or the Great Awakening

⁶ Gentry notes that Josephus mentions two particular names, but only one was a Christian: Jesus, son of Annus “four years before the war began” and James the Just ([Josephus](#), *Wars* 6.5.3.300-309).

⁷ These are taken from Gentry, Leithart, and [Daniel K. K. Wong](#), “The Two Witnesses in Revelation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (July-Sept 1997): 354-47.

([historicist](#)). Some see a fulfillment in our own future ([futurist](#)). And some see a fulfillment throughout the church age ([idealist](#)). How are we ever to make sense of such a passage?

Context and Structure

The answer should begin [first](#), as often in this book, with [humility](#) bowing before the Word of God, recognizing that we may not know everything and may get some things wrong. That's fine by me, for it was the same way in the first coming where God hid his plan in plain sight so that people would get much wrong so that the plan would be carried out exactly the way God designed it to be ([1Co 2:6-8](#)). God knows even if we don't. [Second](#), we need to understand [what the Bible says elsewhere](#) about two witnesses. We've done a little of this and if you see it correctly, then you can at least get on the right track. [Third](#), we need to keep in mind [several points of context](#), including the overall purpose of where we are and what has been going on in Revelation up to this point. Let's turn to that next.

There's a lot here, so I want to briefly mention [seven points](#) that I will be keeping in mind as I take us through the

two witnesses passage. To go into these in great detail would take the rest of our time, but we need to say something about them.

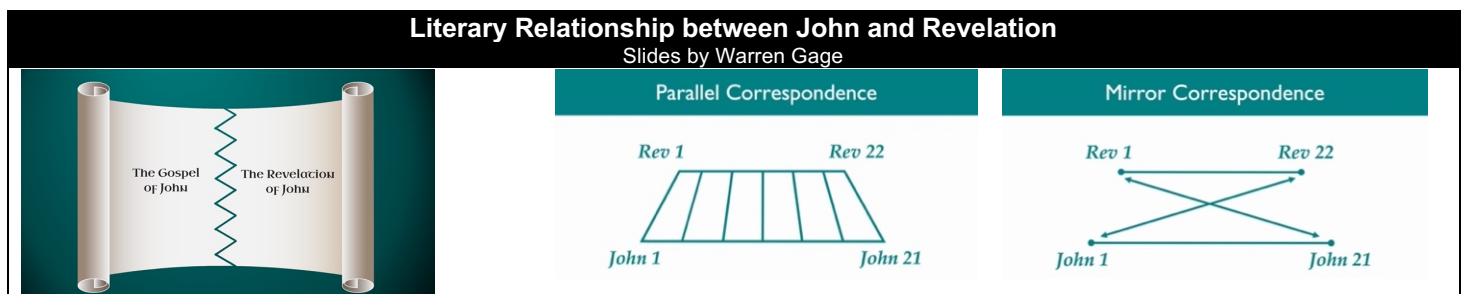
First, we need to keep in mind [the OT quotations and illusions](#). This is always important in every chapter of Revelation, but especially here. These include:

- [Daniel](#), especially [ch. 12](#) which gives us the Angel and scroll witness imagery from ch. 11 which bleeds over to the two witnesses of ch. 12, as well as resurrection and numbers which we find in ch. 12. Along with a chiasm of numbers in Rev 11-13, this will help us interpret the meaning of the numbers, the covenantal mission of the two witnesses, and the meaning of their death and resurrection in the chapter.
- [Ezekiel](#), especially [38:19](#) and the reference to the “great earthquake” in the Gog/Magog prophecy and [chs. 40-48](#) which is the only other time besides Rev 12 where we see someone measuring the temple. This will help us see the universality of the prophecy (not limited mere to Jerusalem) as well as the spiritual nature of the temple.
- [Zechariah 4](#) and the vision of two trees and the lampstand. This will help us interpret the identification of the two witnesses.
- [The OT background of two witnesses](#) that we have already seen. This will further help us identify who the witnesses might be.

Second, we need to understand how the NT describes **the current temple**. When not talking about the actual temple in Jerusalem, it shows us that Jesus came to bring another, just as real (perhaps more real) temple: a spiritual one. This begins with Jesus himself who “**tabernacles**” (**John 1:14**) among us because he is God’s “**temple**” on earth (**John 2:19**). As his body on earth, the NT takes this and applies it first to the **believer** whose body is **a temple of the Holy Spirit** (**1Co 6:19**), and then to the **corporate church**, which is **a holy temple to the Lord, being joined together** (**1Co 3:16-17; Eph 2:21; Heb 3:3; 1Pe 2:5**; etc.). It is even called “**the temple of God**” (*naō theou*; **2Co 6:16**), which is what John calls the temple in **Revelation 11:1** (*naon tou theou*) and **19** (*naos tou theou*).

Third, we need to remember that there are two chiastic relationships to **John’s Gospel**.⁸ One is parallel (John 1 and Rev 1 up through John 21 and Rev 22) and the other is an inverse parallel (John 1 and Rev 22 and John 21 and Rev 1).

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These parallels will teach us about the resurrection of the two witnesses in a remarkable way and how they are in fact organically related to Christ as a body is to a head.

Fourth, recall that the entire book of Revelation is itself *chiastic* with the beginning of Rev 1 paralleling the end of Rev 22 all the way to the middle,⁹ which occurs in **Rev 12:9-10**, which we are rapidly approaching. A great example of who this is helpful is *the beast*. While we will not look at who the beast itself is today, we can see that in our chapter he “**will make war**” on the two witnesses. But if you go to the parallel in **13:7** it says something nearly identical, but with more specificity. The beast “**was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.**” This helps us further identify the two witnesses.

⁹ Prologue (1:1-20)
Seven Epistles to Seven Angels (2:1-3:22)
Seven Seals (4:1-8:1)
144,000 saints and Seven Trumpets (7:1-11:19)
The Two Witnesses (11:1-13)
Woman clothed with the sun (12:1)
Dragon in Heaven (12:4)
Woman flees to wilderness (12:6)
Satan cast out (12:12)
Woman flees to wilderness (12:14)
Dragon persecutes woman (12:15)
Woman's seed keeps the commandments (12:17)
The Two Beasts (13:1-18)
144,000 saints and Seven Angels (14:1-15:4)
Seven Bowls (15:1,5-16:21)
Seven angels: whore of Babylon vs. New Jerusalem (17:1-22:5)
Epilogue (22:6-21)

Fifth, we need to remember that Revelation is a series of seven repeating cycles.



The **six churches** parallel in some way the **six seals** which parallel the **six trumpets** which parallel the **six bowls** and so on.¹⁰ One of the ways this can help us with our

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Figure 1:

- A. **Six Seals** (four distinct (re: earth) + two) (6:1-17)
- B. Interlude (7:1-17)
- C. Seventh Seal (8:1) > Seven Trumpets!
- D. Heavenly Temple (8:2-4)
- E. Signs of God's Presence (e.g. thunder, lightning) (8:5)
- A. **Six Trumpets** (four distinct (re: earth) + two "woes") (8:6-9:21)
- B. Interlude (10:1-11:14)
- C. Seventh Trumpet (11:15-18) > Seven Bowls (not until 15:1)
- D. Heavenly Temple (11:19a)
- E. Signs of God's Presence (e.g. thunder, lightning) (11:19b)

This comparison is in **Bryce Morgan**, "A Tale of Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:1-14), *Way of Grace Church* (March 22, 2015), <https://www.wayofgracechurch.com/sermons/sermon/2015-03-22/a-tale-of-two-witnesses-revelation-11-1-14>

Comment: If this is the case, then remembering what takes place in the parallel to our passage can help interpret it. For example, the numbering of 144,000 is parallel to the measuring of the temple. If we can identify the 144,000 properly, this can help us identify the temple.

Figure 2:

Cycle 1: Seven Churches

- Church 1
- Church 2
- Church 3
- Church 4
- Church 5
- Church 6
- Protection amid suffering (Ch 3)
- Philadelphia*: Weak but invincible (3:8)
- ("A Witness"), kept from wrath.
- Church 7

Cycle 2: Seven Seals

- Seal 1
- Seal 2
- Seal 3
- Seal 4
- Seal 5
- Seal 6
- Protection amid suffering: (Ch 7)
- 144,000 = Church Militant (A Witness) +
- Church Triumphant (kept from wrath)
- Seal 7

Cycle 3: Seven Trumpets

- Trumpet 1
- Trumpet 2
- Trumpet 3
- Trumpet 4
- Trumpet 5
- Trumpet 6
- Protection amid suffering (Ch 11)
- Witnesses*(?) invincible till death
- Witnesses raised to life (kept from wrath)
- Trumpet 7

interpretation surrounds the identification of the two witnesses. For example, we are still in the sixth trumpet. The church parallel is the sixth church. That church, **Philadelphia**, is called God's "witness" (**Rev 3:8**). It will suffer persecution but made invincible and be kept from God's wrath. In the sixth bowl, the **144,000** become a witness as they cry out praises to God. They, too, are persecuted. But they are eventually taken to heaven as they are made invincible and kept from God's wrath. This all parallels our two witnesses who speak boldly and powerfully in the world, are killed, but are then raised from the dead and lifted up to heaven invincible, as they are saved from God's wrath.

Sixth, to state the obvious, Rev 11 comes immediately after Rev 10. **Chapter 10** was tremendously important to our two-witnesses theme of Revelation 11. In it, we identified the Angel as Christ, covered in a **rainbow**, the sign of the Noahic covenant. He had an open **scroll** in his hand, open most likely because this is the scroll of Ch. 5 that was previously sealed with seven seals. But now they have been opened. This angel took an **oath** to heaven and swore. Then, he immediately commissioned John into his prophetic role where he must "**prophesy about many peoples and nations**

and languages and kings” (Rev 10:10). Each of these four things (rainbow, scroll, oath, commissioning) is intimately related to the covenants. In fact, the Angel swears an oath with a covenant scroll in his hand which means that he has come as covenant witness against those whom the scroll judges.¹¹ The fact that Christ is the covenant witness in ch. 10 and that he commissions John to unfold the covenant charges against the peoples, languages, nations, and kings only to suddenly see two witnesses appear in Revelation 11 is no accident. It necessitates that the two witnesses’ job is to be covenant enforcers for Christ himself. Who has this role in the NT era?

Seventh, and finally, there are two chiasms in Revelation 11. The first deals with the whole chapter. The first shows us the response of heaven to the work of the witnesses who usher in the seventh trumpet. They praise God in heaven:

¹¹ Listen to Psalm 89 and the covenant with David. “I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies” (Ps 89:34-37). 1. Not altering the word (see the seven thunders). 2. Swearing an oath. 3. A witness in the skies. Like Revelation 10, this witness in the skies is none other than the cloud-rider himself—the son of man, Jesus Christ. In this way, Meredith Kline says, “Revelation 10 may be cited as just one further passage identifying Christ as the Old Testament Angel. The Glory-Angel figure introduced there in the role of covenant witness is one and the same as the heavenly figure described in Daniel 10:5ff. (who appears also in Daniel 8:16 and 12:6ff.). (Meredith Kline, *Images of the Spirit* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999], 84.)

- A. The **temple** and **altar** with worshipers (Rev 11:1-2)
- B. Two witnesses and **judgment on their enemies** (3-14)
- C. **Declaration** of Christ: “**He shall reign** forever” (15)
- D. **Twenty-four elders give praise: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was” (17a)**
- C¹. **Declaration** of Christ: “You have taken your power and **begun to reign**” (17b)
- B¹. The **nations raged, but God judged** (18)
- A¹. The **temple** in heaven and **ark** of the covenant: thunder, lightning, etc. (19)¹²

The second focuses in on the two witnesses story and shows us the response of those who dwell on the earth to the death of the witnesses. They rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents with each other. These contrasting responses force you to deal with which of the two camps you will be in. They highlight the practical application to your heart.

I found two independent analysis online, both had the same center:

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1a) Rev 11:3-7a, His witnesses prophesy + testify/ they devour + kill their enemies; 1b) Rev 11:7b, The beast from the bottomless pit makes war against them, overcomes + kills them; 1c) Rev 11:8-9, Their dead bodies in Sodom, Egypt, Jerusalem 3-1/2 days/ Nations do not bury them; 1d) Rev 11:10a, And those who dwell on the earth; 1e) Rev 11:10b, Will rejoice over them; <li style="padding-left: 2em;">central axis) Rev 11:10c, Make merry, and send gifts to one another; 2e) Rev 11:10d, Because these two prophets tormented; 2d) Rev 11:10e, Those who dwell on the earth; 2c) Rev 11:11a, Now after the three-and-a-half days; 2b) Rev 11:11b, The breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet; 2a) Rev 11:11b-14, They ascended to heaven/ their enemies saw it + were killed in a great earthquake;¹³ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Two witnesses, olive trees, lampstands, vv 3-4 B. Devouring enemies with fire from mouth, v 5 C. Authority to shut up heaven, turn waters, smite earth, v 6 D. Beast from abyss makes war, overcomes, kills the witnesses, v 7 E. Body in street of great city for 3 1/2 days, v 8 F. Peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations look at bodies, v 9 F'. Land-dwellers rejoice, make merry, give gifts, v 10 E'. After 3 1/2 days, v 11a D'. Spirit of life revives them, and they stand, v. 11b C'. Called to heaven and ascend to heaven, v 12a B'. Enemies behold them, v 12b A'. Earthquake destroys 1/10 of the city, v 13¹⁴ |
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¹² Modified from **Christine Smith**, “Revelation 11,” *A Little Perspective* (Dec 14, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/revelation-11-2016/>.

¹³ **Smith**, Ibid.

¹⁴ **Peter Leithart**, “Structure in Revelation 11,” *Theopolis* (Feb 18, 2015), https://theopolisinstitute.com/leithart_post/structure-in-revelation-11/.

Revelation 11: The Two Witnesses

Measuring the Temple

As we come to ch. 11, we **begin in the temple of God** near the **altar** (**Rev 11:1**). We've just seen that the NT interprets the temple consistently as the church (even calling it "the temple of God" elsewhere), unless it is clear that it has in mind the physical temple in Jerusalem. Which might it be here? Answering this question has tremendous impact on how we will interpret the entire passage.

We have **seen the temple before in Revelation**. First, and perhaps most importantly, in the **sixth cycle parallel**, God says he will make the Christians (the "conquerors") at Philadelphia "**a pillar in the temple of my God**" (**Rev 3:12**). Pillars are not separate from the temple; they are part of the temple. The church is being called the temple here, just as it was called the witness!

We've seen **several of the items** associated with the temple before. John saw the **lampstands**, which he said was the church (**1:18**). The lampstand appears in ch. 11, where it describes the witnesses. He has seen the **altar** several times (**6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13**). This altar is **in heaven**, not earth. Therefore, its temple is the *heavenly* temple, not the earthly

temple in Jerusalem. In the chiasm of ch. 11, the temple both begins and ends the chapter. In vs. 19 it is “*God’s temple in heaven...*” All of these facts strongly suggest that the temple of **Rev 11:1** is a *spiritual temple*, not the temple in Jerusalem. In other words, the temple is the church of Jesus, just as the *144,000 parallel* in the sixth seal interlude was.

I bring this up because like the 144,000 which are numbered, we get a *new kind of number* here with the temple. John is told to do something strange in **vs. 1**. Immediately after his commissioning as prophet, “*I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, 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’*” (**Rev 11:1-2**). This whole idea of *measuring a temple* seems to many to necessitate that John is measuring an earthly temple. Preterists see this as the temple still standing before 70 AD. Dispensationalists see this as a rebuilt temple sometime in our own future. Historicists and Idealists take it to represent the church in the NT.

Which one is correct? We could take a deep dive into the weeds here and probably never come out due to being

entangled in a never-ending web of roots and thistles that are the disagreements of opinion on this subject. Instead, I want to notice that **there one and only one other place in the Bible where someone measures the temple** (and I'm not talking about original measurements of Solomon's temple). This is found at the end of Ezekiel.

Now, there are so many similarities between the commissioning of John in **Rev 10** and **the commissioning** of Ezekiel in the beginning of the book (**Ezek 2-3**) that it is tempting on that basis to say that John is being sent essentially to warn Christians about what is coming in terms of judgment upon Jerusalem, therefore he is measuring the temple in Jerusalem. However, this idea ignores a good portion of his book. Ezekiel was sent to his own people, true. But, **his prophecies extended far beyond them**.

When you come to Ezekiel 25, he begins to prophecy **against the nations**. Ammon, Moab, Seir, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Assyria, **Gog, Magog**, etc. After all this is over, the book suddenly changes. This is the point where we find someone measuring the temple. **“Behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand”** (**Ezek 40:3**). He began to

measure a very different temple than the one Solomon had built or that Nehemiah would oversee a second time.

Many people think that Ezekiel is describing a rebuilt third temple in our future at the hands of men in the city of Jerusalem. But is this so? Rather than rectangular, it is square. The only other square temple we know of is in Revelation 21, where the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven like a cube. Like that city, Ezekiel's temple has gates on several sides, not just on the east. The priest lives in it, even having kitchens at the four corners. This is could be seen as a fuzzy picture of the NT's explanation that God is building a new temple made of living stones. Perhaps most interestingly, the river of life flows from its Most Holy Place. In fact, the measuring continues with this river.

The man brings Ezekiel to the back door of the temple and he sees water issuing from below the threshold. It is flowing down below the south (Ezek 47:1). He brings him out of the north gate and takes him around to the east where the prophet now sees a trickle of water (2). Then, with measuring line in hand, he goes 1000 cubits where the water becomes ankle-deep (3). A thousand more and it becomes knee deep, again 1000 and it is waste-deep (4). Another

thousand and he could no longer pass over, it was **deep enough to swim** (5).

Suddenly, **trees** start popping up (7). The leaves of their branches do not wither, but bear fruit of all kinds of food (12). This very image is used later in Revelation for the church (**Rev 22:2**), the squared cube. Most importantly, when the water reaches the sea (that is the Dead Sea), the saltiest, deadest waters on planet earth all **become fresh** (8)! Everywhere the water goes, creatures live (9). There are no creatures in the Dead Sea. It is absolutely void of life. Yet, fishermen are suddenly fishing and catching fish like there are in the Mediterranean (10). It is impossible to read this description and think that this refers to a physical rebuilt temple. In fact, the measuring of this temple in light of Ezekiel shows us that this is **a spiritual temple**.¹⁵ **John is measuring the church**, just like the 144,000 were numbered.¹⁶ This view is perhaps the earliest we have (**Hippolytus, Tyconius, Andrew of Caesarea**).¹⁷

¹⁵ Beale has an entire book dedicated to this subject. For his chapter on Ezekiel 40-48 see **G. K. Beale**, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 17, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL; England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2004), 335-64. A shorter treatment is **Gregory K. Beale**, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," JETS 48.1 (March 2005): 5-31, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-1/48-1-pp005-031_JETS.pdf.

¹⁶ See **Leithart**, 1:421-22.

¹⁷ **Leithart**, 1:422.

In the measuring, he is told to leave out the measurement of the courtyard. He is only measuring the temple proper. The courtyard was for Gentiles. If my interpretation is correct, here it represents unbelievers, which may specially include both unbelieving Jews and unbelieving nominal Christians, people who go to church but are not saved. Why? The courtyard was itself a good place, a place where Gentiles could come nearest to God. It makes me wonder if it might not symbolize the visible church, whereas those with true faith are the temple proper. Even the best of our efforts in the visible church contains unbelievers, so this makes sense. But only true believers (“those who worship there” in vs. 1) are measured. Whatever the case, he is not to measure it because “it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months” (Rev 11:2).

The Holy City and Forty-Two Months

This verse raises two new difficulties. What is “the holy city” and what is the meaning of “forty-two months?” I’ll save the explanation for the holy city until later. I’ll tell you now, however, that I believe this refers, like the temple, to the church. There is so much symbolism going on in this

chapter that we have to be at least open to the fact that this could be as well. One of these is the number forty-two months.

In terms of a prophetic time-frame, “**forty-two months**” does not appear as such anywhere else. However, it does have **parallels**. For example, our verse says that the nations will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months. There is a parallel in **Luke 21:24** in Luke’s version of the Olivet Discourse. It tells us that Jerusalem will be *trampled* (same verb; *pateō*) until the *times of the Gentiles* (same noun as “nations”) are fulfilled. “Times of the Gentiles” parallels “forty-two months.”¹⁸

Luke 21:24b	Revelation 11:2b
Jerusalem will be trampled [<i>patēsousin</i>] under foot by the Gentiles [<i>ethnesin</i>] until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.	It has been given to the nations [<i>enthnōn</i>]; and they will tread [<i>patoumenē</i>] under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

A **second parallel** appears when you compare the only three other appearances of “forty-two” in the Bible. There are **forty-two cities of refuge** (**Num 35:6**). These are for

¹⁸ This verse is used by some preterists, to prove that “the holy city” in Rev 11:2 must be “Jerusalem” of Luke 21:24 (e.g. **Gentry**, 2:38). A futurist could make the same point, that it is the earthy city Jerusalem. In my view, Jesus is in fact talking about 70 AD in this portion of the Discourse (even with Matthew and Luke having different tellings of the sermon). However, John can certainly reappropriate a passage that he alludes to; we’ve seen it before. When we come to Rev 11:8 and “the great city,” I will argue that this is precisely what John is doing. Nevertheless, in alluding to it, I do think our minds should at least see 70 AD at a type of what is to come, as I have argued throughout this series.

accidental **man-slaughter** where a person can flee. When Elisha calls down a curse, a bear comes out of the words and **mauls forty-two boys (2Kg 2:24)**. And again **forty-two relatives of king Ahaziah are killed** at the pit of Beth-eked (**2Kgs 10:14**). In every case, some kind of death is in view. This continues in Revelation 11:2 and it's parallel in 13:5.

The meaning we could gather from this is probably best related to the Elisha and relatives of Ahaziah stories. With Elisha, the Jewish youths are **mocking God's prophet** who **judicially sentences** them to death. With Ahaziah's sons, Jehu is **fulfilling prophecy** against Ahab, **judicially killing** his sons, but he takes it too far and kills the relatives of Ahaziah as well. Forty-two is a judicial sentence being carried out on the "courtyard" at God's sovereign decree against the unbelieving portions of the visible church at the hands of the pagan nations. I suggest those who draw near to God in his NT temple, but refuse to repent and turn to Christ are in view, for this part of the chapter is not against those who are measured, but those who are not. Leithart makes another interesting observation, this time about "time." These are 42-months. He connects this to Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1. He writes, "**The period of waiting for the fulfillment of promise was long, but now we learn that there is no longer**

any delay, that the end will come within a mere forty-two months.”¹⁹

The Two Witnesses

At this point, the two witnesses are introduced to the story. “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth” (Rev 11:3). Sackcloth is the easiest thing here, it represents humility and otherworldliness, since it does not find itself attached to the trappings of expensive garments here. But now we have two more problems. What is the 1,260 days and who are the witnesses? Let’s deal with the time-frame first, since we just looked a similar one.

1,260 days is very similar to 42 months. The obvious difference is that one is in days and the other is in months. The similarities are that both are very close to another number: 3 ½. To understand how, we must turn to Daniel. Daniel is famous for his prophecy of 70 weeks, each consisting of 7 years (Dan 9:24). If you take seven years and cut it in half, you have 3 ½ years. There’s your 3 ½ tie in. Curiously, through neither Daniel nor John speak of “3 ½ years,” we do

¹⁹ Leithart, 426.

find “3 ½ *days*” in Revelation 11—twice. Together with forty-two months and 1,260 days, this creates a chiasm of numbers in Revelation 11-13, where each number is only found in these two places in the entire book:

- A. 42 months, 11:2 (3 ½ years, calculated in months)
- B. 1260 days, 11:3 (3 ½ years, calculated in days)
- C. 3 ½ days, 11:9
- C'. 3 ½ days, 11:11
- B'. 1260 days, 12:6
- A'. 42 months, 13:5²⁰

The obvious implication of this is that the three chapters must be read together. This will have more meaning for us when we come to the repeated numbers **later on**.

Now, Daniel does in fact talk about the three and a half period. Once, he calls it “**half a week**” (**Dan 9:27**). That half a week clearly concludes at Jesus’ death on the cross, which we will finish today thinking about. Two more times he calls it “**time, times, and half a time**” (**Dan 7:25; 12:7**). John uses this same expression as well, only once, in Revelation 12, which is no coincidence. These things are all related. Daniel has two more numbers that are also similar. Both are not coincidentally found in Daniel 12. He has 1,290 days (**Dan 12:11**) and 1,335 days (**12**).

²⁰ Ibid.

Dan 7:25	“time, times, and half a time”	Little horn blasphemes the Most High and wears out the saints for...
Dan 12:7	“time, times, and half a time”	Christ swears the vision is for the ending of the shattering of the holy people
Rev 12:14	“time, times, and half a time”	The woman given two wings to flee from the serpent into the wilderness to be nourished for...
Rev 12:6	1,260 days	The women flees into the wilderness prepared by God to be nourished for...
Rev 11:3	1,260 days	Two witnesses prophecy in sackcloth, perform great miracles for...
Dan 9:27	“half of the week”	Christ makes a “strong covenant” with man, half way through he puts an end to sacrifice and offering on the wing of abominations by one who makes desolate
Dan 12:11	1,290 days	The regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up
Dan 12:12	1,335 days	A blessing for waiting and arriving at...
Rev 11:9, 11	three and a half days	Resurrection of the witnesses (“they stood up on their feet”) after the beast kills them
Rev 13:5	42 months	Beast utterly blasphemous words and given authority for...
Rev 11:2	42 months	God’s “temple” and “holy city” given over to the nations who trample them for ... (during this time, see above, the two witnesses are working)
Rev 20:2	1000 years	Satan bound from deceiving the nations ²¹

Every one of these is closely related, though slightly different. I want to make **two observations** here about them. **First**, focusing on just our numbers, scholars have noticed that *42 months* would be the reckoning if you were using **the moon** as your base of time (lunar years are counted in months). Meanwhile, *1,260 days* would be the reckoning if

²¹ Meredith Kline makes a compelling case that the millennial 1000 years is to be equated with all of these numbers as well. See **Meredith G. Kline**, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 171-73.

you were using **the sun** (solar years are counted in days).²² The moon is the great light of the **night**. The sun is the great light of the **day**. The moon and hence night here belongs to nations who trample for 42 months. The sun and hence day belongs to the two witnesses who prophesy for 1,260 days. Reading is one verse after the other it is as if “**the dark night of persecution is going to give rise to the sunshine of the ministry of the two-witnesses.**”²³

Gentry points out something related. “**The forty-two month period highlights the beast’s time whereas the 1,260 days picture God’s people’s time.** In 11:2 the Gentiles (the Roman beast) trample Jerusalem for forty-two months; in 13:5 the beast acts against God for the same period. But in 11:3, Christ’s two prophets operate unscathed for 1,260 days, and in 12:6, God nourishes the saints in the wilderness for this period. As Mayo (130) puts it: ‘John’s switch signals his change of subject matter’ from the beast to God’s people.”²⁴ Here, also notice how the two witnesses and the saints **both have the same time (12:6; 14)** and how the Gentiles and beast both have the same time. They are parallel to one another. That helps you understand who all these are.

²² Jordan, in Leithart, 426.

²³ Leithart, *ibid.*

²⁴ Gentry, 2:89.

Second, Daniel 12 is vital to our interpretation. Recall that Daniel 12 was the basis for the Angel with the scroll in his hand in the previous chapter of Revelation.

Dan 12:4-9	Rev 10:4-7
<p>⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."</p>	<p>4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."</p>
<p>⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. ⁶ And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?"</p>	
<p>⁷ 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. ⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?"</p>	<p>⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷ but 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.</p>
<p>⁹ He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.</p>	

Now we add that identical and similar time frames from Daniel 12 appear in Revelation 11-13. And, they only appear together in these two places in the Bible. That means that **what was unfolding in Daniel 12 is now being**

elaborated in Revelation 11-13. So, the book (Gk: *biblion*) Daniel seals in one is now being opened in Revelation. Daniel 12 and Revelation 11 mutually interpret one another. I'll simply mention here that Daniel 12 begins and ends in resurrection. Meanwhile, we see the two witnesses being killed and then resurrected in Revelation 12.

- A. Resurrection (“stand” = *'amad*) and “time (*eth*) of trouble” (12:1-2)
- B. The wise (*sakal*) understand (12:3a)
- C. Righteous shine like the stars forever (12:3b)
- D. “Shut up” (*satham*) the words (*dabar*) to the “time of the end” (*et qes*) (4)
- E. The angel’s question about the end of the wonders (5-6)
- F. Angel above the waters: A time, times, and half a time (7)**
- E¹. Daniel’s question about the outcome of these things (8)
- D¹. The words (*dabar*) are “shut up” (*satham*) until the “time of the end” (*et qes*) (9)
- C¹. Many are purified and white and refined (10a)
- B¹. The wicked and the wise (*sakal*) (10b)
- A¹. “Time” (*eth*) of trouble and resurrection (“stand” = *'amad*) (11-13)

Let’s turn our attention now to the two witnesses. As virtually everyone asks when reading this passage, who are they? We’ve seen hints in several places. But we need to continue to see what else we might learn.

John specifically calls the witnesses “the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the lord of the earth” (Rev 11:4). This is obvious temple language means they come out of the temple from vs. 1. Therefore, they are intimately related to the spiritual temple-church. The

description has to remind us of Jesus' churches which are the seven golden lampstands (**Rev 1:20**).

In the tabernacle (1) and the temple (2) there was a menorah-candlestick before God's throne. It looks like a tree. It has **almond blossoms** (1 tree) but was fueled by **olive oil** (tree 2). Zechariah 4 is very similar to this. There we see "a lampstand of gold" and "two olive trees by it" (**Zech 4:2-3**). When Zechariah asks the angel what they are, he responds that they are, essentially, two witnesses: **Zerubbabel** the ruler from David's line and **Joshua the high priest**. No one suggests that the two witnesses of Revelation 11 are these two people, because Jesus himself fulfills the office of king and priest. However, isn't it interesting that earlier in Revelation we read of the church, "You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (**Rev 5:10**). Both offices are right there—now in the church, Christ's body. Everything we have seen thus far is pointing us in the same direction as the temple and the holy city. But let's continue.

Very clearly the two witnesses are modelled after Moses and Elijah. "If anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed" (**Rev 11:5**). Fire

came out in the days of Moses, consuming Nadab and Abihu (**Lev 10:1-2**) and in the days of Elijah, consuming the prophets of Baal (**1Kg 18:38**).

Elijah

Power over fire
No rain
Fire—Sodom
Kingly period
Trumpets
Kingly judgment comes first

Moses

Water to blood
Plagues on earth
Blood—Egypt
Priestly period
Bowls
Priestly judgment is final²⁵

- A. If anyone would harm them
- B. Fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes
- A¹. If anyone would harm them
- B¹. This is how he is doomed to be killed

“They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying” (**Rev 11:6**). That’s what **Elijah** did (**1Kg 17:1**). “And they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire” (**Rev 11:6b**). That’s what **Moses** did. Sky, water, and earth—that’s everything. Curiously, our OT ends with these two figures coming back into view. “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes” (**Mal 4:4-**

²⁵ Leithart, 430.

5). They also appear together on the Mt. of **Transfiguration** (**Matt 17:3-4**; etc.). Of course, John the Baptist is likened to Elijah (e.g. **Matt 11:14**). Furthermore, we might say that Moses and Elijah summarize the entire OT: the law and the prophets. Are you starting to see from this why the suggestions for who these two witnesses is so long?

Vs. 7 becomes a turning point. At some point in time, the two witnesses “**finish their testimony.**” This is their judicial activity as they bring the covenant lawsuit against the enemies of God. That’s the whole point. If this were a **relay race**, it is as if they have taken the scroll from John who has taken it from Christ. Then, “**The beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them.**” In the parallel in Revelation, this beast will return in ch. 13 where he is also associated with “**forty-two.**” In the middle, we have Satan (ch. 12). We have enough on our plate, so will save a discussion of the identity of the beast for another time.

It talks next about how **their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified (vs. 8).** Again, we have a problem. What is this “great city?” Notice how it is symbolically (Notice how this explicitly tells us that

symbolism is in this chapter; and in this verse, if the city is symbolic, might the bodies also be?) called Sodom²⁶ and Egypt. This relates back to our two witnesses overview, where **two angels** are sent to Sodom and **Moses and Aaron** are sent to Egypt.

It is also called the place **where their Lord was crucified**.²⁷ That's clearly **Jerusalem**. The idea is that Jerusalem has become just like the worst of the **OT pagan cities**—because it crucified the Lord Jesus. This in turn helps you see that “**the holy city**” of **vs. 2** is not “**the great city**” of **vs. 8**. What sense would it make to call the same physical fallen city holy and Sodom? Instead, this great city is, I believe, the world-city, which even Jerusalem now symbolizes. As Paul himself spiritualizes it, calling “**the present Jerusalem**” both Hagar and Mt. Sinai in slavery, but “**the Jerusalem above**” is free and is our mother (**Gal 4:25-26**; this ramifications for ch. 12's “woman”).

Vv. 9-10 become **the center** of the two witnesses story. It begins and ends with “**three and a half days**” (**9a, 11a**). “**For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes**

²⁶ This has a parallel in **Isa 1:10** where Israel is called Sodom. Isaiah begins his book this way!

²⁷ “Their” (*autos*) can also be translated “our” Lord. The difference is subtle. If it is “their” Lord, it could lend itself to the entire chapter being about the Jews. If it is “our” Lord, it would lend itself towards the passage being about Christians. I think the Sodom and Egypt and Jerusalem overlap lends itself towards the both/and. Jerusalem 70 AD was a type of the world-judgment to come.

and language and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb” (9). Let’s notice a few things here. **First**, the people of the earth are voyeurs towards God’s witnesses. The witnesses use their mouths; the nations use their eyes. I’m using “voyeur” in the sense of someone who enjoys seeing the pain or distress of others. They can’t help but look. Basically, that’s our world (and the visible church) today with the insanity that is our “news” outlets. **Second**, they refuse burial. This is an act of desecration, the opposite of holiness. **Third**, three and a half days dead is close to Jesus’ three days dead. 3 ½ is a hint that we are to be thinking about this, for this is the number associated with Daniel’s weeks. In Daniel, the 3 ½ **terminates in the death of Jesus**. In these ways, the witnesses’ death parallel’s their Lord’s. They gawked at him on the cross. It took the righteous Joseph to even give him a burial. And he was dead for basically the same period of time.

Before we get to the parallel with Christ in the resurrection, we have **vs. 10** to deal with. “**And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.**” Because of the similarities with the other “center” of the chapter, we’ll save

a detailed discussion of this **until next time**. Here, I just want you to see how the **two prophets tormented the earth-dwellers**. It isn't that God sent them to do this, *per se*. When God sends his two witnesses in other parts of the Scripture, it is an act of mercy to save people who would repent. But it is a covenant lawsuit and it makes people angry. The torment is not caused by the witnesses, but by the rebellious stubborn hearts of those who refuse to hear their message. And for it, they party like its 1999.

“After three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them” (11). The two witnesses are **resurrected**. We have seen that Daniel 12 both begins and ends in resurrection.²⁸ Now we see the witnesses are resurrected. I'll interpret this in a moment when we conclude. For now, notice the response of the people. The rejoicing is turned into bitter fear. Their happiness has become a horror. What power must be behind this resurrection and what does this mean for our mocking of these witnesses?

²⁸ When we were in this passage a few months ago, I argued that Daniel had in mind two different resurrections. The first (**Dan 12:11-13**) was a spiritual resurrection, where Daniel would die and then be taken up to heaven when Jesus lead a host of captives from Sheol in his train to heaven. The second (**12:1-2**) is the physical resurrection at the end of time. Neither of these resurrections was a literal killing of Daniel to see his body rise from the dead hundreds of years before Christ. This seems to me to have implications for the nature of the resurrection in Revelation 11's parallel. For more see **my sermon**, “Daniel 12: The Glorious Hope,” <https://www.rbnc.com/Daniel%2012.1-13%20The%20Glorious%20Hope%20big%20font.pdf>.

The parallels with Jesus do not conclude here. Not only do they die. Not only are they raised. **They ascend to heaven.** “Then they (the witnesses) heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here!’ and they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them” (12). This has important tie-ins with both Jesus’ actual ascension, where he ascended to heaven in a cloud (**Acts 1:9**), and to the Angel-Christ who rode the clouds in ch. 10. We saw that only God rides the clouds. But now, *his two witnesses do too!* That which only belonged to God, is now given to them. The enemies can only watch.

The glories of God safely preserving the witnesses quickly give way. “**And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven**” (13). “**A great earthquake**” most likely has in mind the prophecy in the **Gog-Magog** section of Ezekiel (**38:19**). That earthquake takes place in Israel, but it is a restored Israel, a resurrected Israel in the dry bones story. It causes every creature not killed to quake at God’s presence (20). Immediately after that, God goes after Gog (21), thereby showing his greatness

to many nations (23). This shows that it is the nations being judged for attacking God's people—the church.

Who are the **tenth** and **seven thousand**? A tenth is a **tithe** (Lev 27:32). And the tithe belongs to the LORD; it is holy (30). Seven thousand has a connection to **Elijah**, whom we've seen today. Recall that God kept a remnant of 7,000 that would not bow the knee to Baal (1Kg 19:18). Both numbers are associated with **the remnant**. This is **the ironic reversal**. Beale calls it “a *lex talionis* [eye for an eye] penalty imposed on the unbelievers.”²⁹ You go after my people; I will go after you in like manner. This is the beginning of the horrors to come in the seventh trumpet and onward. It causes everyone else to be terrified and give glory to God. It is debated whether they are **repenting or simply submitting** their minds to the reality that God is in fact sovereign. I believe the latter is in view, though we cannot rule out that some of those people would repent, for it has happened many times in the past.

Lazarus and the Witness of Christ's Church

When talking about the witnesses, it can be difficult to come to a conclusion. We have to read carefully, like I found

²⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 602.

in the song. After all this,³⁰ to my mind, **the interpretation that makes the best sense** of the two witnesses is some kind of **spiritual one**. Whether that be Jew and Gentile united in Christ, the law and the prophets representing God's word, the two Testaments, the apostles and prophets, Smyrna and Philadelphia, the Paulikans and Waldenses, Luther and Calvin, heaven and earth,³¹ or Christ and his church, I don't see that we really have to choose. For, these two witnesses represent the church. They come out of the church (the NT temple from heaven). They are God's holy instruments of the temple (we are to use our bodies as holy instruments in Romans 6 etc.).

Like John, they are **commissioned by their Savior** to witness his righteousness and justice in the world. When? Until the end. The church's testimony agrees! One Lord, one faith, one baptism. We know him. We know his works. We know his power. We have his authority. And it is so strong that it is covenantally binding in heaven like the two witnesses in a court of law. And God remembers his people.

³⁰ Many kinds of witnesses (mountains, people, groups of people), Philadelphia is the witness, Parallel with 144,000 numbered/measured, Lampstand is the churches/witnesses are the churches 42 months belongs to the two witnesses and to the saints, etc.

³¹ Pepler suggests the twins Gemini picture this. With so much heavenly archetypal stuff happening in this book, could the witnesses (ala Ps 19) be supernatural and non-supernatural?

If this is true, then the death, resurrection, and ascension that is witnessed by the world can be **both corporate and individual** in nature. *We* are the testimony—the saved in Christ’s body—to the power of the resurrection, the surety of heavenly bliss, and the fact that Christ has not called us out of this world just yet. Are we not surrounded by a great cloud of *witnesses* (**Heb 12:1**)? He bids his churches to conquer, even in the midst of suffering. It has been happening since the beginning. It will be so until God brings final judgment upon his enemies.

To close, I want to look at the **three parallels in John’s Gospel** to see how they can help us understand this great truth that the physical life of Christ’s three-and-a-half-year ministry matches up with **his mystical bodies’ three and a half years** between the First and Second Comings, for this is the meaning of the numbers.³² Christ is the head; we are the body. Earth has sun or moon time; heaven has its own clock where a day is like a thousand years.

The church emulates its Lord. “**When they finish their testimony, the beast ... will kill them** (the two witnesses; **Rev 11:7**). **This has parallels later in Revelation when we will look at it in more detail.** The inverse parallels is **John**

³² See my sermon on Daniel 12. We will look at this more in a later sermon.

11:53, “*From that day on they (the religious leaders of the temple) plotted to kill him (Christ).*” At his trial, they sent false witnesses against Christ, but *their testimony did not agree* (Mark 14:56). They killed him anyway. As with the Head, so with the Church.

In Revelation, “*They will see their dead bodies for three and a half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them*” (Rev 11:9-10). No one wants to live through the horrors that this world heaps upon the Church. But fear not, Christian. This book is informed by Jesus’ earthly ministry in John. The parallel is Lazarus. “*Lazarus is dead, and I rejoice for your sakes that I was not there that you might believe ... So when Jesus came, he [Lazarus] had been in the tomb for four days*” (John 11:14-15). Half a day longer than the witnesses! Then, “*with a loud voice [Jesus] cried out, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot*” (43-44). Jesus has the power over even death. Thus it tells you as a witness to the power of God in salvation, “*Now .. the breath of God entered them [the witnesses], and they stood on their feet ... and they heard a loud voice from heaven saying ... ‘Come up here!’*” (Rev 11:11-12). And thus we will be with the Lord forever in eternity.

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The War of Light and Darkness on Earth	The War of Light and Darkness in Heaven
11:53 “From that day on they (the religious leaders of the temple) plotted to kill him (Christ).”	11:7 “When they finish their testimony, the beast ... will kill them (the two witnesses).”
11:14–15 “Lazarus is <i>dead</i> , and I rejoice for your sakes that I was not there that you might believe ... So when Jesus came, he (Lazarus) had been in the tomb four days ”	11:9–10 “(they) will see their <i>dead bodies</i> (the two witnesses) for <i>three and a half days</i> , and not allow their <i>dead bodies</i> to be put into a tomb . And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them”
11:43–44 “with a loud voice He cried out, ‘Lazarus, <i>come forth!</i> ’ And <i>he who had died came out</i> bound hand and foot ”	11:11–12 “Now ... <i>the breath of God entered them</i> (the witnesses), and they stood on their feet ... and they heard a loud voice from heaven saying ... ‘ <i>Come up here!</i> ’ ”