

## CHAPTER 11

***"In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly" (11:13,14).***

Chapter 11 seems to be something of an enigma to most readers, myself included. Most puzzling of all are verses 1-14. It is here that we meet those two, shall we say, nebulous figures--the "two witnesses." Who are these two men who prophesy for 1,260 days? Are they real, live prophets witnessing in plain language to the crowds, or are they simply symbolical representations of two groups of people, such as Israel and the Church, or two principles, such as the law and the prophets? As Alford states, "This passage may well be called . . . the *crux interpretum*; as it is undoubtedly one of the most difficult in the whole Apocalypse."<sup>1</sup> With this quote from Alford in mind, we no doubt will find a veritable panoply of interpretations, which we shall address shortly. To begin, though, we gain from Frost and Walvoord a general overview of the placement of the chapter.

Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, according to Frost, form an introduction to the vial and judgment periods with the vial portion beginning at 16:2. This is an important point, and the view seems eminently reasonable.

This understanding of the introduction will explain certain repetitions which occur as between the introduction and description, the one being a pre-statement of the other. Thus, for instance, we have in chapter fourteen--which is a part of the introduction--a portrayal of the coming of Christ (14:14-20), though this event does not actually take place in the development of the record until chapter nineteen (19:1-21).<sup>2</sup>

Walvoord writes,

Chapter 11 of the Revelation continues the parenthetical section beginning in chapter 10 and extending through chapter 14. With the exception of 11:15-19, introducing the seventh trumpet, the narrative does not advance in these chapters and various topics are presented. In chapter 15, the chronological developments continue as the contents of the seventh trumpet, namely, the seven vials, are manifested. In 11:1-4 there is a continuation of the same subject as in chapter 10.<sup>3</sup>

Returning now to the subject of the two witnesses, the first question that arises is, "Who are they?" Walvoord thinks they are two unidentified men raised up for the purpose described.<sup>4</sup> Seiss says one is undoubtedly Elijah and the other Enoch.<sup>5</sup> Archer and Frost say they are Moses

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1 Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4:655.

2 Frost, *Matthew Twenty-Four and the Revelation*, pg. 208.

3 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 175.

4 *Ibid.*, pg. 179.

5 Seiss, *Lectures*, pg. 180.

and Elijah.<sup>6</sup> Tenney leans toward the Moses-and-Elijah view, but he holds in reserve the symbolic interpretation of the law and the prophets.<sup>7</sup> Johnson maintains, though somewhat tentatively, that they "represent those in the church who are specially called, like John, to bear a prophetic witness to Christ during the whole age of the church. They also represent those prophets who will be martyred by the beast."<sup>8</sup> Ladd falls among the undecided, opting for either of two choices--historical men or representatives of the church.<sup>9</sup> McIlvaine is most decided and declares with unwavering confidence that they are "faith and prayer."<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Newton on the other hand asserts, "that the Witnesses are two individuals is as certain as that Antichrist is an individual."<sup>11</sup> He does not take a definite view as to who they are. For now, it doesn't seem to matter if we don't know who they are; and, besides, since John doesn't name them maybe we shouldn't even try.

A second question now arises--When do they witness? Is it during the first or last 3 1/2 years (1,260 days) of the tribulation? McClain takes the position that it is the first.

There is one question, however: Since the chronology in the Book of Revelation is always stated in terms of *one-half* of seven years, do the events of the book cover only one-half of the Seventieth Week or can both halves of the week be identified? I believe that the entire Seventieth Week of seven years can be located in the Book of Revelation, and that the key passage is 11:2-3, which reads as follows: "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles [nations]: and the holy city shall they tread under foot *forty and two months*. And I will give power unto my two witnesses; and they shall prophesy a *thousand two hundred and threescore days*, clothed in sackcloth."

Now, since the "*forty and two months*" of verse 2 constitute a three and a half year period during which Gentile powers shall "tread under foot" the Holy City, this must refer to the *last half* of Daniel's Seventieth Week, because it is in the middle of the Seventieth Week that the Roman prince stops the Jewish sacrifice and becomes their persecutor (Dan. 9:27). It is likewise apparent that the "*thousand two hundred and threescore days*" of verse 3 must refer to the *first half* of the Seventieth Week, because the two witnesses bear their testimony during this period, and they cannot be slain until the Roman beast comes to the height of his power when it is "given unto him to make war with the saints, and to *overcome* them" (Rev. 11:7; 13:7). Thus we have here clearly the entire Seventieth Week: the first half as the period of the rising power of the Roman prince and the testimony of the Two Witnesses; while the second half is the period of the Beast's absolute dominion over the world and his terrible persecution of Israel. The exact middle of the Seventieth Week is marked by the killing of the Witnesses and the sounding of the "seventh angel" (Rev. 11:1-15).<sup>12</sup>

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6 Archer, unpublished class notes; Frost, *Matthew Twenty-Four and The Revelation*, pg. 212.

7 Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, pg. 191.

8 Johnson, *Revelation*, pg. 504.

9 George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, pg. 154.

10 McIlvaine, *Wisdom*, pp. 218.

11 B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pg. 143.

12 McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks*, pp. 48-49.

One question comes to mind regarding McClain's view. Verses 9 and 10 of chapter 11 read as follows: *"Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."* Since the first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation are a time of peace, just how did these two witnesses torment the people? Perhaps just seeing Jews freely engaging in their religious services, together with two "guards" (for lack of a better word) at the entrance, added to a growing undercurrent of loathing and hatred on the part of the nations. Or, more specifically, perhaps it is the indignation of the Muslims that is in view, their growing offense at a Jewish Temple erected where their mosque formerly stood, and two powerful men proclaiming that Yahweh alone is God. In any event, that the Jews are worshiping at the temple with sacrifices (evidently) being offered during the first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation seems obvious, and apparently the "abomination of desolation" has not yet occurred. But what exactly is the purpose of the two witnesses in front of the temple during 3 1/2 years of peace? Of what does their "testimony" consist? McClain thinks that it is to denounce the treaty made between the Antichrist and the Jews: "It should be noted here that according to the exact language of Dan. 9:27, the beast's treaty will be made with *the many* of the Jewish nation, the clear implication being that *some* Jews will not join in the compact from the beginning of the last week. Furthermore, we should not forget the effect of the testimony of the Two Witnesses, who undoubtedly will denounce the treaty throughout their ministry during the first half of the week and seal their testimony with martyrdom."<sup>13</sup>

An interesting observation is made by Kelly concerning the phrase "1,260 days," the period during which the two witnesses prophesy: "The Lord mentions them as so many days here, rather than as forty-two months, it would seem, to mark His value for their testimony. He makes, so to speak, as much of it as He can. He does not sum it together, as when speaking of the beast (chapter xiii. 5). Lovingly he speaks of the time as days, as though He were counting them all out."<sup>14</sup>

This subject of "days" and "months" can be somewhat confusing. We know that these time periods come up in the prophecies of Daniel also--not only the 1,260 days (as recorded in Revelation), but 1,290 and 1,335 days as well. Commenting on Daniel chapter 12, Kelly gives some insight:

As to the "days" spoken of in the close of the chapter, what is their meaning? In verse 11, it is said, "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." It had been previously said in verse 7, by the man clothed in linen, that it should be "for a time, times, and an half"--that is, for 1260 days. Verse 11 adds thirty days, or one month more, to the 1260 days. Then, in verse 12, we find a further epoch: "Blessed is he that waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." That is, a month and a half are added still. So that we have, first of all, 1260 days; then 1290 days; then 1335

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pg. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Kelly, *Lectures*, pg. 224. However, Kelly goes on to state that "there is no necessity to take them as two persons: they might be two hundred. . . God was giving a sufficient testimony."

days. What, we may ask, is the meaning of this? and from what time are we to reckon these days? The answer is, "From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up." . . .

. . . the blessing of Israel will not be brought in at once. The first great turning-point will be the destruction of "the king." That takes place when the 1260 days expire. But as we saw in chapter xi., the king of the north has to be disposed of, after "the king." Accordingly, there is another period of delay. But whether that will coincide with the thirty days more (or 1290), or with the subsequent 45 days (1335), I am not prepared to say. Of this, however, we may be assured, that the last of them bring us down to the accomplishment of the whole work: and I am inclined to think that the destruction of the king of the north is rather one of the latest, if not the last, of these acts of judgment before the epoch of blessing begins. In Isaiah x. 12, it is said, "When the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." Does not this seem to indicate that it is the last act of the Lord in judgment connected with the blessing of Israel? Thus we have a brief interval or two after the destruction of Antichrist, during which the Lord is still putting down His and Israel's enemies. "Blessed is he that waits, and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."<sup>15</sup>

Returning now to the two witnesses and the "great city" where the bodies lie, Kelly also writes: "It is perfectly plain that this is Jerusalem. Many think it is Rome, because as has been said before, Protestants are absorbed in, and biased by, their controversies with Popery."<sup>16</sup>

Walvoord states that we hear of "the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit" for the first time here. He is mentioned 35 times more. It is Satan. The beast out of the sea is the world dictator (13:1) and the beast out of the land is the false religious leader of that day (13:11).<sup>17</sup>

**Seventh Trumpet** - This is the "Last Trumpet" which ushers in the kingdom of Christ. According to Seiss, it is "an anticipatory program, so to speak, of the main elements and issue of the great drama, given out in advance of the more special narration of circumstantial particulars and related events."<sup>18</sup>

Verse 17 reads, "*We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was.*" The words "and who is to come" are an interpolation and thus omitted by all modern editors and versions. According to Reese,

The omission is of profound significance; for the expression *ho erchomenos* means "the Coming One," and its exclusion here, in contrast to Rev. 1:4, 1:8, and 4:8 is because God in Christ *has now come*. Prior to this, He was "the Coming One"; now He has actually come. The Last Trumpet brings us to the Coming of the Lord. . . . We need have no hesitation then in affirming that Rev. 11:17 indicates that "the

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15 Kelly, *The Great Prophecies of Daniel*, pp. 233-235.

16 *Ibid.*, pg. 226.

17 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 181.

18 Seiss, *Lectures*, Vol. II, pg. 249.

Coming One" comes at this point, and that, therefore, the resurrection of the saints takes place here.<sup>19</sup>

At the time of the seventh trumpet we have the following actions of God announced: the first resurrection, the rewarding of the saints, and the destruction of Antichrist and his host. It is both a trumpet of joy (to those who are saved) and a trumpet of woe (to those who are lost). It is here at Revelation 11:18--the sounding of the seventh trumpet--that the saints of Luke 14:14 are raised to life and rewarded. *"We give You thanks . . . because you have taken your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."*

It will be profitable at this point to take note of Reese's comments on rewards:

When are the saints tested and rewarded? According to Paul in our passage [1 Cor. 3:13], at the Day of the Lord; elsewhere at His Appearing and Reign (2 Tim. 4:1, 8); at the Parousia (1 Thess. 2:19, 3:13), and at His Coming to judge and reign (1 Cor. 4:5, 8); according to John, at the Last Trumpet (Rev. 11:18), at the beginning of the kingly rule of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6), and at the Day of Judgment (First Epistle 4:17); according to our Lord, "at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14), at the Last Day (John 6:39-54), at His Coming as Son of Man (Matt. 16:27), and at His Coming "for the Church" (Rev. 22:12). This last passage is illuminating: "Behold I come quickly; *and my reward is with me*, to render to each man according as his work is."

The resurrection, judging, and rewarding of Christians take place at the Day of the Lord.<sup>20</sup>

Concerning this seventh trumpet--this "last trumpet"--, it is the same Last Trumpet as that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. Verses 50-54 read,

*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.*

The change from corruption to incorruption is what takes place in the twinkling of the eye, not our disappearance from earth in a pre-trib rapture, as many often think.

The full description of this last trumpet spoken of by Paul is reserved for the Apocalypse. But here Paul connects the resurrection and transfiguration of the saints with the inauguration of the

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19 Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 79.

20 *Ibid.*, pg. 169.

millennium.

Chapter 11 ends with verse 19: *"Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail."* Milligan offers the following insight:

When too the shrine was opened, what more appropriate spectacle could be seen than "the ark of His covenant," the symbol of His faithfulness, the pledge of that love of His which remains unchanged when the mountains depart and the hills are removed? The covenant-keeping God! No promise of the past had failed, and the past was the earnest of the future.

Nor need we wonder at the *lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and the earthquake, and the great hail* that followed. For God had "promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."<sup>21</sup>

We conclude this chapter with an excerpt from Zahn:

At the seventh blast of the trumpet, which is closely connected with the fifth and sixth by 9:12, 11:14, in spite of their being separated by the episode in 10:1-11:14, there is again, as in the case of the opening of the seventh seal, no description of what happens; but we have here expressed by the songs of praise in heaven, just as in the former case by the silence, what takes place when the seventh act is performed. God and Christ have begun their world rule (11:15).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Milligan, *The Book of Revelation*, pg. 195.

<sup>22</sup> Zahn, *Introduction*, Vol. III, pg. 398.