

1. **Introduction:** We begin today where we left off last week discussing God’s designated witnesses in a highly symbolic section of Revelation. The witnesses satisfy the Law requirement for establishing truth, namely, 2 witness who agree (in truth, there are many who agree). These witnesses are given dramatic powers (11:5-6). The powers belong to them jointly (they and them) and are not divided.
  - This undivided witnessing power seems to point to an empowered group (like the church) witnessing.
2. **Two Witnesses as “Two Olive Trees and Two Lampstands:”** (11:4). “Olive trees” likely references the witnesses being empowered by the Holy Spirit (also, olive oil used to anoint for ministry of Holy Spirit).
  - “Lampstands” in Revelation symbolize the church exercising its role as witness to Christ and His gospel (the church is to be a light glowing with truth in the darkness of a sinful world).
  - “Two” lampstands signify meeting the requirement for “two witnesses who agree” to assure their evidence is to be accepted as true. The two witnesses are not merely two individuals but a symbol of the whole church insofar as, in the power of the Holy Spirit, it fulfills its role as faithful prophetic witness.
  - The two witnesses represent all believers who faithfully bear witness to Christ and His gospel.
  - The time for faithful witnessing (symbolized by 42 months) is the time between Jesus’ resurrection and second coming. Those who witness are to take up their crosses, protected spiritually but not physically.
  - The two witnesses, by the power of the Holy Spirit, have power to devour those wishing to harm them. They do so by the fire of powerfully effective spoken **words**.
  - The witnesses also have the power (not necessarily exercised) to stop the rain, to turn water into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues (11:3-6). After completing their testimony, the beast from the bottomless pit conquers and kills them.
3. **Revelation 11:7-8:** *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,<sup>8</sup> 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.*
  - Once the witnesses finished their testimony (i.e., completed the work assigned by God), they were killed by the beast that rises from the bottomless pit. Their corpses lay in the street of the great city for all to see. The great city is the center of opposition to God (Babylon in its time; Rome in the first century).
  - The great city is figuratively called Sodom (a place of moral depravity), or Egypt (a place of oppression and slavery), or Jerusalem (a place responsible for the unjust death of Jesus).
4. **Revelation 11:9-11:** *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,<sup>10</sup> 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.* <sup>11</sup> *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.*

- The way of the fallen world is that whenever the gospel is preached, opposition follows. In this case, the witnesses are killed, their corpses left in the open without burial. Unbelievers celebrate their demise.
  - But after 3 ½ days God restores them life and they stand on their feet. That naturally resulted in a great fear among those who witnessed their return to life.
5. **Revelation 11:12-16:** *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.* <sup>13</sup> *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.*
- The witnesses killed by the beast are resurrected and ascend to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watch. At that time, there was a great earthquake felling a tenth of the city and killing 7,000 people. The people who survived were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.
  - Does “giving glory to God” indicate a genuine repentance and conversion of nine tenths of the people, or does it indicate a forced acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty and glory by His defeated enemies?
  - Resurrection is God’s reversal of the curse of death. It defeats evil’s last and greatest weapon. The resurrection referred to here could be the witnesses’ resurrection at the end of the age or it could be symbolic of the witnesses’ vindication by God.
6. **Revelation 11:14:** *The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.*
- The eagle in 8:13 announced the coming of 3 “woes”. The first and second are now past. John does not formally indicate the beginning of the third woe. The immediate connection to the seventh trumpet in 11:15-19 seems to make the most sense.
7. **The Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19):** Remember in 10:7, we were told that when the 7<sup>th</sup> angel sounds his trumpet, *“the mystery of God will be accomplished.”* It will be the climatic turning point of human history. That means this section (11:15-11:19) brings us to the consummation of God’s kingdom, the inevitable transfer of power from earthly, secular rulers to God’s eternal rule.
- After the 10:1-11:14 interlude, the sounding of the seventh trumpet also constitutes the 3<sup>rd</sup> “woe.” Unlike the previous two “woes,” this one leads to a heavenly celebration of God taking His great power and judging the ungodly nations and rewarding His servants (11:18).
  - The 3<sup>rd</sup> “woe” presents the positive side of judgment by celebrating God’s victory over evil. Because the structure of Revelation is to spiral forward rather than unfold in a linear sequence, there remains much yet to come in describing the consummated kingdom in chapters 19-22.
8. **Revelation 11:15-19:** *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his*

*Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”<sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,<sup>17</sup> saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.<sup>18</sup> 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.”<sup>19</sup> Then God's temple in heaven was opened,*

- *And the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.*
- In 11:15, when the trumpet blows, loud voices in heaven sing out a chorus of praise made famous by Handel's *Messiah*: *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”*
- Despite the opposition from Satan and the fallen angels who support him and the part of humanity that is controlled by him, God has insured there is a vast crowd of people who have been cleansed and redeemed by the Lamb who will live in eternity in the presence of God.
- The heavens and earth will be restored to their original state of perfection (when created, God said, it is good!). Truly, the kingdom of the fallen world has become the restored kingdom of our Lord and his Christ and will remain so eternally.
- 11:16-18, the 24 elders who sit on their thrones fall on their faces before God and worship Him.
- The reference to the 24 elders mentions several of the themes found in Chapter 4.
- The elders are an exalted order of angels who represent God's people and continually worship, always prostrating themselves to worship.
- They give thanks to the Lord God Almighty, who is and was (speaking of God's eternal self-existence and sovereignty). The phrase *“and is to come”* that was added in 1.8 and 4.8 is omitted at this point because the future has invaded the present. The *“to come”* reality has arrived! The number of those God desires to live forever in the New Jerusalem in His presence is complete.
- In verse 18, we find that the nations raged, but God's wrath came at His appointed time, the time for the dead to be judged, which is also the time for God's servants to be rewarded (the prophets and saints and those who fear God's name, both great and small).
- It is also the time for destroying the destroyers of the earth (those who have taken the “good earth” God created and destroyed its goodness).
- In verse 19, John reports that the Temple in heaven opened. He saw the ark of the covenant in the Temple. In OT times, the ark symbolized God's presence. It contained the tablets of the law, an urn of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded (Heb. 9:4).
- The ark disappeared from the earth-Temple at the time of the exile, but it never lost its significance. Seeing the ark in heaven shows that God's presence and protection continue for His people. Wars and earthly calamities cannot destroy the ark's significance.

- No power on earth can rob believers of the presence and spiritual protection of God.
9. **Hebrews 13:5-6:** *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*<sup>6</sup> *So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”*
- At the end of the “seal judgments,” John saw powerful responses from the earth when the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar and threw it upon the earth.
  - When God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was revealed within, there were similar powerful earthly responses with *“flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and earthquake, and heavy hail.”* All nature appears to give a loud “amen” to what God had done.
  - This emphatic close to chapter 11 is followed by a “Third Interlude” (chapters 12:1-14:20). This third and final interlude unveils a Cosmic War between God and the forces of evil and further demonstrates God’s vindication of His people and judgment of the wicked.
10. **A New Section:** Chapter 12 begins a new section (Chapters 12-14) which is the theological heart of Revelation. It shows why God’s people face hostility in this world and how God provides victory over evil.
- The basic story is in 12:1-6. A war in heaven is depicted in 12:7-12, resulting in a continuing war on earth in 12:13-17. The part played by the two beasts in the battle for earth is in 13:1-18.
  - Chapter 14 shows both the victory and vindication of the saints (14:1-5) as well as the judgment of the unrighteous shown in two paired visions (14:6-13 and 14:14-20).
  - This enables greater understanding about the spiritual war we are involved in. That larger perspective is intended to lead to faithful endurance. Persecution is to be expected as believers participate in the ongoing conflict between God and Satan, but the enemy is already a defeated foe because of the willing self-sacrifice of Jesus. His death and resurrection insured Satan’s defeat.
  - Revelation 15:1-8 serves as a transition providing a conclusion to what has preceded and laying the basis for the 7-bowl judgments that will follow.
11. **The False Trinity and their fight against God and His People (12:1-13:18):** We will begin this part of the study next week by looking back at the very first lesson, Part 1.