

The Seven Trumpets (cont.)

Revelation 11



Recap of Revelation 10

1. The second woe (the sixth trumpet) brings war from the north upon the city of Jerusalem (9:13-19).
2. John sees a vision of Christ with a little scroll (10:1-7).
3. Christ announces that when the seventh trumpet is blown, “the mystery of God would be fulfilled” referring to the age of the gospel (10:7; cf. Ephesians 3).
4. John eats the scroll which is bitter-sweet. He will speak the words of Christ which are words of judgment and life (10:8-11).

Significance of Revelation 10

1. There is more going on in God's work of judgment and salvation than has been revealed (7 thunders).
2. God's judgment is mixed with grace (bitter and sweet).
3. The judgment of God made way for the gospel (Rom 9-11).

Revelation 11:1-3 (The Temple Measured)

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.”

We have another vision or interlude before we get to the seventh trumpet. We're still in the second “woe.”

This passage is another clear reference to the destruction of Jerusalem between 66-70AD (“trample the holy city” v. 2).

This is clearly referring to Jerusalem (the holy city, v. 2). Cf. v. 8. Both the city and the time are accurate to the events of Jerusalem's destruction.

We have time indicators in this chapter:

- 42 months (v. 2)
- 1260 days (v. 3)
- 3 ½ years.
- The Jewish war lasted 3 ½ years, about the same time as Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of Jerusalem as prophesied by Daniel.

Instructions are given to measure the temple.

Note the parallel again to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 40:2-3, 5, 6

² In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. ³ When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand.... So he measured the thickness of the wall.... Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep.

Ezekiel's prophecy from chapters 40-47 are variously interpreted. Futurists see this as the future temple of the millennial kingdom since no temple of such dimensions has yet been constructed (it does not match Herod's temple or any temple beforehand).

Many others, however, suggest that, like Ezekiel's other prophecies, this temple is a vision of God's people in perfect rest and harmony with God. There is peace, order, security, even after the city has been destroyed (Ezekiel 40:1 says this was given 14 years after the city had been struck down).

Again we see clear allusions to Ezekiel and John's prophecy. Ezekiel 40-47 describes him measuring the temple with a measuring rod. What is the significance of this?

- It depicts the defining of the true spiritual temple in view of the impending destruction of the physical temple.
- The true temple will be preserved (the church, Eph 2). The physical temple will be given over to the nations.
- There are parallels and repeated themes that help us interpret.
- Before the seventh seal God marked out his true believers (144,000). Likewise before the seventh trumpet, the true temple is preserved from God's wrath.

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Beyond the measuring of the temple (to preserve it), we know that the outer court will be given over to the nations.

This is also spoken of by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse in Luke 21.

Luke 21:20-24

²⁰ “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³ Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

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And so the court of the Gentiles will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles (the unbelieving Jews are thus represented), but the true temple will be preserved. The 144,000 will be delivered.

Finally, God will raise up two witnesses who will prophesy or speak God's words during that same 42 month period.

They will be in sackcloth, like the prophets in mourning for the sin of the people and their transgressions before God.

Let's consider the two witnesses next...

Revelation 11:4-6 (The Two Witnesses)

⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵And 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. ⁶They 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.

Two witnesses
Two olive trees
Two lampstands

These are important symbols to consider.

There power is in their mouths (that is, their words rather than some flamethrower coming from their lips).

Notice also how they have (1) power to shut the sky. Reminiscent of Elijah.

There was drought for three years during the days of Elijah. Ahab had married Jezebel (daughter of the King of Sidon) to formalize an alliance. She brought idolatry into northern kingdom of Israel. Not only that, but she was killing the true prophets of God and replacing them with the prophets of Baal. Baal was the god of the weather and the true God made it stop raining for three years. The three year drought meant economic collapse to the kingdom.

Second (2), power over the waters to turn them to blood. This reminds us of Moses in Egypt and the plagues against Egypt. Egypt held God's people captive and worshiped false gods and God's judgment led to his people's freedom.

I believe these themes are important. The match a similar context in Jersalem in Jesus day as the prophets of God (the apostles) are killed and replace with false prophets. Their false worship has brought collapse and ruin. They held God's people captive and were not judged by similar plagues that came upon Egypt.

It is these biblical themes, rather than two individuals (Moses and Elijah revived and spitting fire), that I believe better captures John's intent.

The Two Witnesses

1. Two witnesses served to support the truthfulness of a testimony. John 8:17, “In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true” (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:16; 1 Tim 5:19).
2. Two olive trees and two lampstands could be an allusion to Zechariah 4 which refers to the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel (governor) and Joshua (priest).
3. Fire coming from their mouth represents God’s word (Jer 5:14).
4. Power to shut the sky and turn water to blood is reminiscent of Elijah and Moses.

#2 10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. “These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.” **11** Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?” **12** And a second time I answered and said to him, “What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?” **13** He said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” **14** Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”
(Zech 4:10-14).

The olive trees supply oil that is then burned in the lampstands. We have the civil and priestly leaders fueling the presence of God (lampstand).

#3. “Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts:
“Because you have spoken this word,
behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire,
and this people wood, and the fire shall consume them.”

#4. These are powerful prophets in the midst of idolatry and martyring God’s prophets and keeping his people in bondage.

So who are they?

- We'll keep reading

Revelation 11:7-10 (Witnesses' Defeat)

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.

Does this help us identify the prophets.?

- The death of these prophets seems to happen after the crucifixion (so not John and the OT prophets) v. 8.
- They could be Christians in Jerusalem speaking God's truth.
- Some commentators mention James, brother of Jesus, who was thrown off the temple, and then beaten to death. Josephus records that happens in 62AD but others suggested it happened just before the siege of the city.
- Prophets throughout the OT and into the new covenant era up until the siege.

Other symbols:

- The beast (see more of this in Rev 13) referring to Rome (animated by Satan who comes from the lowest hell). [Futurist can't deny allusions to Rome so says its a revived Roman empire]
- The witnesses finish their testimony (v. 7).
- Make war and conquer could mean that we have more than two individuals (don't normally make war on two guys).
- They bore witness for 3 ½ years but now are silent for 3 ½ days (a short time) before they are revived again. Perhaps this is a reference to the lack of witness within Jerusalem after the Christians fled and the prophets in the city were killed.

What of the rejoicing over their death? Just as people were merry in Christ's death, so too in the death of his witnesses.

Pilate and Herod became friends after once being enemies because of Christ, so too does the death of these prophets of God unite the beast (Rome) with apostate Israel (Jerusalem).

People in the city were happy that the Christians are gone.

Revelation 11:11-14 (Vindication)

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.

¹⁴ The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

- The "defeat" and silence of God's witnesses is only for a short time.
- The prophets of God who are martyred are united with Christ and reign with him.

When Christ rose from the grave, others rose out of their tombs, it could be that this took place in Jerusalem as well during this time.

While this is not the end, this period of witness ends with a great earthquake and a tenth (tithe) of the city fell. This remains a portion and still a sign of coming judgment.

7,000 were killed (this could be symbolic, 7 complete, 1000 many). It could be representative that in Elijah 7,000 had not bowed the knee, in this case, 7,000 were destroyed.

Some gave glory to God in heaven. This is the end of the second woe (6th trumpet).

Josephus

“During the night a terrific storm arose; the wind blew with tempestuous violence, and the rain fell in torrents; the lightnings flashed without intermission, accompanied by fearful peals of thunder, and the quaking earth resounded with mighty bellowings. The universe, convulsed to its very base, appeared fraught with the destruction of mankind, and it was easy to conjecture that these were portents of no trivial calamity” (Jewish War, 4.4.5).

These kind of divine signs were taking place as portents or signs to the people that God was not pleased.

Here Josephus writes about an earthquake that took place in 68AD.

During this time, the Idumeans were encamped outside the city. Because of the earthquake they entered into city and into the outer court of the temple. When the day dawned, Josephus wrote that the outer court of the temple was inundated with blood and that 8,500 were dead.

Revelation 11:15-19 (The 7th Trumpet)

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ 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.

Revelation 11:15-19 (The 7th Trumpet)

¹⁸The 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.”

¹⁹Then 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.

Revelation 11:15-19 (When?)

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The big question that divides interpreters in Revelation is always: when?

Futurists and most idealists interpret this as the second coming of Christ. The kingdom (v. 15) is said to be the millennial kingdom.

Others interpret this as past.

1. The exaltation and enthronement of Christ happened after his death and resurrection (Acts 2 on the throne of David) Stephen sees Jesus at the right hand of God. Hebrews 1, he is exalted.
2. This refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and now it meant that there is a complete dissociation between Christianity and Judaism. Christianity is now a worldwide religion and begins the process of encompassing and enveloping all kingdoms of the world.

The scene here is back in heaven. Where we began in Revelation 4.

Revelation 11:15-19 (cont...)

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3. This could refer to the final judgment (futurist) or that the martyrs and prophets are now vindicated. Their persecutors have been destroyed by God. And God's people have been delivered. (Rev 6:10).

God's true temple is safe (v. 19). This is where we began in measuring the temple. The presence of God still remained. Though the city be destroyed and not one stone of the temple lay upon another, God's temple remains in the heaven.

Significance of Revelation 11

1. The measuring of the temple tells us that God's people will be preserved through judgment.
2. God's prophets will speak and be protected by God until their appointed time of witness is complete.
3. The enemies of God may glory over the death of his prophets but that celebration is short lived.
4. God's prophets will rise and his enemies will be destroyed.
5. Heaven will erupt in praise and God's true temple and ark will be preserved.

#2. We have that same assurance today. Speak on behalf of God.

#3. The enemies seem to have the upper hand but their time is short.

#5. God will win the day and his people will be exalted.