

THE TEMPLE AND THE TWO WITNESSES

Introduction

1. The sounding of the first six trumpets revealed the warnings of judgment to come if men would not repent.
2. Before the sounding of the last trumpet, John was presented with a vision to bring a challenge to the faithful.

I. The Measuring of the Temple

(11:1-2)

- A. This vision is a continuation of the interval between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> trumpets.
- B. John was given a strong and solid reed to serve as a measuring stick.
- C. He was told to measure the temple, the altar and those who worship therein.
  1. Remember, this is symbolic!
  2. Also, the word used here is the word for the “sanctuary” or the “sacred edifice” of the Temple, not the entire Temple complex.
  3. The background of this symbol is found in several OT passages (Ezekiel 42:20; 44:23; Zechariah 2:1-5; cf. 2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1).
  4. Thus, God’s temple would be protected by Him when it was attacked.
  5. The temple of God is the church of Christ (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5; etc.).
- D. John was told not to measure the court outside of the temple proper (the sanctuary), for it was given to the Gentiles – representing the world.
  1. The fact that this court was not measured symbolized that it was not holy nor under God’s protection.
  2. Those outside of the church would be under God’s wrath.
- E. Finally, he was told that the “holy city” would be trodden under foot for 42 months, or 3 ½ years.
  1. Just as the temple was not literal, so the “holy city” does not refer to a literal Jerusalem.
  2. Instead, the “holy city” is the home of the saved (cf. 21:2, 10).
  3. The message is clear: even though the church is protected by God, it will still face persecution.
  4. However, this persecution is limited – it lasts only 3 ½ years.
    - a. This number is ½ of seven.
    - b. This symbolizes a broken period of time, an incomplete episode of suffering.

II. The Two Witnesses

(11:3-6)

- A. After measuring the temple, John is told of God’s two witnesses.
- B. Who are the two witnesses?
  1. Consider the symbolism of this concept.
    - a. Two witnesses were needed for legal testimony (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Num. 35:30; Heb. 10:28).
    - b. Two witnesses were needed for church discipline (Matt. 18:16, 19-20).

## The Book of Revelation

### Lesson Twenty

Revelation 11:1-14

- c. Two witnesses were needed for confirmation of truth (John 8:17; Luke 10:1; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19).
    2. If this number is to be taken literally, it probably refers to the Holy Spirit and the apostles (cf. John 15:26). {*Yet, keep in mind the fact that by this time all the apostles had died, save John.*}
    3. Symbolically, the two witnesses represent all those who stand for and teach the truth in the midst of persecution.
  - C. Note that they wear sackcloth – symbolizing their mourning during their suffering – and prophesy for the same amount of time as when the “holy city” is trodden under foot.
  - D. Their role is further explained by comparing them to the olive trees and candlesticks of Zechariah 4.
    1. The message was one of confirmation to Zerubbabel that the temple in Jerusalem would be rebuilt.
    2. In John’s day, the faithful serve as witnesses who hold forth the Word of Truth, empowered by God through the Holy Spirit (cf. Philippians 2:15).
  - E. Furthermore, they would be protected by God, just as He has always empowered and guarded His prophets. {**Elijah** – 2 Kings 1:10-14; cf. Jeremiah 5:14; 20:9; Acts 6:10; 7 / 1 Kings 17:1; 18; Luke 4:25; James 5:16-18 / **Moses** – Exodus 7 – 12}
    1. Those who stand for the Truth will bring down the unrighteous with God’s Word.
    2. These judgments are not literal, but symbolic of the power of the righteous over the wicked.
- III. The Death of the Two Witnesses (11:7-10)
- A. This is the first mention of “the beast” who will play a prominent role in subsequent chapters of this book.
    1. In chapter 13 and 17, it is revealed that this beast symbolizes a great world power (namely, Rome).
    2. This beast is a servant of Satan, for it rises from the abyss.
  - B. Though the beast will war against and kill many saints, it would not be until they had finished their testimony (cf. Colossians 1:23; Mark 16:17-20; Jude 1:3; 1 Peter 5:12).
  - C. The bodies of the slain saints are pictured as lying in the streets of Babylon, the great city (the symbol of the wicked world of men).
  - D. The world treats the deaths of Christians with utter contempt and disregard.
  - E. In fact, they rejoice because they have rid the world of such a nuisance.
- IV. The Resurrection of the Two Witnesses (11:11-14)
- A. However, their joy does not last long, for the cause of Christ will rise from the ashes of persecution.
  - B. Their joy is turned to fear as God grants complete and total victory to His people, the church.
    1. Neither the resurrection nor the ascension in this passage is literal.
    2. They symbolize the victory of the cause of Christ over evil.
  - C. When God’s people are victorious, the wicked are judged and punished.
  - D. The result is that men fear and recognize the power of God.