

November 2, 2010

Fire Breathing Witnesses

Revelation 11:1-14

¹Then 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, ²but 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. ³And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

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. ⁷And 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, ⁸and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. ⁹For 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, ¹⁰and 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. ¹¹But 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. ¹²Then 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. ¹³And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand *men of renown* were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

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

As of chapter 10, John is no longer a viewer... he is a participant in the revelation!

1 "measure the temple of God"- Ezekiel 40:1-5, a temple will often be symbolic of God's Church
"the altar"- the incense altar used with prayers- John measures the worship activity

2 "outside the temple"- representing the unbelievers (Ez 40:17-19)

That it is not measured indicates it will not be marked off and protected by God

"holy city"- later identified as the "new Jerusalem" (21:2) it is where God dwells with His people

The worship life of God's Church on earth will be assailed, but "The Church will be sustained in her faith and godly life by God's presence as the focus, source, and center of her worship, as indicated by the temple and its outer court." (Brighton: 287)

"42 months" = "1,260 Days" this time period occurs twice more (12:6, 13:5).

Why say it multiple ways? We cannot tell from Revelation.

Is the time itself significant? YES! Daniel 7:25 & 12:7 – the first is how long the 4th beast would dominate God's saints (Dan 7:25 // Rev. 13:5), the second is the period for how long the saints will endure (Dan 12:7 // Rev 11:2-3, 12:6).

So is it a literal 42 months? No. Take 1,260 Days or 42 months and say what that is in years! Look back to our "Intro to Revelation" sheet. **What does 3 ½ stand for?**

Added significance to the 3 ½ years is 1 Kings 17 – 18 (Lk 4:25) as well as Antiochus Epiphanes

So when does this take place? (Luke 21:24)

3 "I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days"- during this age of persecution, the witnesses will carry out their prophetic ministry.

Who are the witnesses? "these are the two olive trees/ two lampstands" reminding us of Zech 4:2-14. In Zechariah, the ONE lampstand's 7 lights are the 7-fold Holy Spirit and the lampstand itself is representative of Israel. The two olive trees are the two anointed ones (Zch 4:11-14), namely Joshua the Priest and Zerubbabel the king from David's lineage.

IN REVELATION- the TWO lampstands now signify the Temple & the Holy City (Rev 11:1-2). The TWO Olive trees are NOT an anointed Priest and King, but rather they are the TWO witnesses/TWO lampstands. **Sooooo... WHO ARE THE WITNESSES!?!?!?** The Church with whom God dwells (see our notes above on “Holy City” and “Temple.”)

I’m still confused- why are the 2 witnesses symbolized by lampstands and olive trees???

Brighton: Thus the two witnesses are symbolized by the two lampstands because they represent the church in her royal, priestly, prophetic witness to the Gospel message of Christ to the world. They are also symbolized by the two olive trees because God, through his anointed prophets and ministers, edifies and nourishes the church as she (through them and as represented by them) witnesses to the world. (293).

Why are there two? Not two specific individuals, but rather a solid testimony by the Church in the last days. 2 witnesses are necessary to establish a legal case! Deut 19:15! It’s that simple

What is the content of their prophecy? The same content of every prophecy!

“sackcloth” sign of grief, sorrow, and repentance over sin (Gen 37:34, 1 Chr 21:16, Jonah 3:5-8)

5 Fire consuming foes- 2 Kings 1:1-15- Ahaziah’s men are burnt up for attempting to capture Elijah
Here it is most likely metaphorical for how God protects His witnesses.

6 shut the sky = no rain – Reference to Elijah in 1 Kings 17

Water to blood, any plague – Reference to Moses in Egypt

7 “finished their testimony” Read Matthew 10:14-15 for some context

“beast from the abyss”- recall Rev 9:1-11, this beast is Abaddon/Apollyon/Dragon/Satan

“conquer them and kill them”- where the Church and her testimony is rejected and silenced

8 “dead bodies lie in the street”- now testifying to the depravity of that place

“spiritually (not symbolically) is called Sodom & Egypt”- two reprehensible sites in the OT

“where their Lord was crucified”- Jerusalem- the new center of apostasy!

Anyone who rejects their testimony is spiritually in Jerusalem, denying Christ, killing his witnesses.

9 3 ½ days- the people’s actions are done from evil intent

“peoples and tribes and languages and nations”- clarifying that this is not just Jerusalemites

10 “a torment to those who dwell on the earth”- calls to repentance can be a torment for sure!

11 “a breath of life from God entered them”- Ezek 37:1-14 (Dry Bones)- The Evil Foe cannot keep the Church and her testimony down!!! Think of who Revelation was originally given to and what this would mean for them!

“they stood up on their feet”- the Church daily dies and rises with Christ! ALLELUIA!

“and great fear fell on those who saw them.” A sense of awe and the dread of consequences

12 The Church’s Ascension!- The church and her witness may by earthly standards appear dead in humiliating defeat, but her final end is in resurrection and ascension glory! JUST LIKE CHRIST!

Meanwhile, back in spiritual Sodom/Egypt/Jerusalem... a great earthquake! A tenth of the city falls, 7,000 die- **What does this mean???**

Ezek 38:19-20 – A great earthquake precedes The End

Haggai 2:6-9 – A great shaking will cause men to tremble when God reveals His glory on earth

Zech 14:1-5 – The Mount of Olives will split in half at the coming of Yahweh

Matt 27:51 – Earthquake at Jesus’ death

Matt 28:2 – Another one at his resurrection

Heb 12:26 – The earth and heavens will shake before The End

You get the picture!

This earthquake points towards God’s judgment on the unbelievers

13 “7,000 men of renown”- 7 fold Spirit of God from the lampstand reference, 1000 for complete.

This is God’s complete judgment in accord with His own will for how many should perish

“the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven”- worship motivated by fear, not faith

Conclusion of the interlude: The Church in her mission testifies to the faith, dies for it, and will be raised in such a manner that terrifies and serves judgment on those who have rejected & persecuted the Church.

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