

The Facebook Commentary on Revelation
Jon Paulien

Revelation Chapter 11

Rev 11:1-13 Introduction–

The chapter divisions of the Bible are not original, but were added a long time after the Bible was written. They sometimes hinder rather than help our understanding. The division between chapters 10 and 11 is a good example. In Rev 11:1 John continues interacting with the angel of Revelation 10, but that connection can be lost if one focused on the chapter division instead of the continuing nature of the story. Most who have studied this chapter carefully consider it one of the most difficult to understand in the entire Bible.

The first part of chapter 11 (1-13) is a continuation of the scene in 10:8-11. Although the mighty angel and the scroll seem to fade from view, John continues to interact with either the “voice from heaven” (10:4, 8) or the angel of the scroll (10:1-7, 9-10). This passage is still a part of the sixth trumpet which covers the period from the end of Daniel's prophecies to the close of probation (see on 10:7). This is also the gathering time for the battle of Armageddon (cf. 9:13-21 and 16:1-16). It is the message that is to be prophesied to all the nations (10:11) and the bitterness that all will experience when giving it (10:9-10).

There are important connections between chapters 10 and 11 (1-13): John; the voice from heaven; peoples, nations and languages; verbs like stand, give, eat and fulfill; nouns like mouth, voice, cloud and foot; and last but not least, prophets and prophesying. There is also a connection between this passage and the sixth trumpet passage of 9:13-21. In both places fire comes from the mouth(s). There are common words like angel, harm, kill, worship, see, power, altar, remnant and plague. So the story of the two witnesses is a clear counterpart to the woes of the sixth trumpet.

This section can be structured as follows:

- A) Measuring the temple (1-2)
- B) The identity of the two witnesses (3-6)
 - 1) Prophesying 1260 days (3)
 - 2) Standing before the Lord (4)
 - 3) Their authority and power (5-6)
- C) The death, resurrection and ascension of the witnesses (7-13)
 - 1) The witnesses' death and resurrection (7-10)
 - 2) Their ascension (11-12)
 - 3) Earthquake and remnant (13)

John's “prophesying again” (Rev 10:11) seems to be elaborated in the restored temple of 11:1-2, the experience of the two witnesses during the 1260 days (11:3-6), and the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses in 11:11-13. This is confirmed by the repeated use of “prophet” and “prophesy” in the chapter (11:3, 6, 10). The fate of these two martyred witnesses (11:7-10) also seems to illustrate the bitterness of eating the scroll in 10:9-10. The scroll itself is good news but brings bad times.

The two witnesses themselves also have a prophesying again. Let me explain. The time periods in this chapter remind us to read this chapter in light of the background texts of Daniel 12 (“time, times, and dividing of time”). The gentiles will trample on the holy city for forty-two months (Rev 11:2), and the two witnesses will prophesy in sackcloth for 1260 days (11:3). All three of these time periods are the same, amounting to three-and-a-half years. So the initial experience of these two witnesses occurs during the time of Daniel’s prophecies, then the witnesses “prophesy again” after the close of the 1260 days. So much of Revelation 11:1-6 actually precedes Revelation 10:7-11 in point of actual time.

Rev 11:1–

A reed “was given” to John. The passive without any point of reference is fairly common in the Book of Revelation (Rev 6:2, 4, 8, 11; 8:3; 9:1, 3, 5, etc.). In most cases these are what would be called “divine passives.” Jews in the First Century preferred not to use the names of God but rather speak of Him in roundabout ways, such as the passive voice here. Other ways of avoiding the word “God” were to say “heaven” (“heaven help us”), the Name, Lord. As a good Jew, Jesus used many of these same expressions (Kingdom of heaven, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” [by who? God]).

John is given a reed like a measuring rod and is told to measure the temple of God. There is a similar description in Revelation 21:15, where John is told to measure the New Jerusalem. But there are also a number of differences between the two accounts. In this passage he receives reed-like measuring rod and in Revelation 21, the rod is made of gold. Another difference, of course, is measuring a temple in one scene and a city in the other. But the city is actually like the temple because it is the place where God dwells, it is in the shape of the Most Holy Place, and exhibits its radiance (Rev 21:11, 15, 16).

This scene recalls Ezekiel’s vision of a restored temple (Ezek 40-48). There measuring the temple showed the commitment of God to the people to continue as their God in spite of their apostasy. He will continue to be their God and they will continue to be His people (cf. Zech 2:1-5). The temple is measured in order to be restored (Ezek 43:7-9). The problem that caused Solomon’s temple to be destroyed was having places to worship idols immediately adjacent to the temple, it was the worst kind of syncretism, mixed worship of God and idols. In Ezek 43:7-9 God promised Israel that if they would put away their mixed worship, God would rebuild the temple and dwell with them forever. Ezekiel’s vision to measure the temple was on the Day of Atonement (Ezek 40:1). On the Day of Atonement the sanctuary was cleansed from the sins that had accumulated through the year. That was that day when God came to Ezekiel to promise a restoration of the temple in Jerusalem.

Some scholars suggest that measuring the temple implies an allusion to the Day of Atonement. We have already noted the parallel to Ezekiel 40:1. But there is also an allusion to Leviticus 16, the great Day of Atonement text. Only two places in the Bible combine sanctuary altar and people together, Leviticus 16:33 and Revelation 11:1-2. So the Day of Atonement is brought into view here with its implications of judgment.

This highlights the significance of “measuring” in the Bible for this verse. In 2 Samuel 8:2 David made the defeated Moabites lie down on the ground and measured them with a cord to decide who would live and who would die. The concept of rewarding the good and the bad is

wide-spread in both the Old and New Testaments. The sayings and parables of Jesus describe an end-time judgment to evaluate who does and does not serve God (Matt 7:2; Mark 4:24): the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the good and bad fish, the wise and foolish virgins. The combination of Day of Atonement imagery and “measuring” anticipates the judgment that will occur just before the end. It must be admitted, however, that the package of allusions in this paragraph is possible but not certain.

Rev 11:1-2-

In the previous chapter we learned that there is a period at the end of history between the close of Daniel’s time prophecies and the close of probation. During this period there would be a final proclamation of the gospel in the context of apocalyptic books like Daniel and Revelation. This passage adds another element to that proclamation, the final gospel to be proclaimed in the last days includes a message about the heavenly sanctuary, which includes a serious pre-Advent judgment which measures the professed followers of God. Daniel, Revelation and judgment are not the gospel itself, but they provide an added-value message with particular relevance to the end of time. The added value was designed to provoke readiness for the return of Jesus. But the gospel is the key. If you don't know how to get right with God, it doesn't matter what you know about Daniel and Revelation (1 Cor 13:2). So Revelation needs to be read in balance with other messages of the Bible.

In order to make sense of this passage one needs to know something about the sanctuary/temple descriptions in the Old Testament. This is clear from the Greek word “temple” (*naos*) in verse 1, recalling the language of tabernacle and temple in the OT. While the word *naos* can refer to the entire temple complex, including the outer court (normally the word *hieron* is used for the whole), it normally focuses on the innermost part of the temple, the holy places or most often the Most Holy Place itself. Jesus was often found teaching or acting in the *hieron* (Matt 21:12, 23; Mark 11:11, 15; Luke 19:45; and John 7:14, to mention only a few occurrences), but few entered into the innermost precincts of the temple and only the High Priest entered the Holiest and that only once a year.

The Hebrew sanctuary was laid out as two squares side by side. The right-hand (eastern) square was the outer court, which included the altar of burnt offering (for animal sacrifices) and the laver (a basin for ceremonial washings). The tabernacle proper was in the left-hand square and it was divided into two parts, the holy place with its lampstand, table for bread of the presence and altar of incense, and the most holy place containing the ark of the covenant and the living presence of God. At the very center of the outer court was the altar of burnt offering. At the very center of the tabernacle square was the ark of the covenant.

In the temple of Herod (the one known and experienced by Jesus and His disciples), however, this outer court was part of the inner temple precincts, forbidden to the Gentiles, even though it was outdoors. Outside the inner temple precincts was a much larger Court of the Gentiles, in which no ritual activity took place, but people could meet and talk, classes would be held and in Jesus’ day, business related to the temple sacrifices and offerings would be conducted. So Herod’s temple was a more extensive complex than the original Hebrew tabernacle.

According to Revelation 11 the outer court was not to be measured, only the temple building itself was to be measured. This is in contrast with Ezekiel, where the entire temple complex is measured (Ezek 40:17-19). All of this raises the question, which “outer court” is in view in this text, the outer court of the tabernacle, with altar and laver, or the Court of the Gentiles in the Jerusalem temple?

Which altar is in view here, the altar of incense (which was in the Holy Place) or the altar of burnt offering (which was outside the tabernacle but inside the larger temple complex of first-century Jerusalem)? By implication, which “outer court” is in view here, the one of the Hebrew tabernacle or the Court of the Gentiles in Herod’s temple?

The outer court of this passage is “given to the Gentiles.” That would seem to suggest that Herod’s temple is in view, because in the temple of Jerusalem, the outer court of the inner temple complex (the outdoor portion of the original sanctuary enclosure, with the altar and laver), was forbidden to the Gentiles. They were allowed only in the Court of the Gentiles, which lay outside the area in which all the temple rituals were performed. On the other hand, if we limit ourselves to the Old Testament evidence (which John’s constant reference suggests is primary in his mind), the Greek term for “outer court” (*aulên*) is used only for the outdoor portion of the tabernacle enclosure (Exod 27:1-19; LXX to 38:1-20; Exod 40:29-33; LXX to Lev 6:16 and 26; Lev 8:31) and the same location in Solomon’s temple (1 Chr 28:6; 2 Chr 24:21, cf. Matt 23:35; in 1 Kings 28:6 the location of the *aulên* is ambiguous). 2 Chronicles 4:9, on the other hand, suggests that Solomon’s temple may have had two “outer courts” (*aulên*) like Herod’s temple, the “Court of the Priests” and the “Great Court.” Ezekiel’s temple also had an inner and an outer court (various forms of *aulê* in the LXX). So the question of which altar and outer court rests in whether John would be thinking of the Mosaic tabernacle or the temple of Herod, which may have been based somewhat on Ezekiel. It is my judgment and that of Stefanovic, that the Mosaic court is the likely reference. Since Gentiles were allowed in the Court of the Gentiles, their trampling that would not be worth mentioning here. An “invasion” of the inner court, on the other hand, would be dramatic and shocking and just such an invasion occurred with the sacking of the temple by Titus a couple decades before Revelation.

The altar in verse 1 must be the altar of incense (Exod 28:43; 30:1-10, etc.), since the altar of burnt offering (Exod 27:1-8, etc.) was located in the outer court and that part of the temple complex is excluded from measuring in verse 2. The altar of incense was normally located in the holy place (but see Heb 9:1-5), the first and larger of the two sacred rooms inside the temple. This altar is described in more detail in Revelation 8:3-5.

Rev 11:2–

Many English translations begin verse 2 with “but.” The word in the Greek, however, is not the strong adversative “but” and should better be translated as “and.” It implies that the excluding is part of the measuring which suggests that the gentiles (could be translated “nations”) mentioned in the text are really part of the professed people of God. Among those who profess to be followers of God, the measuring divides the true followers from those who only claim to be followers. This introduces a major theme that is brought up in a variety of contexts in Revelation. Just before the coming of Jesus, God will act in such a way as to divide the professed people of God into two groups: genuine followers of God and an excluded group.

The translation "exclude" as in "exclude the outer court" (Rev 11:2) is based on the Greek word *ekballe* which was widely used for excommunication from the synagogue (see the story of the blind man in John 9:34-35). A similar exclusion takes place in the last part of Revelation where the New Jerusalem functions like a temple (Rev 21:8, 27; 22:15). In 11:1-2 it means to exclude something that was once part of the whole. Elsewhere in the New Testament God's faithful people are described as living stones which are collectively built up into the temple of God (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5-10). So "measuring out" the true Christians among the professed is a part of the final events of earth's history. It is a process of determining who among the professed followers of God are worthy to be stones in His spiritual temple, the true church. Since God already knows those who are His (2 Tim 2:19), this process is less one of decision than a making public of the knowledge God already has regarding the character of His professed followers.

The outer court given to the gentiles reminds us of the wall around the temple itself in the first century. In the Israel Museum (in Jerusalem) one can find a fragment of one of the marker stones at gaps in the wall stating that "Any gentile passing this point is held responsible for his own death which would quickly ensue." The gentile was not welcome inside the temple of Jesus' day! So the language of this text, that the outer court was the place where gentiles were allowed to worship, fits well into the first century context (Rev 11:1-2). The Greek root for "outer" or "outside" (*exo*) is used again in Revelation 22:15, where it portrays the exclusion of the wicked from the reward of the New Jerusalem. In light of the New Testament gospel then, the Gentiles in this text are not to be understood as non-Jews in an ethnic sense, but those who rejected the gospel and failed to enter into relationship with Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.

The word for "trample" (from *pateô*) is significant in Revelation. Its use here anticipates that it is the trampers who get trampled at the end of time. The wicked who trample the holy city here get trampled by the wrath of God in the End (Rev 14:20 and 19:15). Trampling also finds a strong parallel in Luke. In Luke 21:24 it is the holy city, Jerusalem, that is trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are complete (Luke 21:24). Since the trampling mentioned by Luke begins after the fall of Jerusalem in the First Century (Luke 21:20-24) and ends before the final signs are mentioned (21:25-27), the "times of the Gentiles in Luke 21:24 seems roughly equivalent to the 42 month period mentioned five times in different ways in Revelation (11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

The common background for both Revelation 11 and Luke 21 ("trample") is found in several verses of Daniel, where the people of God are trampled down.

"He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time." Daniel 7: 25.

"Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, 'How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled--the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?'" Daniel 8:13.

Daniel describes a religio-political power that changes the times and laws of God and persecutes (tramples) those who resist. And all of this is tied to the sanctuary of God. The

trampling in Revelation 11 also anticipates the persecution of the saints in Revelation 13 (5-7, 15-17).

“Trampling” is also used in the Old Testament for the oppression of God’s people by enemy nations (Isa 63:18; Jer 12:10; Dan 7:7, 19, 23; 8:9-13). In this light, the trampling for 42 months here would seem parallel to the activities of the sea beast for 42 months in Revelation 13:5-7. That passage has strong allusions to Daniel 7 and its portrayal of persecution.

The concept of the “holy city” needs to be understood in light of how the New Testament generally handles the things of Israel. In Old Testament times, God was located with the Jews in the temple at Jerusalem and to be fully in God’s presence required Jews to visit the temple in Jerusalem. So there was an ethnic and geographical dimension to relationship with God in OT times. But in the NT the ethnic dimension was expanded or spiritualized in relationship with Israel’s Messiah, Jesus Christ. Membership in Israel was counted in relation to its Messiah (Gal 3:28-29). And the presence of God was no longer localized at Jerusalem, but through the Holy Spirit was equally present everywhere (John 4:21-24). So the “holy city” in this text is not to be understood as a reference to a literal city, rather Jerusalem is a model for all who are in relationship to Jesus, no matter their ethnicity nor their geographical location. Through the Holy Spirit, all have equal access to Israel’s Messiah.

The above can be demonstrated by seeing how “holy city” is used near the end of the book. In Revelation 21:2 and 10 the “holy city” is another name for the New Jerusalem. But in 21:9, the same city is called the bride of the Lamb, the people of God (cf. 19:6-8). Therefore, the holy city is used in Revelation, not for the literal city of Jerusalem but as a way of describing the NT people of God (Israel), those who are the bride of the Lamb, in relationship with Jesus.

The 42 months of verse two and the 1260 days of verse three would seem to be the same period of time. These figures are repeated in 12:6 (1260 days) and 13:5 (42 months). They are also the same as the three and a half times of Revelation 12:14, which figure is drawn from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. In Revelation the 42 months are always associated with the activities of the wicked and the 1260 days are associated with the activities of God’s people. For centuries these periods of time were read in terms of a day for a year, thus 1260 years. See the explanation of the year-day principle in the comments on chapter 12.

In the book of Revelation, the concept of “forty-two months” is in both instances associated with the wicked (Rev 11:2 and 13:5). On the other hand, the temple and the holy city would represent God’s New Testament people. The holy city recalls the contrast between two cities in the latter half of Revelation: 1) the new Jerusalem (the holy city of God and His people) and 2) the end-time Babylon (the city of Satan and the wicked). Here the holy city represents God’s true people in contrast to the wicked great city (Rev 11:8).

Rev 11:1-2 Conclusion—

A word about the Greek tenses in this passage. It seems that 10:8 - 11:13 is a continuous prophetic explanation of the vision in 10:1-7 (or at least parts of it). As such the tenses of verses 1 and 2 relate to John’s point of view in 10:8-11 rather than the time of the vision in 10:5-7. The passage begins with a present tense (“rise”) followed by an inceptive aorist imperative (“begin to measure”). The imperative force is continued in verse two (aorist imperative followed by aorist subjunctive), but in the second part of that verse the tense shifts significantly to the

future ("they will trample"). So the measuring or not measuring is addressed to John in his immediate situation, but the trampling will occur in his future. The future tenses continue in verse 3, so the two references to 1260 days (11:2-3) are in the future from John's perspective.

The question arises as to how the temple of God in this text is to be understood. The answer requires a general understanding of how temple language is used in the New Testament.

Where is the New Testament sanctuary? The most basic answer is Jesus Himself. In John 2:19-21 Jesus speaks about the temple of His body. Jesus' human body was a temple in which the glory of God dwelled. Then in Matthew 12:6 Jesus claimed to be greater than the temple. Within Judaism of the time there was only one thing greater than the temple and that was the *Shekinah* glory of God that was located in the Old Testament temple. So Jesus was claiming that His body housed the *Shekinah* glory of God. Jesus embodied the very *Shekinah* glory that made the temple a temple. Since the very presence of God was in His own body, the temple of God resided in Jesus while He was on earth. So in the New Testament sense, the temple is located wherever Jesus is.

If the temple in the New Testament is wherever Jesus is, where is Jesus? According to the book of Hebrews, He is in heaven. So there is a sanctuary in heaven--the place where Jesus ministers, intercedes, and judges the people of this earth.

But in the New Testament, temple language is also applied to the church (1 Cor 3:17; 1 Peter 2:5-10, etc.). The church on earth is a temple because it's the place where Jesus dwells today. If people gather in a living room, a campsite on the mountain, or any place there is a gathering of believers, it is a temple of God because Jesus is present. "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20.

Finally, the body is also a temple of the Holy Spirit. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" 1 Corinthians 6:19.

So there are at least three options for understanding the New Testament temple in this text, it could be speaking about the temple in heaven, the church on earth and the body in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

Which of the three main options for understanding temple is in play here?

The temple in this text is clearly not the human body, as there are many bodies (worshipers and Gentiles) in the temple that is described. The text also does not seem to equate the temple with the church as the worshipers (church) are not the temple itself, they are placed inside the temple. So the best explanation of the temple imagery in this text is that it relates to the sanctuary in heaven, which is a frequent component in Revelation (Rev 4-5; 7:15-17; 8:3-5; 11:19; 15:5-8).

This means that John's prophesying again (Rev 10:11) includes a message regarding the temple in heaven. There will be an end-time restoration of the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Dan 8:13-14). This restoration is likely related to the reign and character of God, which is established through the Lamb in Revelation 5. The larger context is that God's character has been impugned by the angel of the Abyss (Rev 9:11) and there has been war in heaven (12:7-12). We learn from all this that sin at its most basic level is a denial of God's rightful rulership over our hearts and hence the entire universe.

The character of God is vindicated in the heavenly sanctuary, so that it can also be vindicated through the proclamation of the gospel on earth. The relation between heaven and earth in Revelation is very intimate. The restoration of the heavenly sanctuary has powerful implications for the work of God on earth as well.

The theme of this passage has to do with the end-time restoration of the sanctuary. In the book of Revelation, the heavenly sanctuary is the most frequent and most central reference, while the body as temple seems to be absent. Sanctuary/temple as church may be represented in passages like Revelation 13:5-7, where the persecuted saints on earth are described as “those who dwell in heaven” (Rev 13:6, ESV). This is consistent with the New Testament idea that the people of God dwell in heavenly places in Christ (Eph 2:6; Col 3:1-5; Rom 6:11-14).

According to Revelation 10-11, in the last days of earth's history there will be a great final proclamation of the gospel. That gospel will include Daniel and Revelation, but it will also emphasize the restoration of the heavenly sanctuary and its services. So the New Testament gospel will speak with power once more at the end of earth's history, but it will be expressed in a unique form and context, the context of the heavenly sanctuary and biblical prophecy.

Some spiritual lessons from the passage: 1) The final presentation of the gospel will be an added-value proclamation uniquely formulated for the End. It will not contradict the everlasting gospel that has consistently been taught in the Old and New Testaments (see my book *Meet God Again for the First Time* to understand the gospel from Genesis to Revelation), but it will be relevant to the End-time in a unique sense.

2) Tragically, God's professed people will be divided by the final proclamation of the gospel. In the end, God's own professed people will find themselves divided by the very proclamation that they are giving to the world. Such a realization should be a source of humility to all to study the Bible. Because of human resistance to God's truth, the final proclamation of the gospel will be a challenge as well as a blessing.

Rev 11:3-6 Introduction--

The word for “witnesses” in the Greek is primarily used for witness in a legal sense, but the same word can also be translated “martyrs” (taking one's witness to the ultimate extent, demonstrating its truthfulness through death). In Revelation the term is used also in relation to Jesus (1:5; 3:14) and His followers (2:13; 17:6). The concept of martyrdom seems to predominate.

There are a number of parallels between the two witnesses and the ministry of Jesus Christ. The 1260 days of ministry approximates the three and a half years of Jesus' earthly ministry. The two witnesses die (like Jesus, attacked by earthly powers), are resurrected, and ascend to heaven just as Jesus did. They “stand before God” (11:4) as Jesus does in heaven (Rev 5:6). They are clothed in sackcloth, a reminder of divinity veiled in the flesh of Jesus while He was on earth. Since the church replays the experience of Jesus on earth, this is evidence in favor of a church interpretation of the two witnesses.

It seems that the author of Revelation intended us to see a number of connections between the two witnesses (Revelation 11) and the frightful beasts that they are battling against (Revelation 13). The sea beast also has a ministry that lasts 42 months (13:5). Just as the

beast out of the abyss makes war against the witnesses and overcomes them (Rev 11:7), so the beast out of the sea makes war against the saints and overcomes them (Rev 13:7). The earth rejoices at the death of the witnesses (Rev 11:10) and is amazed at the activities of the sea beast (Rev 13:3).

Likewise, the two witnesses parallel the land beast: fire comes out of their mouths (Rev 11:5) while the land beast brings fire down from heaven (Rev 13:13). The two witnesses receive the breath of life from God (Rev 11:11) while the land beast breathes the breath of life into the image of the beast (Rev 13:15).

These parallels with chapter 13 suggest that the two witnesses have something to do with the final proclamation of the gospel and the people that make it.

The author here abruptly introduces two new characters as if the reader already knew them. This brings us face to face with a literary dynamic in the Book of Revelation that is extremely important to understand. When introducing a new figure, beast, or concept, John (or the author of the vision, Jesus) takes "time out" to identify that new character before it acts. That identification usually includes a visual description of some sort and a summary of the character's background and history. For example, Jesus is described visually when He appears for the first time (Rev 1:12-16), then He acts in the context of the vision (Revelation 2 and 3). The sea beast is described visually and some of its history and background are given (Rev 13:1-7) before its actions at the time of the vision are described (Rev 13:8, 12-18). Here the two witnesses are described (Rev 11:3-6) before they act or are acted upon in the context of the vision (Rev 11:7-13).

These events take place during the 1260 days of Daniel's prophecy. So this part of Revelation comes before the close of Daniel's time prophecies proclaimed in 10:6. The two witnesses are identified here in terms of their activities during the 1260 day period. Their action at the time of the vision (the "prophesying again"— Rev 10:11) occurs in Revelation 11:7-13.

The two witnesses are given another title in 11:10— they are the two prophets who torment "those who live on the earth." These references to prophets and prophesying (Rev 11:3, 6, 10) recall Revelation 10:11. The two witnesses carry out the command to "prophesy again" to many peoples, nations, languages, and kings (Rev 10:11).

There was a law in the Jewish legal system that, in order for something to be true, it had to be established by at least two witnesses whose testimony could be corroborated (Deut 17:6; 19:15, cf. John 8:17; Heb 10:28). It was a good system because the two witnesses had to separately describe the incident in ways that cohered with each other. It would not be taken seriously if only one person said that so-and-so did it. In the famous O. J. Simpson trial, nothing could be established beyond a reasonable doubt because there were no witnesses at all to the decisive events. So having two witnesses in this passage suggests the seriousness of their message and that the testimony is decisive, true, and believable (Rev 11:3). A likely parallel to the two witnesses is the repeated pair of ideas "The word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9, cf. also Rev 12:17).

Rev 11:3—

The voice speaking here in the first person is the "voice from heaven" that began speaking after the thunders spoke (Rev 10:4). So all of Revelation 10:1 - 11:13 is one connected

visionary narrative. The voice from heaven that began speaking after the thunders spoke (Rev 10:4) and told John to eat the scroll (Rev 10:8-11) now gives the two witnesses divine authority to do what they are doing, which is to prophesy 1260 days in sackcloth. In terms of history, the 1260 days are to be understood as 1260 years (a detailed description of the year-day principle of Bible prophecy is provided as an excursus in relation to Rev 12:14).

“I will give to my two witnesses” is a Hebraic construction that implies the bestowal of divine authority to them. The verb here is in the future tense. The voice from heaven is continuing the explanation of 10:1-7 which began in 10:8. In other words, at a time future to John, the two witnesses will experience the 1260 days and all that follows. After the two witnesses first appear on the scene, they are identified in terms of their appearance and their activities prior to the events of 11:7-13.

The 1260 days seem to be the same as the forty-two months in the previous verse (Rev 11:2) and the time, times and half a time of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. In the book of Revelation, the term forty-two months is used when the time period refers to the wicked (Rev 11:2; 13:5) and the term 1260 days is used when referring to God's people (see also Rev 12:6).

The two witnesses are clearly doing God's work with divine authority. They are active during the same period when God's holy city is trodden down (Rev 11:2). That is the reason they wear sackcloth-- sackcloth often has to do with mourning (Gen 37:34; 2 Kings 19:1; Esth 4:1; Isa 69:10-12; Joel 1:13, etc.) and repentance (1 Kings 20:31-34; 1 Kings 21:27-29; Jonah 3). It seems to be related to the sour stomach that comes from the experience of sharing the gospel (Rev 10:9-10). They are preparing to give God's final message in the last days of earth's history (Rev 11:12-13).

Rev 11:4--

The lampstands remind us of the seven churches (Rev 1:13) except that in chapter one there were seven lampstands and here there are only two. The seven-branched lampstand provided the only light in the OT sanctuary (Holy Place) and it was bright enough to shine over the curtain into the Most Holy Place. Trees have been symbols of God's people (Rev 7:1-3; 8:7; 9:4) and the olive tree is possibly Palestine's most common tree. The images of olive trees and lampstands would seem to point to the church as the reference point for the two witnesses.

The author of Revelation often chooses clusters of allusions that address a similar theme, for example, the throne scene of Revelation 4-5 repeatedly alludes to Old Testament visions of God on His throne (Ezek 1, Dan 7, Isa 6, 1 Kings 22). In Revelation 6 one finds a cluster of allusions to OT texts related to the curses of the covenant (Lev 26, Deut 32, Ezek 14). In Revelation 11 there are frequent allusions to the restoration of the temple in OT times (Lev 16; Ezek 40-48; Zech 3-4). Since the two witnesses function in the context of restoring the temple, the most important OT allusion in this verse may be to the visions of Joshua and Zerubbabel restoring the temple after the return from exile in Babylon (Zech 3-4). In both passages olive trees are mentioned as “before the Lord.” The mention of Joshua and Zerubbabel suggest the two witnesses carry out both royal and priestly roles (cf. Rev 1:5; 5:9-10).

So whoever we conclude the two witnesses are, they represent the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the whole earth through God's Word and His people. And they are involved in the measuring and restoration of the temple that was described in verses 1 and 2.

“Stand” or “standing” (*estôtes*) is a perfect participle which means (along with the present tense of “these are”) that the two witnesses are not something new at this time but have always stood before the Lord of the earth. This is in contrast with the future tense of the vision itself (11:3– “I will give” and “they will prophesy”) from the perspective of John. The witnesses will act at the time of the vision (the period between Daniel’s time prophecies and the close of grace– 10:6-7), but before that action is described the two witnesses (as a new character in Revelation) are introduced and described in terms of their previous activity, including the 1260 days. All of this is after John’s experience in 10:8-11.

To be clear, let me summarize the time sequence of Revelation 10-11. First there is the time frame and experience of John (10:8-11:1). Then there is the time of Daniel’s time prophecies (10:6; 11:2-6). Then comes the Time of the End (10:7; 11:7-13), the time between the close of Daniel’s time prophecies and the close of gospel proclamation in the world.

Rev 11:5–

In this verse fire comes from the mouth (singular) of the two witnesses, in contrast to the many mouths of the strange horses of Revelation 9:17-19. Although there are two witnesses, they have only one mouth, one prophecy (11:6) and one testimony (11:7). Later on, their “body” (*ptôma*, singular) lies in the street of the great city (11:8), people see their “body” (*ptôma*, singular– 11:9) and their bodies (*ptômata*, plural– 11:9) not buried. Even the KJV translation is not precise here, so this is hard to observe in translation. The constant use of the singular for the two witnesses seems intentional to stress their unity. They have no separate identity.

This verse may allude to a couple of OT passages concerning Elijah. In 1 Kings 18 Israel had fallen away from Yahweh to worship the Canaanite god Baal. Elijah called all Israel, including the priests of Baal, to a showdown on Mount Carmel. There two altars would be built, one representing each contender for the role of true God. Elijah and the priests of Baal would each pray and the God that answered by fire would be Israel’s God. When fire came down on Elijah’s altar it demonstrated that Yahweh was the true God of Israel.

In 2 Kings 1:6-15 Elijah is repeatedly confronted with groups of soldiers seeking to arrest him. In the power of God, he warns them that fire will come down from heaven if they do not cease and desist. When they fail to do so, fire comes down from heaven and “devours” them.

Fire comes out of the mouth of Yahweh in 2 Samuel 22:9 and God’s word becomes a fire in the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 5:14).

Although the two witness suffer for the message and operate in sackcloth, they are not powerless. Opposing the two witnesses is dangerous for those who do so.

Rev 11:6–

This verse contains a further allusion to the three-and-a-half years of drought proclaimed by Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; Luke 4:25; Jam 5:17). This drought occurred just before the showdown on Mount Carmel. That drought was more than just an absence of rain, but a drought for God’s word. Elijah was withdrawn from Israel for the entire three and a half years. That underlines a spiritual dimension here also in chapter 11.

While the two witnesses are strongly reminiscent of Elijah, they are also reminiscent of Moses. They turn waters into blood just as Moses did during the exodus from Egypt (Exod 7:17-

21). So the two witnesses are modeled on Moses and Elijah (1 Kings 19), both of whom talked to God on Mount Sinai and both of whom met with Jesus at His transfiguration (Matt 17:1-12; Mark 9:1-13). Malachi also predicts that Elijah would return just before Jesus' second coming (Mal 4:5-6).

Rev 11:3-6 Conclusion—

What is the primary purpose and function of the single message that the two witnesses share? As noted earlier, at least two witnesses are required in Hebrew trials, particularly when a death sentence is in view (Deut 17:6-7). Since Jesus' return is accompanied by the death of the wicked (Rev 6:15-17; 14:14-20; 19:11-21), the function of the witnesses is critical in preparation for the Second Coming, and that event would occur shortly after the function of the witnesses is completed. Witnesses were also required for the transfer of property in the OT (Jer 32:8-12), and Jesus receives back ownership of the earth at His return as well (Rev 11:15-17; 19:16). Appreciation to Jack Cross, who triggered these thoughts.

The two witnesses are the righteous counterparts of the end-time evil powers in the sixth trumpet. During the sixth trumpet, the forces of evil have weapons that come out of the mouth and the tail (Rev 9:17-19). Such a connection is consistent with similar contrasts throughout Revelation. There are 144,000 on God's side (7:4-8) and 200 million on Satan's side (9:16). There is a true Trinity (Rev 1:4-5) and a counterfeit trinity (16:13). There are three angels giving the final proclamation of the gospel (Rev 14:6-21) and there are three frogs gathering the kings of the whole world for the battle of Armageddon (16:14). The cities of Jerusalem and Babylon are contrasted in Revelation 17-21, one is a virtuous bride and the other is a prostitute. The people of God and their work is paralleled to and also contrasted with their opponents and their work.

Who are the two witnesses or what do they represent? There are three main options in the scholarly literature. Many see the witnesses as two literal individuals, either in history (such as Moses and Elijah) or at the end of time (particularly in dispensational futurism— the Left Behind scenario). Another major view is that the two witnesses represent the church and its experience in the world. A less common view, and the one that is the most widely accepted by Seventh-day Adventists, is that the two witnesses represent the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. Which of these three views is most clearly supported in the text? I will not go deeply into the first view, that the two witnesses are two literal individuals for two reasons. Revelation is normally symbolic (Rev 1:1) and such a view does not add much to the understanding of the passage.

There is considerable evidence in these verses that the two witnesses are associated with the Scriptures in some way. The OT scriptures were generally thought to be divided into two parts, the law (Moses) and the prophets (David and Elijah). So the clear references to Moses and Elijah suggest the law and the prophets, which together represented the totality of Scripture as it was known in John's day.

The drought in Elijah's day was not only an absence of rain (1 Kings 17-18) but also about the departure of God's word from Israel. God Himself withdrew from the nation for three-and-a-half years and visited only a widow in a neighboring country (Luke 4:25-26). When

the two witnesses are killed (Rev 11:7), it would suggest that the scriptures and even God's presence are removed from the people.

The OT scriptures give testimony to Jesus (John 5:39-40; 19:35-37). So in the context of the NT era, the two witnesses of Revelation are witnesses to Jesus. This would also suggest they are a reference to the Scriptures.

In Revelation the messages of God are described in a two-fold form— the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (see Revelation 1:2 and 9, etc.) The word of God could refer to the Old Testament and the testimony of Jesus to the oral and written traditions about Jesus that would eventually be collected in what we know as the New Testament. So, there is a sense of God's revelation being in two parts— the older revelation or testament came to the ancient Israelites, and the new revelation came through Jesus and the apostles.

The same Jesus who is twice called the "faithful witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:14, cf. 19:10) is also called the Word of God in Revelation 19:13. So the concepts of witness and God's Word are joined together elsewhere in Revelation.

The concept of the candlesticks reminds us of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6) who was central in the production of the New Testament (John 16:13-14). We have the ongoing witness to the mighty doings and sayings of Jesus through the canonization of the New Testament under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The two witnesses are repeatedly associated with fire and there is an allusion to Jeremiah 5:14, where God's word was like a fire in Jeremiah's bones.

So in the story of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, there are a number of evidences that they should be seen as a symbol of the Bible's witness (perhaps the Old and New Testaments) throughout history (11:4) and then being proclaimed one final time at the end of earth's history (11:11-13). The biggest challenge to that perspective is the fact that while seeing the Bible as Old and New Testaments is natural for us today, the New Testament as we know it was not canonized until the Fourth Century at the earliest. So seeing the two witnesses as the Old and New Testaments is an extended meaning, it would not have been exactly what John would have drawn from this vision. If the two witnesses represent the Bible, their death would represent the rejection of the Bible and its message while their resurrection would represent a renewal of interest in the message of the Bible.

There is a fairly equal amount of evidence that the two witnesses in this text represent the people of God from John's day to the End. One evidence in this passage is the use of sanctuary imagery. There is a message of restoring the temple (Rev 11:1-2) and the mention of lampstands (11:4). As we have seen, in the NT temple imagery is often applied to the church (1 Cor 3:17; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:5-10). The lampstands represent the churches (Rev 1:13, 20). As the lampstands were the only light in the sanctuary, the church brings the light of God to this world. It is also through the church that people come in contact with the scriptures, so the two concepts are not contrary to each other.

Further evidence that the two witnesses refer to the people of God is the mention in the immediate context of the holy city (cf. 11:2). This phrase is used elsewhere in the New Testament to apply OT prophecies regarding Jerusalem to Jesus and His people (Acts 4:24-28 and 15:15-18). In the NT, OT texts about Jerusalem are consistently applied to the church— the people of God. The church on earth is a "new Jerusalem" and God sees the church functioning

much like ancient Jerusalem. If a Gentile wanted to find God in OT times, he or she went to geographic Jerusalem. To find God today, you need to go wherever His people are. In the OT era, the temple in Jerusalem was the holiest place on earth. In the age of the Holy Spirit, no place on earth is any nearer or further from the presence of God. This is an important distinction when it comes to reading the things of Jerusalem and Israel in the book of Revelation. I would refer readers to the works of Hans LaRondelle, who most powerfully demonstrated the above principle in his writings.

Still further evidence that the two witnesses are a symbol for the church is that witnessing is the primary task of the New Testament people of God (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). Not only that, trees often represent the people of God (Rev 7:1-3; 8:7; and 9:4) and the olive tree is the most common tree in Palestine. So two olive trees that witness would suggest that the people of God are in view in this passage.

The two witnesses are parallel to the mouth and tail of Revelation 9:19 and also the land beast of Revelation 13:11-18. Just as Satan's forces are made up of people and organizations that support his ends, so the two witnesses can represent people who support God's purposes on this earth.

In summary, you can make a great case that the two witnesses represent the church or that they represent the authority behind the church--the Word of God; the Old and New Testament Scriptures. While many Adventists are familiar with Ellen White's application of this passage to the Bible in the French Revolution (*The Great Controversy*, 266-268, 274), she also saw echos of the church in the two witnesses. "The church will yet see troublous times. She will prophesy in sackcloth. But although she must meet heresies and persecutions, although she must battle with the infidel and the apostate, yet by the help of God she is bruising the head of Satan. The Lord will have a people as true as steel, and with faith as firm as the granite rock. They are to be His witnesses in the world, His instrumentalities." 4T594

Ken Mindoro suggests another statement that supports a "church" reading of the witnesses, COL 418: " But no man can impart that which he himself has not received. In the work of God, humanity can originate nothing. No man can by his own effort make himself a light bearer for God. It was the golden oil emptied by the heavenly messengers into the golden tubes, to be conducted from the golden bowl into the lamps of the sanctuary, that produced a continuous bright and shining light. It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables him to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely, to shine out again in good works, in real, heartfelt service for God." COL 418. Some might argue that this refers to Zechariah and not to Revelation, but Zechariah is clearly in mind at Revelation 11:4.

If the people of God are the primary identity of the two witnesses, then the main thrust of the passage is the final proclamation of the gospel and the suffering of the witnesses that would proclaim it. During the 1260 days, the two witnesses suffer in obscurity for 1260 days (11:3-6) with a climax in verses 7-10. Their ascension to heaven (11:11-13) corresponds to the final proclamation of the gospel (cf. 14:6-7). The experience of the witnesses would also parallel 10:7-11, where the final proclamation to the nations is sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly.

If the Bible identity of the two witnesses is primary, we should look for a special problem with the Scriptures right around the time when the prophecies of Daniel come to an end--1798. Many people in the time of the French Revolution came to a conclusion that the prophecies of Daniel were completed. During the French Revolution, for a period of roughly three-and-a-half years, the Scriptures and Christianity were both declared to be dead. If that is the primary direction the text is heading, the resurrection of the two witnesses and their ascension to heaven would illustrate the rekindling of interest in the Bible over the last two centuries and its greater prominence yet to come.

Whether one chooses the church or the Bible as the primary reference of the two witnesses, the ultimate end of the passage is the same. It is the prominence of the word of God and/or the people who proclaim it in the course of Christian history (11:3-6) and the final warning message that is given to the world (Revelation 11:11-13). Secularism and political religion seek to undermine the word of God but still cannot destroy the faith of the true people of God.

If you take the Scripture view of the two witnesses, the fire coming out of their mouths suggests that ignoring the word of God is dangerous-- there are huge consequences for not taking it seriously. It is like ignoring the manual that comes with a car and creating problems that take more time to solve than it takes to read the manual. The word of God tells us how we were made and how we best function.

Rev 11:7-13 Introduction-- After the close of the 1260 days, another way of describing the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, there is a final message to a dying world. In the transition between verses 6 and 7 we visit again the close of Daniel's time prophecies asserted in Rev 10:5-7.

Rev 11:7--

Begins with *hotan* and a subjunctive (for those who have some sense of the Greek). This construction can be interpreted in two different ways. 1) The phrase can be understood as repetitive, "every time" they finish their testimony. 2) The other option is punctiliar, in other words, "at that very time" that they finish their testimony. The former interpretation would imply that the ascension of the beast from the Abyss and the death and resurrection of the witnesses is a repetitive occurrence. This does not fit the rest of the passage, so the second interpretation is preferred. At the time that the two witnesses finish their testimony (which lasted for 1260 "days"), the events of verses 7-13 follow in their order.

This verse announces the end of Daniel's time prophecies (cf. Rev 10:5-7). The world here enters the "time of the end" (Dan 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9), which continues until the end of the sixth trumpet (11:14-15; 10:7) or the second coming itself. In this passage the two witnesses finish their testimony for a period, but then "prophesy again" (cf. 10:11) in verses 11-13. That is the final proclamation of the gospel to the world so that the End can truly come (cf. Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10; Rev 14:6-7).

A new figure is introduced as "the beast from the abyss". The original readers were expected to know who this was because it has a definite article in the original. Since we are not original readers and have not heard John's preaching, we only know what we find in the book

of Revelation. So we will need to carefully examine details and hints within the book. This is the only beast in Daniel and Revelation that is not described visually in some way at its first appearance. We don't know what it looks like. It is mentioned again in 17:8.

In the Old Testament the Abyss first appears in Genesis 1:2 with reference to the condition of the earth (covered by a stormy sea) before creation (see also Gen 7:11). In Jeremiah 4:23-30 it refers to the desolate condition of Palestine during the exile to Babylon.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, the Abyss is the home of the demons, but it is a place where they are confined, they do not reside there willingly (Luke 8:31; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Locusts come up out of the Abyss like smoke from a great furnace (Rev 9:1). A beast comes up out of the Abyss in Revelation 17:8, representing the great civil and secular powers that unite against the people of God at the end-time. Finally, Satan is bound in the Abyss, which prevents him from "deceiving the nations" (Rev 20:1-3). So when something comes out of the Abyss it suggests a demonic attack. So I would conclude that the beast from the Abyss is either Satan or an earthly power(s) controlled by Satan.

Most scholars believe that there are strong allusions to Daniel 7 in this passage. There the little horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them (Dan 7:21). What strengthens an allusion here is the curious expression "made war **with** them (the two witnesses)." (The Greek in 11:7 is better translated "with" rather than "against") This wording occurs also in Theodotion's version of the Greek of Daniel 7:21 as well as in the Aramaic original of that verse. In Daniel that war occurs during the time, times and half a time (1260 days). But here the emphasis is on the close the 1260 rather than the full extent of it. The beast from the abyss is clearly an enemy power that attacks and in some sense prevails over God's people and/or His Word.

While the beast from the abyss arises at the end of the forty-two months within the narrative, does it arise as a brand new power or was it lurking in the background of the entire 1260 period? One possibility is that the beast from the Abyss is associated with the beast from the sea, which dominated for forty-two months in Revelation 13:5. Sea and abyss can be parallel images, as we know from Genesis 1:2. There "darkness was on the face of the deep" (abyss in the Greek translation) and the deep is paralleled to the "waters" over which the spirit/wind from God was moving. Both beasts "come up" (*anabainon*) and wage war with the people of God. So is the beast from the abyss the same as the beast from the sea or is it a new or different entity? Something else to consider is a parallel with Revelation 9:1, in which the abyss is the place from which demonic locusts come, led by the angel of the abyss, Apollyon or Abaddon (Rev 9:11). The beast from the sea has more of a religious flavor, while the locusts from the abyss have a more anti-religious flavor (see comments on those passages later). So the identity of the beast from the abyss is somewhat ambiguous in the text.

In the Greek, "comes up" or "ascends" is a present participle which expresses continuing action at the same time as the main verb, "finished" in this case. However, since the participle is used as an adjective rather than an adverb in this sentence construction, the time of "coming up" may not be as crucial to the verse as it could be. The beast comes up when the two witnesses finish their testimony (singular in the Greek). It is probably not the sea beast in spite of some parallels (Rev 13).

In the narrative the two witnesses are not only killed, they are “overcome.” Nearly always in Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5-6; 21:7), this term is used in a positive way for spiritual victory rather than merely military conquest (but see 13:7 and 17:14). So the combination of overcame and kill fits the two major identities of the two witnesses as the people of God and also the Scriptures.

In traditional Seventh-day Adventist interpretation, the two witnesses are understood as the Scriptures. If that is so, seeing the beast from the abyss as France or the French Revolution is attractive. The Revolution produced perhaps the most fierce attack on the scriptures in the history of the world up to that time. If the period of 1260 closed in the 1790s, this interpretation fits well. In the fifth trumpet we see demonic plagues with a secular twist (more on that when we get there). The atheism of the French Revolution marked a time when the secularizing trend in the world became evident to all. But the French Revolution was also the foundation for things like democracy, communism, religious liberty, and universal military conscription. In reaction to the French Revolution, there developed the most widespread distribution of the gospel and the Scriptures in the worldwide missionary movements that began with the 1790s. Although there are challenges with the historical details, the French Revolution interpretation of the beast from the abyss fits the situation in the world in the 1790s and is certainly one serious option for interpreting Revelation 11.

Rev 11:8–

In the Greek, “their bodies is actually “the body of them”— singular. But in verse 9 the plural is used (in verse 5 the two witnesses also have just one mouth between them). This surprising shift indicates that the two witnesses are not to be thought of as a pair of individuals. They are never separated, instead they function together like a single entity, symbolizing either the Scriptures or the church as a whole.

The great city here is contrasted with the holy city in verse 2. This is the first mention of the concept. Later on in the book, the great city is equated with Babylon, the “great city that rules over the world” (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) although “great city” can also appear by itself again in 17:18 and 18:16. The contrast between the great city and the holy city here anticipates the strong interaction between Jerusalem and Babylon in the latter part of the book. The great city represents the power of evil in opposition to God, particularly at the very end of time, although this reference appears earlier. So there are a pair of contrasts implied in this verse. The beast is in opposition and contrast to the two witnesses of verses 3-6 while the great city is in opposition and contrast to the holy city of verse 2.

Sodom is an ancient city renowned for self-indulgence, luxury, adultery, lies, neglect of poverty, and unnatural sexual behavior (see Genesis 18 and 19; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:46-58; 2 Pet 2:7-8; Jude 7). Interestingly, while the story of Genesis 19 can be read as describing homosexual behavior, this is not emphasized in the biblical summaries of Sodom’s sin.

Egypt was an ancient power in opposition to God and His people. It was not only known for its immorality, luxury and anti-law behavior but in the Bible also for its self-sufficiency and atheism (Exod 5:2). The Egyptians felt self-sufficient because they depended the Nile River, not rainfall, for their crops. The river overflows and waters the land that would otherwise be bone

dry. It almost never rains in Egypt, yet it is easy to grow crops there because of the abundant water that flows in from further south in Africa.

The anti-God aspect of Exod 5:2 is heightened when one realizes that the fifth trumpet (which also mentions Abyss), which portrays as well as ancients could the kind of secularism the world has experienced in the last century, has allusions to the plagues of Egypt, particularly locusts and darkness.

There were many enemy powers mentioned in the OT, including Assyria, Syria, Persia, Greece, and the Philistines. The book of Revelation mentions only three of these great enemy powers— Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon. The three have a number of commonalities. All of them are associated with significant rivers (the Jordan, the Nile, and the Euphrates). All of them were visited by people of God who served as witnesses to them. All of them rejected these witnesses; and experienced devastating consequences. In the case of Egypt and Babylon the consequences were closely associated with the rivers they depended on. In the battle of Armageddon, the drying up of the Euphrates becomes the symbol of the loss of Babylon's power (16:12). These three powers here become symbols of all powers who hear but reject the gospel. Later on in the book, Babylon alone becomes the representative of all the others.

There are two possibilities for the place where “their Lord was crucified.” First, it might be a reference to literal Jerusalem as also being in some sense an enemy of God. In the OT, God often treated Jerusalem as an enemy. Even though the temple was there, it was often neglected as the people turned to other gods. If this was in mind here, the reference would be to the literal Jerusalem that crucified Jesus. On the other hand, it might not be a reference to the city of Jerusalem at all, but simply associating the death of the two witnesses with the crucifixion of Jesus. Sodom and Egypt then would also be places where the Lord was crucified in a spiritual sense. In any case, the death of the two witnesses is seen in the light of the cross. They faced the same kind of opposition that Jesus did (both religious and political). In this text, Jesus is crucified again in the person of His witnesses.

Rev 11:9—

The three-and-a-half days sound like a miniature of the three-and-a-half years the two witnesses were clothed in sackcloth. This dynamic illustrates the day-year equivalence in the minds of ancient Hebrew thinkers. This kind of year-day thinking in the Bible laid the groundwork for the year-day principle that was introduced into prophetic interpretation during the Middle Ages. See comments on Revelation 12:14.

The sackcloth represents the lack of respect with which people regarded them, the obscurity in which they operated. This obscurity and disrespect here intensifies with their death and bodily exposure. Exposing dead bodies was a great disgrace in the ancient world and thus a sign of gross disrespect (cf. 1 Kings 13:21-31; Psa 79:1-4; Jer 8:1-2; 14:15-19).

We are also reminded of the three days Christ spent in the tomb, so this scene is probably an allusion to Christ's death and burial. He was crucified in the "midst of the week" (Dan 9:27), so the three and a half days may allude to Daniel 9.

The actions of some from every “people, language, and nation” produce a bitter result that reminds the reader of the bitterness that occurred when John ate the scroll (Rev 10:8-11)—he would have to prophesy again. A similar series of terms to those used in 10:11 describe the

people who reject the message. The bitterness involves the fact that the message is rejected by the very people it was intended for. It was an extremely painful rejection and a gross indignity to be refused burial (1 Kings 21:24; Jeremiah 8:1-2 and 14:16; Psalm 79:2-3).

Rev 11:10–

In the book of Revelation, a characteristic reference to the wicked is "the inhabitants of the earth" or "those who live on the earth" (6:10; 8:13; 13:8 and 14; 14:6; and 17:2 and 8). The phrase consistently refers to those who oppose God and His people. In this case, it is the same group as the "peoples, tribes, languages and nations" in verse 9.

Those who live on the earth send each other gifts to celebrate the death and exposure of the two witnesses. There is a possible allusion to the time when the Jews celebrated their deliverance from Haman's death decree by giving each other gifts (Esther 9:19 and 22). If it is an allusion to Esther, it is probably the only intentional one in the Book of Revelation. There may also be reference to the lifelong enemies, Pilate and Herod, who were reconciled in the process of crucifying Christ (Luke 23:12). People can be united by a common opposition to truth and goodness.

The two witnesses as tormentors recalls the story of Elijah, who was called a "troubler of Israel" in 1 Kings 18:17 and an enemy of the king in 1 Kings 21:20. Ahab had a similar relationship with the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8).

Rev 11:11–

There is an interesting shift of tenses here. Up until now the main verb tenses in chapter 11 have been future. The story is viewed from the perspective of John's experience in 10:8-11. But with verse 11 the tense shifts to past (aorist indicative in the Greek), "the spirit of life . . . *entered* into them." These past tenses continue through verse 13. Since past tenses are typical in describing a vision (the vision occurs before it is written down so the writer naturally uses past tenses to describe it), it appears that the explanation of the vision of 10:1-7 (Rev 10:8 - 11:10) has now ended and John is moving into a new vision, which elaborates on a portion of the earlier vision, the final proclamation of the gospel in Rev 10:7. So 11:11-13 comes after the events of the preceding narrative and is also after the close of Daniel's time prophecies. So the past tenses of 11:11-13 should not cause readers to assume that the events described here occur before the events of 11:1-10.

The indignities of verses 9 and 10 last only "three-and-a-half days." From the Greek, it is not clear if the "after" means immediately after or at some time further along. It could be some time after. If the three-and-a-half days are prophetic along the lines of the year-day principle (see excursus in chapter 12), there were three-and-a-half years in which the two witnesses were silenced. Some time after that period of gross disrespect, the "breath of life" entered the two witnesses, a likely allusion to Genesis 2:7, where God breathed the breath of life into Adam. After this action, the two witnesses were resurrected and their re-appearance terrified the onlookers. It is God Himself who brings them back to life. The word for "breath" here is the same Greek word as "spirit." (*Pneuma*).

There is a likely allusion here also to the resurrection of the dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel 37:9-10. As God speaks the word of life in Ezekiel, breath comes into a field of dry bones which stand up to their feet in a narrative with many similarities to the experience of the two

witnesses here. The two witnesses, whoever they are, stand up because they have the breath (Spirit) of God in them.

Many commentators in the course of church history saw the events of Revelation 11:7-11 as taking place in the context of the French Revolution at the close of the 1260 days (1789-1800). If the two witnesses represent the Bible, their death and exposure could refer to a roughly three-and-a-half year period in which the revolutionaries sought to forever "abolish" the Bible (1793-1797). That period includes what has aptly been called the Reign of Terror, an era of unbridled atheism and hostility toward Christianity. While the greatest attack on the Bible occurred in the 1790s, soon after came the rise of the great Bible Society movement which led to the Bible being more widespread than at any time in history before it. This accompanied the great missionary movement (starting with William Carey in India) in which Protestants took advantage of colonialism to spread the gospel in places where it had not been much heard before.

The ones who respond with fear in this passage are presumably "those who live on the earth" (11:10) and the "peoples, tribes, languages and nations" (11:9), the opponents who have rejected the two witnesses and rejoiced over their demise. This "terror," however, may not be a totally negative response, it could be a godly fear. The Greek word (*phobos*) is the same word as "fear" in Revelation 14:7. If that connection is intentional (and verse 13 suggests it is), the revival of the two witnesses is closely related to the judgment hour message to "fear God and give him glory" in 14:7. The resurrection of the witnesses would bring about the same result as the message of the first angel. So Revelation 11:11-13 is associated with the final proclamation of the gospel.

Rev 11:12–

The "loud voice" here anticipates 14:7 and to a lesser degree the expression in 18:2. The witnesses here do not ascend to heaven for their own sake but in order to be observed by their enemies on earth. Since there are multiple evidences that verses 11-13 concern the final proclamation of the gospel, here we see that this final gospel will have something to say about what is going on in heaven. In 11:1-2 there is a view of the heavenly sanctuary and in 14:7 it is declared in the context of the "everlasting gospel" (14:6) that the hour of God's judgment has come. So the final proclamation of the gospel will include a view of the heavenly sanctuary and a proclamation of judgment.

This ascension to heaven recalls the ascensions of Jesus (Acts 1:9) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). Moses was presumably resurrected and raised to heaven also (Jude 9; Matt 17:3-4 and parallels). Jesus' ascension was associated with witnessing, "You will be witnesses for me." (Acts 1:8) Also like Jesus, the two witnesses ascend to heaven in a cloud. Clouds seem to indicate the presence of divinity (Exod 13:21; 1 Kings 8:11; Rev 1:7 and 14:14). When the two witnesses ascend, it is a divine happening and we are seeing God more clearly through them.

The three angels begin to proclaim the everlasting gospel from mid-heaven in Revelation 14:6. That message and this passage appear to be the same final proclamation, a message from God; a final warning to a dying world, and a call to "fear God and give Him glory." Other possible parallels include Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Moses (Jude 9), who were also raised

to heaven. So this passage pulls together a number of themes found throughout the Bible to show that it is describing the final proclamation of the gospel at the very end of the world.

Rev 11:13–

This earthquake and the ascension of the previous verse happen at exactly the same time, “at that very hour.” So this passage ties events on earth with events in heaven (Rev 11:12). Earthquakes are used in the Bible to portray the turmoil and upheaval that will characterize the End (Matt 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; Rev 16:18). In the Greek, the wording (translated “severe earthquake” in the NIV) is the same as the first earthquake in the book (Rev 6:12--the sixth seal). This earthquake would seem to signal the approach of the final events of earth's history. The earthquake in 16:18-20 is not parallel to the one mentioned in 11:13 and 6:12, it fits better with the second earthquake in the sixth seal, the one mentioned in 6:14. The latter earthquake comes after the close of probation. The one in the current text leaves people open to respond to the gospel.

As a result of the great earthquake a tenth of the city (presumably the same as the great city of 11:8– Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon) fell. This fall is only partial at this point, it is a foretaste of the seventh plague which includes the total collapse of Babylon (Rev 16:17 - 18:24). If one takes the position that the great city of verse 7-8 represents the actions of France during the French Revolution, such events would only be a portion of the “great city’s” history located at that point in time. The events in this verse are triggering the very final events of earth's history. We are still located within the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:13 - 11:13) and the end of all things only takes place at the time of the seventh trumpet.

Another reading of this verse is that the earthquake is to be taken in a spiritual sense, as parallel to the ascension of the witnesses in verse 12. In such a reading, the earthquake is the final proclamation of the gospel and the 7000 who “die” are those who come out of Babylon at that time (Rev 18:1-4). This would be consistent with the meaning of the 7000 in the Elijah story (1 Kings 19: 18), but would contradict the strong evidence that a positive response to the gospel is offered by the “remnant” at the end of the verse, as we will see next.

The 7000 mentioned here seems to be an allusion to the story of Elijah, where the prophet is told by God that there were 7000 living Israelites that remained faithful to Yahweh (1 Kings 19:18; Rom 11:4-5). After the earthquake in this text, there were 7000 dead residents of the great city, the opponent of God in the closing events of Revelation (Rev 11:13). It seems likely these 7000 represent those who resist the final gospel message. The verse goes on to tell us that the survivors (in Greek it is the same word translated “remnant” in Revelation 12:17) were terrified and gave glory to God. This is exactly the response that is called for in Revelation 14:7: “Fear God and give Him glory.” Nebuchadnezzar, too, gave glory to the “king of heaven” after experiencing the divine judgments (Dan 4:34-37, Theod.). So the remnant of the great city seems to be giving a positive response to the final gospel call (cf. Ezek 28:22; 36:23). That there are a faithful remnant in Babylon is clear from Revelation 18:4. For those familiar with the concept of “remnant,” remnants are not always small or even a minority. In this case the remnant is 90% of the great city. That should not be read as an exact prediction of how many will be saved in the end (that’s how western minds think, but not eastern so much), it is simply telling us that the final remnant will be surprisingly large.

The Bible versions fairly consistently translate the 7000 as “people” or “men.” But this masks a very interesting expression in the Greek. 7000 “names of men” (*onomata anthrôpôn*) were killed in the earthquake. Killing “names of men” seems to be unique in the Bible to this passage. Why this expression? In the Hebrew context names have to do with character (see this clearly seen in Revelation at 3:1 and 15:4). In Revelation 3:12 Jesus promises to write the name of God and His own new name on those who overcome in Philadelphia. In Revelation 14:1 the 144,000 have the name of the Lamb and of His Father written on their foreheads. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are inscribed on the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12). On the other hand, in Revelation 13:8 and 17:8 there are people whose names are not written in the Book of Life. One beast is full of names of blasphemy (Rev 17:3), another blasphemes the name of God (13:6, cf. 13:1). In this verse the 7000 “names of men” are contrasted with the “remnant” who glorify God. The point of emphasis seems to be a difference in character between the two groups.

To the Hebrew mind, killing “the names of men” could mean wiping them out of their genealogies. As long as Hebrews were in genealogies, they lived on in the memories of their descendants. If the genealogy was lost, it was as if they had never lived. Worse than death in their minds was to be forgotten.

Throughout the New Testament giving glory to God is always positive (John 9:24; Rom 4:20; 1 Pet 2:12; Rev 15:4; 19:7) and failure to do so is always negative (Luke 17:18; Acts 12:23; Rev 16:9). There is, perhaps, one ambiguous reference. In Philippians 2:10-11, all in the entire universe, including the wicked, confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. But the language in Revelation 11:13 specifically anticipates Revelation 16:9: “They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.” In 16:9 giving glory to God is equated with repenting (Revelation 16:9 and 9:20-21), so the remnant of 11:13 are clearly repenting.

Summing up: A large portion of the people who see all the events that happen to the two witnesses respond in the way called for by the first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7 (“fear God and give Him glory”). Comparing 11:13 and 16:9 tells us that the final gospel message divides the world into two groups: 1) the remnant who glorify God and 2) the rest of mankind who refuse to repent (in chapter 17 the unrepentant are further divided into religious and political opponents of God). Revelation 11:11-13 needs to be read in parallel with 14:6-7 and 16:9. In 11:13 the underlying theme is the remnant in contrast with Babylon (the great city). This verse is the clearest juxtaposition of the two concepts in Revelation.

Rev 11:11-13 Summary— In the book of Joel, the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-32) is followed by an apocalyptic war (Joel 3:1-17). Here the spirit, the “breath (*pneuma*) of life from God” activates the two witnesses first and then come the consequences to the Great City in verse 13. But since this passage is part of the sixth trumpet, the description of a great army in Revelation 9:16-19 must be in the background here. We are dealing with the final proclamation of the gospel, which precipitates a final worldwide battle. That battle is elaborated in chapters 16-18 as the battle of Armageddon.

Whether the two witnesses represent the scriptures or the people of God, the climax of the passage is the final proclamation of the gospel in the language of the first angel. There is an

acceptance of the gospel by a significant number of people. We can expect the gospel to go forth in mighty power in the context of prophecy, the restoration of the heavenly sanctuary, and drawing the people's attention to the great final gospel as we approach the last days of earth's history.

Rev 10:1 - 11:13 Conclusion— Perhaps this is the best time and place to summarize the whole time sequence of the “interlude” between the 6th (9:13-21) and 7th (11:15-18) trumpets. There is a vision in 10:1-7, followed by an explanation in 10:8 - 11:13 (remember that chapter divisions are not inspired, they were added much later than the text). In terms of time, I see the following sequence in the “interlude”: The vision of 10:17 covers the big picture from John's day to the End, including the open scroll, the time of Daniel's prophecies, and the Time of the End.

The explanation that follows (10:8 - 11:10) sequences what is going on in the vision, using present and then future tenses. Such explanations always come in the time and place of the prophet's experience (see Daniel 2 and 7 as examples). First, you have John's experience with the “voice from heaven” and the scroll angel (10:8:10). This expresses the disappointment John experiences when he realizes the End will not come as a result of his vision (by extension John's experience is also an acted parable of the Millerite experience at the end of Daniel's time prophecies). Second, there is a summary of what comes after John, his prophecy must continue working into the future (10:11). Third are the events during the 1260 days (11:16) and lastly come the events that occur after the 1260 days (11:7:13). The time sequence in 11:1-10 is signaled by the future tenses (from John's perspective).

11:11-13 clearly follows what occurs in 11:7-10 but moves back into past tense, so it is a new vision focusing on the final proclamation of the gospel (which was introduced in 10:7). Revelation 10:8 - 11:13, therefore, contains a clear and specific sequence of events from John's time until the blowing of the seventh trumpet (close of grace or probation): John's experience (10:8-10), the 1260 (11:1-6), the abuse of the witnesses (11:7-10), and the final proclamation of the gospel (11:11-13). 10:11 should be seen as a summary in advance of 11:1-13.

Rev 11:1-13 Spiritual lessons— 1) The majority is not always right. The masses of the people felt vindicated by and rejoiced over the downfall of the witnesses. Because of sinful human nature, it is almost never safe to go with the majority. 2) Enemies become united in their common opposition to God's people even though they have nothing else in common. Sometimes parents are almost more willing to see their children be secular or atheist than to become a part of another denomination. The relationships that we see between family and friends will become a world-wide matter. Nothing unites people like opposition to God and to His people.

Rev 11:14—

This is one of the most important structuring passages in all of Revelation. It builds on 8:13 and 9:12. The sum of these three texts is that there are three “woes” coming at the end of the seven trumpets. These three woes are parallel to trumpets five, six and seven. The first woe and fifth trumpet is covered by 9:1-11. The third woe and seventh trumpet is covered from 11:15-18. A combination of 9:12 and 11:14 makes it clear that the material in between (9:13 -

11:13) is the second woe and that all of it is included in the sixth trumpet. This does not mean that the passage contains no references to anything before or after the sixth trumpet, only that the predominant focus of the whole passage is the time of the sixth trumpet. On the meaning of “woe” see comments on Revelation 8:13.

11:15-18 Introduction–

The seventh trumpet is marked off from what goes before by the structuring statement of 11:14. The seventh trumpet and the third woe are one and the same thing.

Commentators are divided whether to include verse 19 as part of the seventh trumpet or not. I prefer to connect 11:19 with chapter 12 and beyond because it is a view of the heavenly sanctuary and such views as a rule precede the visions that follow in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:12-20; 4-5; 8:2-6; 15:5-8). On the other hand, the principle of duodirectionality suggests that the boundaries between verses 18 and 19 are not hard and fast.

To understand the seventh trumpet, you have to start with Revelation 10:5-7. That passage alludes to Daniel 12:7 (see comments on Rev 10:5-7 for detail).

The point in Revelation 10 is that the time prophecies of Daniel have run their course at the time when the angel makes the proclamation “time will be no more.” But this is not the end of the world or the end of God’s grace, but introduces a final period in which the gospel (“mystery of God”) will be preached (*euangelisen*) to the world (10:7, cf. 14:7; Matt 24:14). The “unsealing” time of Daniel (Dan 12:4, 13) is entered at this point and the gospel is proclaimed at that point in the context of the books of Daniel and Revelation (Rev 10:5-7, 11). Just before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the proclamation of the gospel ends, which would be the end of God’s grace, or as many call it, the close of probation (Rev 10:7). So the blowing of the seventh trumpet takes the world from the close of grace to the Second Coming itself and perhaps beyond (if there is a reference to the close of the millennium in Rev 11:18). What is clear is that the seventh trumpet brings us to the very close of earth's history.

This sounding of the seventh angel picks up from Revelation 10:7 where the seventh angel “is about to sound.” He doesn’t actually blow the trumpet in 10:7 but is on the very verge. Revelation 10:8 - 11:13 describes what the people of God will be doing during the final period between the closing of Daniel’s time prophecies and the close of probation. The seventh trumpet follows the events of Revelation 11 and is the final consummation of all things. This is the period of time between the close of probation and the end, between the final proclamation of the gospel and the second coming of Jesus--a horrific period of trouble.

The verbal tenses of the Greek in this passage are interesting. With a handful of exceptions, they are all aorist indicatives, which means that in general they are treating the action as a whole as if it were in the past. But in the past with reference to what? This passage is in the future with relation to the first six trumpets, so in the past with reference to what?

These are what is known as “visionary aorists.” They express the past tense with reference to the time of the vision. The time of the vision is the seventh trumpet itself. In relation to that point in history (within the seventh trumpet) the kingdom of the world “has become” the kingdom of Christ (11:15), the 24 elders “fell down” before the throne and “worshiped” God (11:16– used almost like a present tense within the vision), God “has begun to reign” (11:17), the nations “became angry” (11:18– passive) and God’s wrath “has come”

(11:18– active). The force of the last aorist (“has come”) extends through the rest of the verse, which has no more main verbs. What has come? The time to judge, to give a reward and to destroy (infinitives which express a general purpose, somewhat timeless).

There are exceptions among the main verbs. In 11:15 Christ “will reign” forever and ever (future indicative). From the standpoint of the vision, Christ’s reign is extended through eternity. In 11:17 the “giving thanks” of the 24 elders is present indicative, what is happening at the point of the vision. And the elders give thanks that God “has taken” power (perfect indicative). The perfect tense implies completed action. The taking power (perfect) precedes the beginning to reign (aorist).

Much of this is very hard to translate into English, where the verbs have much less variety in form, so it was necessary to unpack these tense shifts briefly.

Rev 11:15–

The concept of “voices” or “noises” comes at crucial turning points in Revelation (Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). But this is the only place in Revelation where you have the adjective “great” or “loud” along with the voices. On the other hand, there is an absence of other phenomena. 4:5 adds lightning and thunder, 8:5 and 11:19 add lightning, thunder and an earthquake, 16:18 adds lightning, thunder and a “great” earthquake. So there is something of an escalation going on in 4:5, 8:5, 11:19 and 16:18.

This verse proclaims the arrival of the kingdom for which God's people have prayed through the centuries– “thy kingdom come” (Matt 6:10; Luke 11:2). This kingdom was anticipated in Old Testament times (Isa 9:7; Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27; Obad 21; Mic 4:8) and was inaugurated invisibly in the ministry of Jesus while He was on earth (Matt 3:2; Mark 1:15; Luke 17:20-21). In Revelation 5 Jesus’ right to rule over the entire universe is formally recognized in heaven, in the context of His ascension at Pentecost. But here the kingdom is brought visibly and finally into the history of this earth, shattering all opposition (11:18) and fully establishing God’s direct rule over this world and its people.

The phrase “of our Lord and of His Christ” is probably an allusion to the messianic Psalm 2. The New Testament assigns this Psalm to David (Acts 4:24-26). The occasion was probably Solomon’s coronation (David was still alive) and captive nations conspired to test the new ruler and see if he could hold onto his territory. They plotted against the Lord and His Messiah, the new king (Psa 2:1-2). But the psalm clearly looks beyond that event and anticipates the final, worldwide dominion of the “Son” (Psa 2:7-9). That prophecy is fulfilled in this verse.

Rev 11:16–

Recalls the scene in Revelation 4 and 5 where the 24 elders are introduced (4:4) and are frequently seen in worship (4:9-11; 5:8-10, 14). They appear at decisive points throughout the book (Rev 7:11, 13; 14:3; 19:4).

Rev 11:17–

“Who is and who was” is an interesting shift from the earlier three-fold formulas (Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8). What is missing here is the phrase “is to come.” Evidently, that phrase is no longer relevant since the elders are celebrating that the kingdom of God has already come in its

finality. Readers of older versions like the King James will notice the phrase added there to harmonize with the earlier formulas, but since the manuscript evidence is divided here and not at the earlier locations, the addition of the phrase would seem to be an attempt to harmonize rather than diminish. Thus the KJV here reflects later scribal activity attempting to “fix” problems in the text.

“Begun to reign” translates an inceptive aorist, which focuses on the beginning of an action rather than the whole action at some point in the past. The 24 elders celebrate a change in history, God has now taken up power and authority and begun to reign in a way that had not occurred before.

Rev 11:18-19 Introduction–

With this passage we come to a major turning point in the structure of Revelation (Rev 11:18-19). The first half of the book is divided into churches, seals, and trumpets with clearly defined introductory visions. The second half of the book is more consistently concerned with the final events at the end of earth's history and is of more difficult structure. The decisive turning point between these two halves of Revelation is in this pair of verses. Verse 19 is a heavenly temple scene, which signals a new section of the book (see similar introductory scenes in Rev 1:12-20; 4 and 5; 8:2-6). Verse 18 is the climax of the seventh trumpet but also anticipates everything that follows. It is like the key to the author's own structuring of the second half of the book. It is what I call a duodirectional text. Ranko Stefanovic calls it a “springboard text.” I use the term duodirectional because passages like this “look both ways,” forward and backward, in the text. Thus, these two verses together are like a key-in-advance to help us make sense of the second half of the book, as we will see below.

Duodirectionality is a major literary pattern in Revelation. In most books, chapters begin with an introduction, follow with the main body of the chapter, and end with a conclusion. But in Revelation, the author often does not conclude one section and then introduce the next, but embeds the introduction of one section into the conclusion of the previous section. The classic example is in Revelation 3:21. There the climax to the seven churches offers a built-in introduction to all four chapters of the seven seals. A similar literary strategy occurs in the fifth seal of Revelation 6:9-11. It is the climax to the four horses but also the introductory question to be answered in the seven trumpets, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (Rev 10:6). I find evidence for a similar pattern in Revelation 11:18.

This passage contains five basic statements. The seventh trumpet is a time when (1) the nations were angry, (2) God's wrath has come, (3) the dead are judged, (4) the saints are rewarded, and (5) the destroyers of the earth are destroyed. These five assertions form a fitting climax to the judgments of the seven trumpets as a whole. As a duodirectional statement, the five main elements of this verse not only conclude the judgments of the seven trumpets as a whole, they also are a summary in advance of the latter half of the book of Revelation (12-22). The language of this verse is echoed at decisive turning points of the latter half of the book and seems to offer clues to how John would have structured that part of the book. I have pursued these clues to the following structure: 1) Rev 12-14– The Wrath of the Nations (particularly chapter 13, but also the dragon's activity in chapter 12). 2) Rev 15-18– The Wrath of God (God's

response to end-time assault of the nations). 3) Rev 19-20— Destruction of the nations and judgment of the dead. 4) Rev 21-22— Reward of the saints.

The five major elements of this verse are grouped into two clusters. First, there are the two phrases concerned with wrath. The first is in verbal form (*ôrgisthêsan*), expressing the wrath of the nations. The second expresses God's response to the wrath of the nations with the noun form (*orgê*), "your wrath has come." The second cluster involves three infinitives ("to judge," "to give" and "to destroy") that are all grammatically connected to the single phrase "the time has come," thus linking the last three major elements of the verse. The judgment expressed in the third element clearly has both positive and negative elements, it is a time to reward as well as destroy. So as Stefanovic points out, the fourth and fifth elements of the verse are subsets of the third.

Here I will begin comparing the five key statements of this verse with key turning points of the second half of the book. First, "the nations were angry." They are angry because they seek to oppose God's taking of the kingdom in verses 15-17. But the verb for "angry" here (*ôrgisthêsan*) is powerfully echoed further on in Rev 12:17 ("The dragon was angry"). 12:17 just happens to be the decisive verse of chapters 12-14. It is the climax of the historical events in chapter 12, which feature the dragon from beginning to end. But the dragon's anger against the woman in 12:17 also summarizes the material in chapter thirteen. His furious war against her offspring is carried out by the beast from the sea (13:1-10) and the beast from the earth (13:11-18). On the other hand, the character and message of the woman's offspring (Rev 12:17) is at the heart of the material in chapter fourteen (14:1-12). So in the simple phrase "the nations were angry" the author of Revelation has summarized the key structural element of chapters 12-14.

There is a false parallel to 11:18 in Revelation 12:12, where the devil is angry. But the Greek word there (*thumon*) is different from 11:18 and is in the noun rather than the verbal form, so a reader of the original would not naturally connect this verse with 11:18.

The second announcement in this verse is that God's wrath has come. This phrase finds an echo in Revelation 15:1 (cf. 14:10), which introduces the bowl plagues as the means by which "the wrath of God is completed." Although the seventh trumpet is the "third woe" (Rev 11:14), it is not nearly as terrible as the first two woes (Rev 8:13 - 9:21). That is because the full description of the third woe is left for the bowl-plagues of Revelation 16. This simple phrase in Revelation 11:18 sets the table for a major section in the second half of the book. Since Revelation 17:1 and 17:18 relate chapters seventeen and eighteen to the events of the bowl plagues (chapters 15 and 16), the whole of Revelation 15 through 18 is summarized in the brief statement of 11:18 "your wrath has come." Revelation 15-18 describe God's response to the anger of the nations, symbolized by the activity of the dragon and his allies in Revelation 13 (cf. 16:13,14). This provides a crucial insight for structuring the second half of the book. Chapters 17 and 18 are difficult to place in the structure of Revelation. Some scholars connect them with chapter 19, others connect them with chapter 16 and still others put them into a separate unit. Revelation 11:18 provides the key to tying them more decisively to the "wrath of God," as expressed in the seven bowl-plagues.

Based on the first two phrases of this verse and their counterparts in Revelation 12:17 and 15:1, what is the central issue in Revelation 12-18? In the final crisis of earth's history the

great powers of the world set themselves up against God ("the nations were angry" against God) and attack Him in the person of His people on earth (chapters 12-14). God responds decisively in chapters 15-18, offering a massive counterattack against the powers that are oppressing His people. So the central theme of chapters 12-18 of Revelation is in essence the final battle between God and the various powers of the world.

"The time to judge the dead" points the reader to the context of the 1000 years in Revelation 20. The language points specifically to Revelation 20:12, the judgment of the dead in front of the great, white throne at the end of the millennium. If one takes a pre-millennial position on the millennium (meaning the Second Coming of Jesus arrives before the 1000 years), the seventh trumpet does not merely cover the short period from the close of probation to the Second Coming, but truly extends beyond into the whole picture covered by Revelation 20, including the events at the close of the thousand years.

The KJV helpfully reflects the Greek here: "give reward." The word combination of "give" (*dounai*) and "reward" (*misthon*) specifically anticipates Revelation 22:12, where Jesus brings His reward with Him when He returns. The word "reward" is often used in the New Testament to describe the paying of wages (Matt 20:8; Luke 10:7; John 4:36; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pet 2:13, 15). But the use in 11:18 and 22:12 must be metaphorical, as the reward of eternal life is not earned on our part, it is provided to us "without cost" (22:17, NKJV).

Revelation 22:12 is a key verse that calls to mind the entire context of the New Jerusalem section of Revelation 21 and 22. So once again, 11:18 is summarizing what follows in advance.

The language of "destroying those who destroy the earth" is not an ecological reference but likely has the Flood story in mind. Genesis 6:11-14 uses similar language (see also Jer 51:25) to describe how the earth was full of lawlessness, leading to its destruction by a flood. The destruction of "the destroyers of the earth" is also echoed in the Greek of Revelation 19:2 (11:18: *diaphtheirai*, 19:2: *ephtheiren*). This is an interesting addition to 11:18 since chapter 19 is the only part of Revelation 12-22 that is not referenced by the first four key elements of Revelation 11:18. So this phrase completes the cycle of reference to Revelation 12-22 in this verse.

As we have compared this verse with key passages in Revelation 12-22 we conclude that it is not only the climax of the seven trumpets, it offers a summary/outline of the direction that the rest of the book will take. It becomes the hinge around which the two halves of Revelation are structured. The author has given, in a nutshell, the outline of the main actions in the second half of the book. See Table 1 in Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, revised edition, page 374.

1- Revelation 12-14. The wrath of the nations includes the dragon's wrath (Revelation 13) and the response of the remnant (Revelation 14). Revelation 12-14 gives the essence of that battle from the earthly perspective of the dragon and the remnant.

2- Revelation 15-18. The wrath of God shows the final battle from God's perspective including His response to the anger of the nations. He initiates the bowl plagues, defeats both the prostitute Babylon and the city Babylon.

3- Revelation 19. God destroys those who destroy the earth.

4- Revelation 20. The millennium. Best located in point of time after the events of 12-19. See comments on Revelation 20 when we get there.

5- Revelation 21-22. The new earth.

Revelation 11:18 teaches us that the primary focus of the last half of the Apocalypse is on the End. A structure of Revelation 12-22 that takes 11:18 into consideration would be as follows:

- A. The Wrath of the Nations (Rev 12-14)
 - (1) The Dragon's War (Rev 13)
 - (2) The Remnant's Response (Rev 14)
- B. The Wrath of God (Rev 15-18)
 - (1) The Seven Bowl-Plagues (Rev 15-16)
 - (2) Elaboration on the Sixth Plague (Rev 17)
 - (3) Elaboration on Rev 17 (Rev 18)
- C. The Second Coming and the Millennium (Rev 19-20)
- D. The New Earth (Rev 21-22)

Since chapter 19 provides a crucial introduction to chapter 20, my outline of Revelation combines chapters 19 and 20 into the sixth major section of the book (out of seven). For a complete outline of Revelation please click "Revelation Outline" on the home page at www.thebattleofarmageddon.com.

The seventh trumpet (which is also the third woe, see Rev 8:13) as a whole provides a summary of the final victory of God that serves as a conclusion to the seven trumpets of Revelation. At the same time, verse 18 provides a nutshell summary of everything that is yet to come in the book of Revelation, it helps us organize chapters 12-22.

That the entire second half of Revelation is associated with the seventh trumpet suggests that the primary focus of the second half of Revelation is the end of history. The first half of the book covered the period from John's day to the end as a whole including several series that move from the cross to the second coming. The second half of the book focuses more directly on the events of the end-time. In my book *What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, chapter nine, there is a chart of this material that may be helpful to you.

Spiritual Lessons from the Seven Trumpets–

1) The gospel won't be available forever. The day is coming when probation will close for the entire earth, and this will happen within history and reality before the end. Since we may not know exactly when that time comes, it underlines an important biblical concept, now is the day of salvation, not sometime later.

2) The time of reward is both positive and negative and both are necessary to set things right in a messed-up world. We live in a very unjust world. If this life is all there is, there is no justice in the world and never will be. Resurrection and judgment are the keys to setting things right in this world. The seventh trumpet assures us that God will set everything right at the End.

In the trumpets as a whole, God has already made a down-payment on His determination to bring justice to the universe. His counteracting of the oppressor may seem ineffective and powerless in our eyes, but that process has already begun (in the actions related to the seven trumpets) and will continue until completed at the End.

3) The Bible's most difficult and spiritually dry material is in Revelation 6-9. It focuses on the negatives and the great trends and movements of nations rather than on individual spiritual life as in Revelation 2-3 and many parts of the last half of the book. But the seals and trumpets assure us that God is active in the world even when we don't see it and that He will bring all things to a glorious conclusion at the End.

Rev 11:19–

As noted already in the comments on verses 18 and 19 together, this verse introduces a new sanctuary/temple scene. These scenes have functioned as introductions to major new visions in the book up to this point (Rev 1:12-20; 4 and 5; 8:2-6). The Greek word for temple here is *naos*, which refers to the innermost part of the temple, the Holy of Holies. In this context we encounter the ark of the covenant for the first and only time in the Book of Revelation. The ark was the centerpiece of the Most Holy Place in the Old Testament sanctuary and temple. Thus its appearance here and only here suggests a deep significance for this verse and the material that follows in chapters 12-14.

What is the significance of the ark of the covenant in this passage? There are several possibilities. 1) The “mercy seat” or cover of the ark was the place where God Himself resided in the Hebrew sanctuary. So the ark represented the real presence and dwelling of God with His people. If that theme is in view here, then all the events of Revelation 12-14 would need to be seen in light of God's presence and mercy. 2) The ark of the covenant contained the two stone tables of the ten commandments. If that theme is in view here, the following events would be centered in some way on the law of God. 3) It was also by the ark that the book of the covenant (probably Deuteronomy) was stored in the Most Holy Place (Deut 31:24-26). This covenant book was a reminder of God's steadfast commitment to be with His people throughout their history. 4) The Day of Atonement was the only day of the year in which the ark and the Most Holy Place were directly involved in the services of sanctuary and temple. That the ark was seen here could point to that event. If that is in view here, the material in Revelation 12-14 would have to do with the last judgment. All four elements seem relevant to the events of Revelation 12-14.

I would like to suggest that the central reason for featuring the ark of the covenant at this point in the book is to highlight the connection with the ten commandments. The commandments are mentioned directly at key points in what follows (12:17; 14:12). We will come to see that the first table of the law plays a major role in chapter 13 and the Sabbath is alluded to in 14:7. In addition Revelation 15:5-8 contains a strong allusion to Exod 34, which makes reference to the ten commandments. So the passage in Revelation 15 serves like a bracket with 11:19 for chapters 12-14, putting a strong focus on the ten commandments as a central theme of that section of Revelation.

The flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, earthquake and great hailstorm recall how these striking events are repeated at a number of decisive points in the Book of Revelation (Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). In the Old Testament, such phenomena often accompany a *theophany* (manifestation of God's presence: see Exod 19:11, 16-20; 20:18-21; Deut 5:22-23, see also Heb 12:18-21). They certainly highlight the importance of this verse to the flow of the vision.

Rev 11:19 - 12:2 Introduction—

Further evidence that 11:19 is naturally linked to chapter 12 is a probable allusion to Isaiah 66:6-7 in these verses. In Isaiah 66 a voice from the temple is followed by a description of a woman who gave birth to a son before she was in labor. Like the woman of Revelation 12, the woman of Isaiah represented the people of God, Jerusalem and Zion (Isa 66:7-13).