

My Two Witnesses

Revelation 11

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Revelation 11 makes it clear that God will not be without a witness. I don't care what is going on in the world or what is going on in our nation; God always raises up someone to witness for His glory, to preach the Gospel and to be a light in the darkness. Even during the tribulation.

I want you to note the key verse, which is verse 3, where John said, "And I will give power..."—that's the voice from heaven—"...to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy..."—or "preach"—"...one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." So during the time of the tribulation, God is going to raise up two more witnesses.

I believe these witnesses would appear during the first half of the tribulation, up to the middle of the tribulation and during the time of the Antichrist, when the temple will be rebuilt and the abomination of desolation occurs. It will also parallel the ministry of the 144,000, which we saw back in chapter 7. They will be witnessing along with these two witnesses. And even during this time of tribulation, after the church is "caught up" in the rapture, God will not be without a witness.

Chapter 11 is a continuation of the parenthesis that began in chapter 10. This parenthesis comes between the sixth and seventh trumpets or between the second and third woes and runs to the end of chapter 15. The narrative does not begin again until chapter 16. This parenthetical pause is where we look deeply into the events of the tribulation.

There are three things in chapter 11 that I want to focus on. The first is the temple, verses 1-2; the second is the testimony, verses 3-14; and the third is the trumpet, verses 15-19.

First, let's look at the temple, verses 1-2. Now, once again, John becomes a participant in the vision. John said, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod." This would be similar to a bamboo pole. It was a plant that grew by a river that was used for measuring. "And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.'" So note that there is a temple of God during the time of the tribulation. "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city..."—or "Jerusalem"—"...underfoot for forty-two months."

This is actually two-and-a-half years or 1,260 days, as mentioned in verse 3. The tribulation is seven years, and quite often there is the distinction of three-and-a-half years or 1,260 days, which is the same as this half of the tribulation period.

I want to ask three questions. The first one is, what temple was John instructed to measure, in verse 1? I believe it is the tribulation temple. After the rapture takes place, the Antichrist will be revealed. He'll make a covenant with Israel, referred to in Daniel 9, for seven years. There are seven years remaining of the 70 weeks referred to by Daniel. The 70 weeks is actually the

tribulation period or “the day of the Lord” or “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” We are in the tribulation period in Revelation, but we are talking about the temple that will be rebuilt during this time.

Let me give you a history of the temple. First, the temple started with King David when he bought the place to put the temple on. He purchased the threshing floor of Ornan. David had a passion to build the temple of God. He said, “I live in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.” The first temple was a tent or tabernacle, but David wanted to build a permanent dwelling for God. But God said David couldn’t build the temple, because “you have been a man of war and have shed blood.” But God chose Solomon, a man of peace, to build God’s temple. The first temple was built by Solomon on the spot that David purchased, and it is known as “Solomon’s temple.” So the first, physical temple with the holy place, the holy of holies and the ark of the covenant with the rites and rituals was Solomon’s temple. Then Solomon’s temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586-587 BC.

Judah had apostatized and turned away from God. Israel, the ten tribes of the north, had already been taken into captivity, but Judah and Benjamin, the tribes in the south, are captured by the Babylonians, and the temple is razed to the ground. For 70 years, they were captive in Babylon.

Then the second temple was built by Zerubbabel, a priest, and the son of a priest, Joshua. They came back from Babylon, and you read about Nehemiah, who built the walls around the temple. It is known as “Zerubbabel’s temple.” Now in the Jew’s history, there have been two temples.

Zerubbabel’s temple was not that grand or glorious. When it was being dedicated, all the people of Israel came out for the dedication. The young people, who hadn’t seen Solomon’s temple, thought it was pretty cool; they were cheering, clapping and celebrating. But the old people were weeping and crying and in tears, because it wasn’t as grand as Solomon’s temple. But their voices all blended together, and the Bible actually says that you couldn’t tell who was crying and who was rejoicing.

Zerubbabel’s temple existed up to the time of Christ. But because it wasn’t that great or grandiose, Herod the Great, the king in that area, refurbished and embellished it. He built it bigger and grander. He laid a greater foundation, built it, covered it with gold and expanded it.

The Zerubbabel temple, temple number two, during the time of Christ then became known as “Herod’s temple.” This is the temple of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John during the Gospel period we read about when Jesus was there.

Now below the Herodian temple today, there are stones underground. When you go to Jerusalem, you can see them. This temple was destroyed by Rome under the leadership of Titus, the Roman general, 70 AD.

So we have Solomon’s temple that was destroyed. We have Zerubbabel’s temple, which

became Herod's temple, that was destroyed. And from 70 AD—this is a marvelous thought—until the present day, the Jews have been without a temple in Jerusalem. They were without a homeland; they were the wandering Jews. But now they're back in their land. It wasn't until June 1967, during the six-day war, that they recaptured the old city of Jerusalem. When Moshe Dayan, the general who was with them, took over the temple mount, they said, "We have returned to the holy of holies, never to leave again." The Bible says that Jerusalem will become a burdensome stone around the neck of the nations. It will become the issue of the day.

So there will be this temple. I believe that the covenant made by the Antichrist, after the rapture, during the seven years of tribulation, as part of his agreement, will, no doubt, be that they can rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. That's an interesting thought.

There are other verses about this tribulation temple. In Daniel 9:27, he predicts what's called "the abomination of desolation," and Jesus also mentioned it. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 it is also mentioned. In Matthew 24, in Jesus' prophetic Olivet Discourse, in verse 15, He predicted there would be "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet." We'll read about that in Revelation 13.

Now my second question is, why is John told to measure the temple, in verse 1? There are a lot of ideas or guesses why. But I think the best idea is that measuring indicates that God was claiming the temple as His own, and secondly, God was saying that the worship had actually been rejected. Notice that when He said to measure the temple, in verse 1, He said to also measure "the altar." This is probably the altar of incense, where the incense went up to God in prayer, that was just before the curtain, behind which was the holy of holies.

And verse 1 also says, "...and those who worship there." God is concerned and focused on how we worship. We are to worship Him "in spirit and in truth." But the fact of the measurement is believed by Bible scholars to be symbolic of God rejecting the people and their worship and of Israel's apostasy. John Walberg said, "Measuring the temple will indicate that apostasy of the nation of Israel and their need for revival and restoration existed." So they had apostatized, they needed revival, and the measuring indicated that they were out of God's will.

The third question is, why was John told to leave out the outer court, in verse 2? It says, "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months." Forty-two months on a prophetic calendar is the same as three-and-a-half years or 1,260 days.

If you're familiar with the temple, you would know that there was an outer court known as the Court of the Gentiles. There was a sign posted there that if a Gentile went beyond that point, he only had himself to blame for his death; he could be put to death. Then inside that was the court of the women where they could go. That was where the widow would have brought her mite and put it in the coffer. Then there was a court for the male Jews or Israelites. And there was an inner court, known as the holy place and another court known as the holy of holies, where only the high priest would go once a year to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat of the ark

of the covenant on the Day of Atonement.

All of this background was necessary to understand verses 1-2, that there will be a temple built again. Technically this would be a third temple. But there will also be a fourth temple in the millennium. That will be built by Jesus Himself. It will be awesome! It'll be there for 1,000 years where the Lord Himself will be worshipped.

On the very top of the temple in Jerusalem is prominently displayed a golden dome. This is an Islamic, Muslim holy site. It is called the Dome of the Rock. It is also sometimes called the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is the second-most holy spot to Muslims. It is possible that the court of the Gentiles was to be left out of the measurement, because "it has been given to the Gentiles" and might refer to the Dome of the Rock. It could be the court of the Gentiles. So it could be that the Jews might be able to build their temple on the mountain but not upset the Dome of the Rock, the holy site of the Muslims.

In 1978 I made my first trip to Israel. I remember going up on the temple mount. In those days they let me and other Gentiles go inside the Dome of the Rock. It was on a big rock slab. The Muslims believe that Muhammad ascended to heaven from that rock. They also believe this could be the place where Abraham offered Isaac, in Genesis 22, as a sacrifice. But he didn't die, because God gave Abraham a substitute sacrifice of a ram.

When I went to the Dome of the Rock I was casually dressed like a southern California surfer with my shorts on. The Muslims freaked out and made me put a skirt on. I felt so silly. And I had to put something over my head. People can't just go in there anymore. Anyone who would upset the Dome of the Rock would cause a holy war to end all holy wars.

So this temple is the temple of the tribulation. John measures it because the Jews who worship there are apostate; they need repentance. That's why the two witnesses come on the scene. It's interesting that they are preaching at this time.

It wasn't until 1967 that Israel took over the temple mount and now has the ability to build the temple again in Jerusalem. All these years they've been without a temple. They have synagogues. They call some of them temples, but they're not really temples. But as a result of the Antichrist making a covenant with them for seven years, there will be another temple.

Now, secondly, we move from the temple of the tribulation to the testimony during the tribulation, in verses 3-14. There are four important things about these powerful, prophetic preachers. The first is the time that they prophesy or preach, verse 3. The voice still speaking from heaven to John says, "And I will give power to my two witnesses." The word "power" appears about four to five times in this section. It is obvious that these are people, they're preachers and they're powerful. They have a prophetic ministry, and they're calling Israel and Gentiles back to God in repentance.

Verse 3 continues, "And they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." Sackcloth was often the garment of the prophets. It speaks of their humility and

repentance for sin. "These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." You have the two witnesses empowered by the Spirit of God, the God of all the earth.

Now in verses 4-6, we move to their traits or characteristics or a description of them and their ministry. They are like two olive trees and two lampstands, and they stand "before the God of the earth." Verse 5, "And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner."

How would you like to go street witnessing with these two guys? That would be interesting. I used to joke about witnessing with a flamethrower. "Turn or burn! Repent!" Pray for me.

Meanwhile, back to the text. These guys are able to breathe out fire and consume their enemies. That would be something to behold.

Verse 6 says, "These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of the prophesy. And they have power over water to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire." So we have the time, verse 3, and we have the characteristics, in verses 4-6.

Now what are these two olive trees and these two lampstands? Anybody who has read the Old Testament knows that is taken from Zachariah 4. It's interesting because there are these two individuals who are symbolized as these two olive trees and two lampstands, and they are Joshua and Zerubbabel. That's where, in Zachariah 4, that we get the Scripture, "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord." So they were going from the Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem to build the temple, and they would need the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

So there was this kind of Rube-Goldberg kind of set up where these olive trees were pouring olive oil into these lampstands. They weren't candles as we know candles; they were actually lamps filled with olive oil and would burn. It was a perpetual supply of olive oil, symbolized by God's Spirit. These two prophets will be empowered by the Holy Spirit. They will declare God's Word, and they will display God's works.

My prayer is that God would raise up witnesses to this generation. In this very dark and difficult time that we live in in America, may God raise up those who would witness with power and display God's works to our nation.

Now we move to their testimony, in verses 4-6. "And they would prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty day," verse 3.

We can't be dogmatic that this three-and-a-half years is the first half of the tribulation and that it takes you up to the rebuilt temple, "the abomination of desolation" and the persecution that will begin by these two being put to death.

Who are these two witnesses? This is what has fascinated and sidetracked a lot of Bible students, because they get all enamored with the two witnesses and they want to know who they are. But the Bible doesn't say. I don't normally speculate, but I'm going to give you some thoughts on this. The most common idea—and I think the best—is that they are Moses and Elijah. God could raise up these two individuals again, and who is better than he who represents the Law and he who represents the prophets? Some speculate it might be Enoch, because he never died; he got translated. But a good guess would be Moses and Elijah.

Let me give you four reasons why many view them to be Moses and Elijah. First, because of the works they perform. Verse 5 says because “fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies.” It was the prophet Elijah who brought down fire from heaven. He was a man of power. The fire consumed the altar and destroyed the prophets of Baal.

And in verse 6, they had “power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls.” It was Elijah the prophet who went into the court of wicked King Ahab and told him there would not be dew or rain for three years according to what God said. And the heavens were shut up, and there was no rain.

Again verse 6 says, “They have power over waters to turn them to blood.” That reminds us of Moses and one of the plagues upon Egypt. Verse 6 continues, “...and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”

Secondly, it is speculated they are Moses and Elijah because of a prophecy in Malachi 4:5. The prophet Malachi said, “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” So there is a prophecy that Elijah will come on the scene before the Second Coming during the day of the Lord or the tribulation.

Thirdly, these two men, Moses and Elijah, showed up once before on the mount of transfiguration, Matthew 17:3. Jesus took Peter, James and John and went to a high mountain—we don't know which one—and Jesus was transfigured before them. They saw Jesus in all His splendor; it was a preview of His Second Coming. Moses and Elijah showed up on the mountain.

I don't know how they knew they were Moses and Elijah, unless they had name tags on. “Hi; I'm Moses.” Can you imagine how mind blowing that would be? Peter was so amazed that he said, “Lord...let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Peter wanted to just stay on the mountain “under the spout where the glory comes out.” It was beautiful there, so he didn't want to go back down the mountain. So in times past, Moses and Elijah showed up together.

Fourthly, Moses and Elijah, and especially Enoch, left the world in an unusual way. When Moses died, the Bible says that his body was carried away and buried by an angel. In Jude 9, Michael fought, argued or contended with Satan over the body of Moses. That's a fascinating Scripture; why are they arguing over the body of Moses? I don't know. Maybe Satan wanted to desecrate it or use it for some purpose. But God sent Michael to conquer the devil and take the

body of Moses and bury it somewhere; no one knows, to this day, where his grave is.

In 2 Kings 2, Elijah went to heaven in style!

“Swing low, sweet chariot,

Comin’ for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see

Comin’ for to carry me home.

A band of angels comin’ after me

Comin’ for to carry me home.”

These angels were riding in a chariot of fire that swooped down. Elijah jumped in the chariot and it took him to heaven. Everyone standing around said, “Wow! That was awesome.” So this is a picture of how Elijah was “caught up” to heaven.

There is also a reference to Enoch, who some believe is one of these two prophets. In Genesis 5:24 it says, “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

So there are two people in the Bible that we know never physically died. In Hebrews 9:27 it says, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” So some people say that since Elijah and Enoch never died, they’ll have to come back again to die. This is true but not true, because there is a whole generation of people who will never die. It could be our generation. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep...”—or “die”—“...but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye....For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” We will go from life to life. When the Lord raptures the church, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up...to meet the Lord in the air,” and we won’t ever have to die.

When I was in my office before first service, I was talking with two pastors about dying and going to heaven and how awesome that will be. I said, “Wouldn’t it be cool some night to get into bed, pull the blankets up under your chin and say, ‘Jesus I love you. Good night’? And then you wake up in the morning in His house and seeing His face.” That would be an awesome way to go! To go to sleep one night and wake up in heaven in the presence of the Lord. The Bible says, “To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” So whether we die or we are awake, we’ll be with Jesus Christ.

Notice the third thing about these two witnesses, the termination of their witness, verses 7-10. “When they finish their testimony...”—we’ll come back to that thought—“...the beast...” This is the first time that “the beast,” who is the Antichrist, is mentioned in Revelation. He will be

mentioned about 36 times in Revelation. We'll see him clearly in chapter 13.

Continuing, "The beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit..."—or "the abyss"—"...will make war against them." That is, the Antichrist, who is Satan's man of the hour, is empowered to rule the world and hates these two witnesses and wars against them. Verse 7, he will "overcome them, and kill them." He will kill the preachers, silence their voices and stop their witnessing. They are executed and put to death.

Starting at verse 8, "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." That's clearly a reference to the city of Jerusalem. Sodom is the wicked city, and Egypt is oppressive. "Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves."

How, in John's day in 95 AD, could he comprehend that all the world will see the dead bodies of these two witnesses lying in the street of Jerusalem? Television and the Internet hadn't been invented. Can you imagine CNN and MSNBC zeroing in with their cameras? I'd love to see people's faces when this happens. And in just a moment, we'll see their translation; they get translated back to heaven.

What happens is that their bodies—and this is a horrible thing that happens in the Middle East at this time—are not buried; they're left lying in the street. And all the peoples see their dead bodies. Then verse 10, "And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them...." So at this time heaven weeps but the earth rejoices. Then there will be the reversal where the earth weeps and heaven rejoices. "The earth will...make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth." So they turn it into a Satanic Christmas. These two prophets tormented them. Why did they torment them? Because they preached repentance and the truth to them. They were witnesses for God.

So the demonically, satanically empowered Antichrist, the beast, is going to make war against these two witnesses and kill them. It says the witnesses "tormented those who dwell on the earth," so people rejoiced and made merry over their deaths. They sent "gifts to one another."

Now notice what God does, in verses 11-14. He performs their translation. It says, "Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them." You betcha; that's an understatement. "And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they ascended to heaven in a cloud..."—in the Greek it says "the cloud," so it's a reference to the shekinah glory of God—"...and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven." That does not necessarily mean the rest were saved; it means they recognized that this was the hand of God. Verse 14, "The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly."

So their bodies are lying on a street in Jerusalem for three-and-a-half days. The newsmen are there, the people are partying and celebrating and all of a sudden something happens. Life comes back into these two witnesses; they stand up on their feet. The world freaks out. The party's over. The witnesses go right back into heaven. The people watch this happen. The moment they go back into heaven, and the glory of God takes them out of their sight, an earthquake hits Jerusalem. And instantly, seven thousand people are killed in the earthquake. Then there is lightning and thunder; God's wrath is coming.

Notice that verse 7 says, "When they finish their testimony...." I propose to you that not until they had finished their testimony could they be killed by the Antichrist. This is an amazing statement.

I believe that if you are a child of God and you are walking in fellowship with God doing the work of God for the glory of God and living in the will of God, then you are indestructible until God's time is for you to go to heaven. That doesn't mean, "Well, I'll just try it out" and you go and jump off a building. No; you'll find out you're out of the will of God very quickly. But if you are walking with the Lord, living for the Lord and serving the Lord, you are indestructible until His time.

About 20 years ago or so, I was on my way to Australia on a ministry trip with a couple of other pastors when we were kidnapped at gunpoint in Los Angeles in the parking lot of a Carl's Jr. right outside the airport. Two men with guns abducted us, forced us back in the car, held us for about four hours, threatened to kill us and lined us up execution style. They did let us go and left in their car. But for about three hours I had a gun to the back of my head, and I was pretty convinced that they were going to kill us.

Then—and I don't know why—the guy in the back seat asked, "What do you do for a living?"

I said, "Funny you should ask that. I'm a pastor. I preach God's Word. That's why you kidnapped me. Because God wants you to know He loves you, and He can change your life."

Then, as he was holding a gun to my head, he said to me, "My Mom tells me that; she's a Christian."

But I'm thinking, She didn't do a very good job of raising you; she should have spanked you a few more times. Then I went on to share the Gospel. The other guy with the gun, in the front seat, said, "Shut up, or I'll blow your brains out!"

Yet it was the one and only time that I was absolutely convinced that I was going to heaven. There came such a peace to my heart. I can't believe the way the Lord showed up in that vehicle; we sensed His presence. I realized that I'm a child of God. He's my Father in heaven. Nothing can happen to me but what He ordains. I can't die until it's done. And if it's time, I'm ready to go. Who wants to stay any longer? If God doesn't want me to preach anymore, then I'm ready to go to heaven. If He wants me to preach more, then He'll keep me going on the earth. So it's amazing the presence and the peace of God I had at that time. I never felt God's presence more than in that car when I was held at gunpoint. So I believe that until you finish

your testimony, you are indestructible.

Now we move to the third section of our chapter, to verses 15-19, the trumpet. I want you to notice four things. First is the announcement of the trumpet. It says, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms...'—in the Greek it's singular; it's "kingdom"—"...of this world have become the kingdoms..."—or "kingdom"—"...of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" This is the announcement of the kingdom.

There is something very, very important for you to learn at this point. Even though we have the seventh-trumpet angel sounding or blowing his trumpet, which is the third woe of chapter 8, verse 13, the narrative does not move forward at this point. In the middle of this parenthetical section, chapters 10-15, there is this preannouncement or this prophetic, future-tense announcement of the coming kingdom. It doesn't actually happen until chapter 19 when Jesus Christ comes back in His Second Coming and establishes His kingdom on earth. So don't get confused; the narration doesn't progress or advance here. It's still part of the parenthetical section. We don't yet have the bowl judgments starting that come out of the seventh trumpet until chapter 16.

So Bible students call this "the prophetic, perfect tense." God can speak about things that are going to happen, as though they had happened, because He knows they're going to happen. God can say that it's a fact, even though it hasn't happened, because in God's economy, it already has happened. He, in His sovereignty, knows that it will happen.

The "kingdoms" or "kingdom" in the Greek is, no doubt, a reference to the Antichrist and his demonic power, who has unified the world. Globalism today is a precursor to the Antichrist. Every time you hear the word "globalism" or "the world has become one" or "the world community," it's setting the stage for the Antichrist, who will make the world one.

So "the kingdoms of this world," which are controlled by Satan, "have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" We'll get that in chapter 19.

Secondly, we see the adoration in heaven. Verse 16 says, "And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God." I believe that these 24 elders is a picture of the church in heaven, that they represent the church in heaven.

By the way, when the two witnesses are "caught up" to heaven, that is not because of the rapture. Mid-tribulationists believe that is the rapture, but it isn't; it's the two witnesses who are "caught up" at the mid-point of the tribulation. Because in verse 16, we have the church already in heaven; the church was "caught up" back in chapter 4.

They "fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty...'—I like that—"...the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned." So there is worship in heaven while there is anger on earth. Notice the anger: "The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time

of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

I want you to notice five things about this. First, they are angry with God; instead of repenting and turning back to God, they are angry toward God. Secondly, they are angry because of God's wrath. Thirdly, God shall judge the dead. This will happen in chapter 20 at the great white-throne judgment. Fourthly, God will reward His servants the prophets, the saints and those who fear Him. Fifthly, God destroys them which have destroyed the earth. The destruction of the earth doesn't just mean environmentally or physically; it means they spiritually and morally have destroyed the earth.

I think, in my lifetime, I've never seen a more demonic time in America than I see going on today. There's only one way to explain what is going on in America right now: it's from the pit of hell; it's demonic. Light and darkness are in contrast and conflict. Good and evil are battling. It's going to get darker and darker, until the church is perhaps “caught up.” Many in the church are falling away from the Lord, falling away from their faith. The Bible says, “In the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” Many men will “have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

This reminds me that we need to be grounded in the Word of God. We need our eyes fixed on Jesus the Son of God. And we need to be looking “for the city...whose builder and maker is God.”

So these people are angry, because God's wrath has come. God judges the wicked dead, He rewards the righteous and destroys those who destroy the earth.

In closing, verse 19, we see the ark of God in heaven that is open. “Then the temple of God was opened...”—open for you and open for me—“...in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple.” This was the ark of the covenant, which was in the holy place. “And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.” That's because the storm is coming.

These people are angry. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “No doctrine in the whole Word of God is more exacting than the hatred of mankind. The truth of the absolute sovereignty of God, the fact that the Lord reigns, is indispensable and is that fact that arouses the utmost opposition in the unrenowned and the unregenerated heart.” So they are angry and hostile toward God, but heaven is open.

I like the way this chapter ends in verse 19. There is the ark of God. What was on top of that ark was the mercy seat. Aren't you glad that God is merciful? Aren't you glad that in wrath God remembers mercy? On that mercy seat, once a year on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the high priest would go beyond the veil, which was torn in two when Jesus died on the Cross, and

sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. He would make atonement for the people. But Christ died "once for all." The veil was torn, the atonement was made. Now we all have access to God through His Son Jesus Christ.

So if you haven't repented of your sins, if you haven't trusted Jesus Christ, the door is open in heaven. You can repent and believe in Jesus Christ and be saved.

If you are a Christian, this chapter and the story we just read reminds us to be a witness. Don't be witless but be a witness. There are a lot of witless Christians out there. As the world gets darker, we must shine brighter. We must not compromise. We must not cave in. We must stand for truth and righteousness. We must hold God's Word high and preach His Word in these last days.