

their Lord, so France repeated the sin, and crucified again the Son of God" (*The Story of the Seer of Patmos*, Stephen Haskell, p. 201).

### **The Great City**

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:8). France had professed to be a Christian nation, but it now boldly turns from God to "kill" His faithful witnesses. In this way they "commit apostasy." Describing those who turn from the Bible, the apostle Paul says that "they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold Him up to contempt" (Hebrews 6:6, RSV).

As a nation France represented "the tenth part of the city" (Revelation 11:13). Though more blatant than its counterparts, France was one of ten nations making up "that great city Babylon" (Revelation 18:10).

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, the literal nation of Babylon represented a nation with four characteristics:

- 1) It professed faith in God (see Daniel 2:46, 47).
- 2) Yet it changed or distorted the truth of God's Word (see Daniel 2:32, 33; 3:3).
- 3) Then it forced people to worship according to this change of God's Word (see Daniel 3:5).
- 4) If any refused to acknowledge and worship, they would be killed (see Daniel 3:6).

These characteristics were seen in the nations of Western Europe during the 1260 years of persecution against the two witnesses. The truth of God's Word had been changed by a power who professed faith in God. Multitudes of people were forced to worship according to the dictates of this power. In the 1260 years during which the two witnesses prophesied in sackcloth, millions who refused to go along with changes in Christian teaching and practice lost their lives.

This Bible prophecy reveals the ultimate consequence

of changing God's Word. As Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind for seven years and became as a wild beast of the field, so France, for three and one-half years, reaped the consequences of apostasy from the truth.

### **They Ascended Up To Heaven**

The "earthquake" of revolution that shook the country of France caused great fear and terror to come upon the western nations of Europe (see Revelation 11:11, 13). Many of the most talented of the nation of France had fallen. Yet through this terrible tragedy life was given to the Word of God. People saw what happened to a nation which divorced itself from the Word of God. Bible and tract societies were established in England and the Bible was resurrected throughout Europe (see Revelation 11:11). Today the Word of God has ascended into the heavens, beamed through satellites and radio waves, fulfilling the prophecy, "and they ascended up to heaven in a cloud: and their enemies beheld them" (Revelation 11:12).

### **A Closing Thought**

The message of Revelation 11:1-13 is a message of judgment. The inhabitants of the world and all creation are called to judge their Creator and His great sacrifice. The two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, bear testimony to God's character of love. Also we find a judgment for those who worship God. Their profession is assessed in relation to His law of love. And finally we find judgment, both immediate and delayed, revealed against those who trample upon God and His people. Though it seems for a time that God's truth is destroyed, it will triumph still. One day soon every knee will bow "in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10, 11). And as the Word of God ascends on high, so too will every person who chooses Christ as the King and Savior ascend with that Word. May we be among that people. Amen.



# Unlocking Revelation

## The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11 is a continuation of chapter 10. John has been given a mandate for God's people. Though they have gone through a bitter disappointment, they "must prophesy again" (Revelation 10:11).

The 2300 prophetic days equaling 2300 literal years pointed unquestionably to the incarnation of Christ, "the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16). It opened to us His anointing, His death, the end of the earthly sanctuary system and Israel's rejection of the gospel as a nation. It also took us to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the final work of intercession by Christ in behalf of mankind (see Daniel 8:14; Hebrews 8:1, 2; 9:23-28). Soon the eternal destiny of every soul will be decided. The world must be given the final warning.

The history of the church is now recounted. Terrible apostasy and the sure results of rejecting the Bible are brought to the prophet's view in this chapter. The testimony of God's Word is recorded in the context of coming judgment that all who would might be warned.

### **A Reed Like Unto a Rod**

The reed given to John is a measuring device. Today we have many standards by which we measure people, like wealth, intellect, race, etc. The Bible reveals one absolute rule by which our actions will be weighed for eternity. It is God's standard of love revealed in His law (see Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:10). The reed by which the temple of God, the altar and them that worship therein are measured is the law of God (see 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Romans 7:7, 12). "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and

are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. . . . So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:8, 9, 12). The first to be measured by this standard is the "temple of God" (Revelation 11:1).

### **Measure the Temple of God**

The temple of God is the place where God Himself sits enthroned. God is the source of all life, who gives "to all life and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). He is the author of all faith, and "hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3; Hebrews 12:2). He is the source of all light and "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). "God is love" and He loves the "world" (1 John 4:8; John 3:16). He has revealed "His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Through this manifestation of His love, He "will draw all men unto" Himself (see John 12:32). "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). And so the Bible says that Christ is "the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).

The temple is to be measured. This means that we are to measure the love of God. We are to understand that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Looking beyond the pain and curse of sin, we are to measure a God who "was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). In the midst of the conflict between good and evil, every act and every purpose of God will be measured by all the universe. In the history of nations God's character will stand true when measured by the standard of love.

## Measure the Altar

Next, a similar command is given to John to “measure the altar” (Revelation 11:1). There are two altars referred to in the Bible, both having prophetic significance. One is the altar of sacrifice representing the cross where Christ gave His life for mankind (see Hebrews 13:10-15). This points to the great gift of Christ for the redemption of the world. The other is the altar where Christ now mediates in the heavenly sanctuary in behalf of the world (see Revelation 8:3-5; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1, 2). Measuring the altar means that we are to comprehend “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height and to know the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:18, 19). We are to see the life and death, the resurrection and intercession of Christ in our behalf. The love of Christ is to be measured; and when it is measured, it will be seen that we have a Savior who has redeemed us from the effects and results of sin. He is One who can save to the uttermost, One who ever lives to make intercession for us (see Hebrews 7:25).

## Measure Them That Worship Therein

John is told to measure “them that worship therein” (Revelation 11:1). This points to all who profess faith in Christ. All who profess to be His followers, to love Him, will be measured by the standard of love. Christ says, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” and “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (John 14:15; Romans 13:10). To measure the temple is to measure God’s love. To measure the altar is to measure Christ’s love. To measure “them that worship therein” is to measure our love (see Revelation 11:1). And to measure our love is to look for Christ in us, the hope of glory which is the finishing of “the mystery of God” (Revelation 10:7; Colossians 1:26, 27).

## Do Not Measure the Court

John is then told not to measure the court which is without the temple (see Revelation 11:2). The court is given unto the Gentiles or nations. In the New Testament the great temple in Jerusalem included a large outer court for devout Gentiles who desired to worship God. This was separated by a low wall from inner courts where only Jews were allowed (see Ephesians 2:14). The fact that those in the court are not measured is definitely a negative. As in the Jerusalem temple, these may refer to Gentiles who profess devotion to God. Yet in Revelation 11:2 their actions condemn them. They tread the “holy city” underfoot for forty and two months” (Revelation 11:2). The treading underfoot

of the holy city is very similar language to Daniel 7:7 and it infers persecution.

## Forty and Two Months

Forty-two months are equal to 1260 days given the Biblical rule of 30 days to a month. Applying the day-for-a-year principle, we find Revelation 11 pointing to a 1260-year period. In this time the Gentiles, professed followers of God, tread underfoot the holy city (persecute God’s faithful followers). This infers a period of persecution during which God’s witnesses were to prophesy in sackcloth (see Revelation 11:2, 3).

42 prophetic months  
x 30 days in a month  
1260 prophetic days

1260 prophetic days = 1260 literal years

## The Two Witnesses

The two witnesses are the Word of God, both the Old and the New Testament. Christ said of the Old Testament Scriptures, “It is they that bear witness to Me” (John 5:39; RSV). At this time the New Testament had not yet been written. Then, in the Olivet discourse, He said, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). This was more specifically talking of the message of His first advent and sacrifice for us as outlined in the New Testament. Revelation 11 shows that God gives power to His two witnesses, to the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible, and they bear a message to all the nations of the love and truth of our Creator.

John was also told that these were “the two olive trees and two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth” (Revelation 11:4, RSV). Olive trees were the primary source of fuel for lamps in Bible times. Psalm 119:105 refers to the olive oil lamp as a symbol for the Bible when it says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” This means that during this period of 1260 years the Bible would stand forth to the nations as a witness to the truth.

## Clothed in Sackcloth

In the Bible sackcloth has at least two important representations. One is repentance for evil or sin (see Jonah 3:5-9; Matthew 11:21). The other is affliction, persecution, physical suffering and the loss of loved

ones (see Job 16:15). The two witnesses prophesying in “sackcloth” symbolize a message of repentance for sin. And this message is given in a time of affliction and persecution brought on by those who oppose God’s Word.

An illustration of this persecution is mentioned in verse 10 of Revelation chapter 11. Those who are tormented by the message of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, rejoiced over the harm that came upon God’s people who faithfully shared the gospel truth. It says in this verse that they were “merry” and sent “gifts one to another because these two prophets tormented them” (Revelation 11:10). A striking fulfillment of this was seen in the account of the St. Bartholomew Massacre. On the night of August 24, 1572, protestants by the thousands slept in France, with their trust in the king, when without warning they were dragged from their beds and murdered in cold blood.

“When the news of the massacre reached Rome, the exultation among the clergy knew no bounds. The cardinal of Lorraine rewarded the messenger with a thousand crowns; the cannon of St. Angelo thundered forth a joyous salute; the bells rang out from every steeple; bonfires turned night into day; and Gregory XIII, attended by the cardinals and other ecclesiastical dignitaries, went in long procession to the church of St. Louis, where the cardinal of Lorraine chanted a *Te Deum*. . . . A medal was struck to commemorate the massacre, and in the Vatican may still be seen three frescoes of Vasari, describing the attack upon the admiral, the king in council plotting the massacre, and the massacre itself. Gregory sent Charles the golden rose; and four months after the massacre, . . . he listened complacently to the sermon of a French priest, . . . who spoke of ‘that day so full of happiness and joy, when the most holy father received the news, and went in solemn state to render thanks to God and St. Louis’” (Henry White, *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew*, chapter 14, 1871).

## They Have Power to Send Plagues

Revelation 11:5, 6 says that if any would hurt the two witnesses they would be hurt by fire and plagues. Revelation 22:18 gives the needed insight when it warns “every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book” (RSV). In other words, those who “hurt” the two witnesses by changing or undermining their message would receive the plagues of Revelation.

Backing up this warning is the statement, “These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days

of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood” (Revelation 11:6). This is a direct reference to the Old Testament record of Moses and Elijah who, when directed by God’s Word, brought plagues and drought upon the earth (see Exodus 7:20; 1 Kings 17:1). Thus the power of the two witnesses is demonstrated.

Throughout the Dark Ages these two witnesses faithfully bore testimony to the true God. Though the Bible was prescribed and those who dared to read it were persecuted and killed, the light shone still. Turning from the light of Bible truth brought in its train intellectual and moral darkness. This resulted in plagues, wars, and bloodshed.

The judgment of fire, spoken of in Revelation 11:5, will find its ultimate fulfillment in the destruction of the wicked (see Revelation 20:9). It is yet to come upon those who hurt God’s witnesses during this prophetic time period.

## The Beast Out of the Bottomless Pit

The two witnesses were to testify for a period of 1260 literal years. This period began in 538 A.D. This date marks the rise of papal Rome and a time of spiritual darkness through which the Bible was to shine amidst the development of error. During the following 1260 years much of the persecution came against God’s Word by professed Christians. But now, at the close of their time of testimony, as the light of the reformation began to grow brightly, another power would arise.

When they “finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit” was to “make war against them” and “overcome them, and kill them” (Revelation 11:7). A beast in the Bible represents a power or kingdom (see Daniel 7:17, 23). This power ascending from the bottomless pit, and the time frame being 1798, points to the rise of atheism. The fulfillment of this prophetic prediction is found in the history of France. During the period 1793-1798 the French Revolution occurred. Religion was despised and the goddess of reason set up. The Bible was tossed into the street, and burned in great heaps. In this manner it lay “dead” in the street for “three days and an half” (Revelation 11:8, 9); that is, three and one-half prophetic days equaling three and one-half literal years.

“The licentiousness of Sodom in the days of Lot, was repeated in France, especially in her capital. The gross idolatry of Egypt, with its proverbial darkness, was to be found again in modern France. As the Jews, by rejecting the Word of God sent by the prophets, severed their connection with heaven and crucified