

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 11:1-14

Topic

The inhabitants of Earth hate and want to kill God's Two Witnesses but are themselves killed if they try

Title

"We Are Two Reviled & Deadly Guys"

It was a \$125m error.

On September 23, 1999, NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter crashed into the red planet. After an investigation it was determined that a piece of software had calculated the force of the thrusters in *imperial* measurements instead of *metric*.

In 2001 the Los Angeles Zoo lent Clarence, a 75-year-old Galapagos tortoise, to Moorpark College. The school would need to build an enclosure.

They asked how big the tortoise was. The zoo told folks at Moorpark College that Clarence weighed 250. They assumed Clarence weighed 250 *pounds*. Clarence weighed 250 *kilograms*, or roughly 551 pounds. Clarence escaped but happily he did not get far.

The United States is the last nation to use imperial units. The solution is obvious. The rest of the world should switch.

John is called upon to take measurements.

1 of 12

The Grace of Wrath
Revelation 11:1-14

Rev 11:1 Then I was given a reed like a **measuring rod**. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and **measure** the Temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there."

- Measuring the "Temple" is straightforward enough.
- Measuring "those who worship there" adds an illustrative element.

As we work through the text, we will do a little measuring of our own. I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 God The Holy Spirit Is Your Measure**, and **#2 God The Holy Spirit Is Yours Without Measure**.

#1 - God The Holy Spirit Is Your Measure (v1-2)

God the Holy Spirit is in verse four where we read, "These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." The words come directly from the fourth chapter of the Book of Zechariah. The prophet saw "a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the *stand* seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. **Two olive trees** are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left" (v2-3).

Lampstands with a constant supply of oil illustrate the unlimited resource of God the Holy Spirit available to the Jews who had returned from captivity in Babylon to rebuild their Temple.

Zechariah would be told, 'Not by might nor by power, but by **My Spirit,**' Says the LORD of hosts" (v6).

Knowing that John was alluding to Zechariah, we 'see' God the Holy Spirit at work.

Rev 11:1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the Temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

One first century system of measure was the "reed."The "reed" given to John would be about 10' long by our way of measuring.

Daniel and Jesus confirm that there will be a Temple in the Great Tribulation. They both refer to a particular event that occurs in the inner chamber called the Holy of Holies. The man we popularly call the antichrist will enter it and defile it by proclaiming himself 'god' and demanding worship. His actions are ominously described as "the Abomination of Desolation."

A Muslim Temple, Dome of the Rock, is said to be built on the site of the Holy of Holies. Does it have to be destroyed for the Jews to build their Temple?

Not necessarily. In 1969 there was construction work in the vicinity of the Dome of the Rock. Dr. Ze'ev Yeivin went to the site and made some drawings of an exposed ancient wall.

Not long after, Dr. Asher Kaufman identified the section of wall seen by Dr. Yeivin as the eastern wall of the Temple's Court of the Women. Kaufman concluded that the site of the Temple is not where we suppose.

The Dome of the Rock is not on the site of the Holy of Holies.

Other sites have been proposed based on more recent research. Both structures could coexist.

Remember, too, that the Jewish Temple consists of two small chambers called the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Together they measure 675sq feet. A makeshift Temple, e.g., a tent, could quickly be erected. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem has manufactured all the implements needed to begin sacrifices, and they have trained the priests.

The measuring includes the "altar." Since Jews could gather there, this must be the brazen altar outside the Temple upon which animals are sacrificed. Animal sacrifice will occur during a portion of the Great Tribulation.

Merely bringing a sacrifice does not indicate that someone is a believer. They may be going through the motions, performing empty rituals. Thus John was told to "measure... those who worship there."

Were they sheep? Or were they goats?

This measuring of Temple, altar, and worshippers leave no doubt that there *will* be a Temple in Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation. To us, that information is interesting. To Jews, it is awesome. John wrote after the Romans destroyed the Temple. It was in ruin and they were dispersed. The hope of a return to Israel and worshipping in Jerusalem - huge.

Rev 11:2 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.

"Given to the Gentiles" indicates a time of cooperation. It will be short-lived. For a period of "forty-two months," Jerusalem will fall into Gentile control and Jews will be a target of persecution.

Forty-two months is three-and-one-half years and it is one thousand two hundred and sixty days. The Great Tribulation lasts for seven years separated into a first half and a second half by the Abomination of Desolation that occurs at the mid-point. Jesus described it this way:

Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Mat 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

Mat 24:18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Mat 24:19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Mat 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

- The opening of the first five seals occurs slowly in the first half of the Great Tribulation.
- The opening of the sixth seal is a preview of things to come in the second half of the Great Tribulation.
- The opening of the seventh seal releases the seven trumpets and the seven bowls coming at an accelerated pace in the second half of the Great Tribulation. Jesus compared it to a woman's labor pains.

We have the Word of God as our measure for life and godliness. We have indwelling us God the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to measure our beliefs and behaviors:

- Thanks to the Word of God, we know what to think and do, and we know what not to think or do.
- Thanks to God the Holy Spirit, we *can* think and do what we ought to.

We can measure some things by verses. A common need for measuring is when presented with behavior that strikes us as questionable. We can measure it by a verse like First Corinthians 10:23, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." Our measurement is the "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" standard.

#2 - God The Holy Spirit Is Yours Without Measure (v3-14)

Jesus is the main actor throughout this great drama. There are multiple supporting roles; an ensemble cast. John introduces "My Two Witnesses."

Rev 11:3 And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Jehovah will empower two prophets as special witnesses.

They are the true & unique Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Sackcloth" was a kind of uniform for Old Testament prophets of woe. It was uncomfortable.

Uncomfortable circumstances are often necessary for the Gospel to be brought into focus.

It's pretty clear that these guys prophesy in at least part of the second half of the Great Tribulation. They may start sometime in the first half and go for "one thousand two hundred and sixty days." It the same number of days as either half of the Great Tribulation, but that doesn't mean their days of ministry can't overlap both halves.

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

More Zechariah. The Jews had stalled in the rebuilding of their Temple. God promised to provide His Holy Spirit to empower the two leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua. He said, "These *are* the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth" (4:14).

The connecting of the lamps to the trees is intended to depict a constant, spontaneous, automatic supply of oil flowing into the lamps. Better than cold-fusion.

Their ministry looked forward to, and was a figure of, the ministry of the Two Witnesses of the Revelation. Their light is the prophecy they share and it will be empowered without measure by God the Holy Spirit.

Rev 11:5 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.

Fire is a favorite superhero power: The Human Torch, Ghost Rider, Phoenix, and Drew Barrymore (in *Firestarter*).

There is that scene in every superhero movie where the police or military shoot the super bad guy only to have their bullets bounce off. He then kills them in some horrific manner. The Two Witnesses originated that genre.

They give an entirely new meaning to being “on fire for the Lord.”

Rev 11:6 These have power to shut Heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

Right here is an excellent verse to launch into the question, “Who are those guys?”

We are not told who they are.

It’s telling of our curiosity that right after commentators admit the identity of the Two Witnesses cannot be known, *they dedicate most of their comments deciding who they are.*

I’ll satisfy our curiosity, but only a little. The casting call includes the following:

- On account of the miracles performed, they seem like Elijah and Moses. Another point in that column is that Elijah and Moses met with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration to discuss the End Times.
- A lot of folks believe that the Old Testament patriarch Enoch, not Moses, will join Elijah. God took both to Heaven without ever dying. The ancient church, including Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, was consistent in identifying the two witnesses as Enoch and Elijah.
- A tiny minority of scholars say they are Zerubbabel and Joshua based on a super-literal reading of Zechariah.
- They could be two ordinary believers that God anoints. I like this more-and-more because it is just like the Lord to raise up nobodies.

I like not knowing.

It is better to stay a "whosoever" than to make a name for yourself. (You-so-ever?).

Rev 11:7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

Some ministries have a definite, even abrupt, ending. The ending can seem a defeat. The important thing is that the Holy Spirit leads it.

"The beast" is mentioned for the first time. Critics of the literal, futurist approach to the Revelation might ask you this trick question: "How many times is the antichrist mentioned in the Revelation?" The answer is, "None." This same person, however, is called the beast thirty-six times. He has a bunch of names in the Bible: Man of sin, man of destruction, the little horn, the Assyrian, *etc., etc.*

"Make war against them, overcome them, and kill them" describes an extended campaign. We can only wonder how many special operatives or squads or units or armies are incinerated. The Two Witnesses will be indestructible until their ministry ends.

The Two Witnesses had the Holy Spirit without measure. They were indestructible and performed amazing acts. Having the Holy Spirit without measure did not save them from martyrdom.

Having the Holy Spirit without measure doesn't mean you will do the miraculous. Especially in the Church Age in which we are living.

Rev 11:8 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.

Not lying in state to honor them, though they deserve nothing less. Lying "in the street," lying in shame.

Jerusalem is the city where “our Lord was crucified.” If words mean anything at all, this is literal, not symbolic.

Jerusalem is *likened* to “Sodom and Egypt” due to its spiritual condition in the Great Tribulation. It will be a place where people are held captive by the unbridled immorality of their flesh.

Rev 11:9 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 could “peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations” simultaneously for “three-and-a-half days” see the Two Witnesses? They couldn’t. Not until almost the mid-1960s.

John predicted the advance of instantaneous global telecommunications technology. John was a prophet accurately predicting the future of mankind.

This book is a prophecy not an apocalyptic allegory.

They would “not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves” means they did not intend to bury them but to keep them on display. Think of big game hunters and their taxidermied prey.

Rev 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

We’ve all seen footage of protestors dancing in the streets, burning effigies, and shouting “Death” to their enemy. (Usually the United States for using imperial units).

What would be an appropriate "gift?" How will they celebrate? Will Hallmark have time to produce cards? It's sick, indicative of the values of the inhabitants of Earth.

The Good News of salvation is not a "torment." It's the greatest news anyone can give you. You can have your sins forgiven, be a new creation, and live forever in a blissful eternity with a glorified body. To John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John, "Tell me more, tell me more."

Rev 11:11 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.

Can you imagine being in the queue, shuffling past the bodies, when suddenly they are raised from the dead? Heart attack.

Rev 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from Heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to Heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

These Eternals, in glorified bodies, ascend to Heaven similar to Jesus in His ascension. The inhabitants of Earth don't have much time to reflect because,

Rev 11:13 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.

These are precise numbers, *not* symbolic. God required a "tenth," a *tithe*, from Israel. Once the damage is calculated, and they realize it is a tithe, the people will know that the "earthquake" was the hand of God.

"Seven thousand people" can be translated as "seven thousand names of men." These are men of some renown.

The likelihood is that world dignitaries are gathered together as representatives of their nations at this horrible antiChristmas. They will be killed, probably in the earthquake and maybe all in one location.

Many in Jerusalem repent and turn to God. Robert Thomas writes, "It comes here as an encouragement just before the last blast of the seventh trumpet falls. Since the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be mostly Jewish, this could very well be the future repentance of Israel that will accompany Jesus Christ's Second Coming."

Rev 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

The second of three "woe[s]" that is "coming quickly" is the blast of the seventh trumpet in the very next verse.

There are three Persons in the Trinity - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit is a Person.

Never treat God the Holy Spirit as if He were *something* rather than *Someone*.

- It is biblical to "ask" for more of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised, "How much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who **ask** Him!"
- It's OK to call it a fresh filling or pouring out upon us.

The Bible uses those as illustrations of the result of yielding to Him. We shouldn't come away from them thinking that He is a commodity, like the Force in *Star Wars*.

It might help to think of our relationship to God the Holy Spirit in romantic terms.

Listen to this stanza lifted from a love poem by American poet Sara Teasdale:

*Oh plunge me deep in love - put out
My senses, leave me deaf and blind*

She compared an all-consuming passionate relationship to a deep plunge into depths of water that would overwhelm her senses of sight and sound. It isn't a 'something' she could tap into; *it was 'someone' to love.*

Asking for God the Holy Spirit, asking to be filled afresh, is a plunge into a Person, not a request for resources.

When I am with my wife, and she wants to relate and talk, I can pay *full* attention or *no* attention. I'm usually somewhere in between. I don't experience her as much as I could. I'm not immersed in her.

God the Holy Spirit is yours without measure. He is always paying attention to you, always ready for you to take the plunge.