Revelation 11

The Two Witnesses: The Kingdom of Our Lord

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God knows exactly who is His, and His witnesses cannot be silenced until their work is done. The world may kill them and throw a party, but God raises them up in front of everyone. Then the last trumpet sounds, and the kingdom belongs to Christ forever.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

REVELATION 11 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning
★ Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein .

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are ▲ the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, ▲ fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 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, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, ⚠ the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 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.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth ⚠ shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11 And after three days and an half ★ the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and ★ they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and ▲ gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, ⚠ the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, ▲ The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and ★ he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, ▲ O Lord God Almighty, which art , and wast , and art to come ; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And ⚠ the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest ★ give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple ▲ the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an ⇄ earthquake, and great hail.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ▮▮ measure the temple of God
- **v2** ◷ forty and two months
- **v3** ⇄ my two witnesses
- **v3** ◷ a thousand two hundred and threescore days
- **v3** ⇄ clothed in sackcloth
- **v4** ▲ the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks
- **v5** ▲ fire proceedeth out of their mouth
- **v6** ▲ power to shut heaven
- **v7** ◷ when they shall have finished their testimony
- **v7** ⚠ the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit
- **v8** ⇄ dead bodies (*every occurrence*)
- **v8** ⚠ Sodom and Egypt
- **v8** ◷ where also our Lord was crucified
- **v10** ⚠ shall rejoice over them, and make merry
- **v11** ★ the Spirit of life from God entered into them
- **v11** ★ they stood upon their feet
- **v12** ▮▮ Come up hither
- **v13** ⇄ earthquake (*every occurrence*)
- **v13** ▲ gave glory to the God of heaven
- **v14** ⚠ the third woe cometh quickly
- **v15** ▲ The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ
- **v15** ★ he shall reign for ever and ever
- **v16** ▮▮ fell upon their faces, and worshipped God
- **v17** ▲ O Lord God Almighty
- **v18** ⚠ the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come
- **v18** ★ give reward unto thy servants
- **v19** ▲ the ark of his testament

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 11:3 (KJV)

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Setting

The interlude that began in chapter 10 continues. John has just eaten the little book and been told, "You must prophesy again" (10:11). Now he is given a measuring rod, and then he sees two witnesses who prophesy, die and rise again. Only after that does the seventh trumpet finally sound (v15), and heaven breaks out in worship.

Structure

- vv1–2 — **the temple measured:** "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it" (v1). The outer court is left out, "for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months" (v2).
- vv3–6 — **the two witnesses empowered:** "I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth" (v3). They are "the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth" (v4). Fire devours their enemies (v5); they can shut the sky, turn waters into blood, and strike the earth "with every plague, as often as they desire" (v6).
- vv7–10 — **the witnesses killed:** "When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them" (v7). Their bodies lie in the street of the great city, "where also their Lord was crucified" (v8). The world looks on for three and a half days, rejoices and sends gifts, "because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth" (vv9–10).
- vv11–14 — **the witnesses raised:** "the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet" (v11). A loud voice says, "Come up here," and they go up into heaven in the cloud while their enemies watch (v12). An earthquake kills seven thousand, and "the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven" (v13). "The second woe is past" (v14).
- vv15–19 — **the seventh trumpet:** "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (v15). The twenty-four elders fall on their faces and give thanks that He has "begun to reign" (vv16–17). It is the time for the dead to be judged and for His servants to be rewarded (v18). The temple in heaven opens, and "the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple" (v19).

Repeated words

temple (vv1, 2, 19); measure (vv1, 2); two witnesses / two (vv3, 4, 10); prophesy / prophets / prophesying (vv3, 6, 10, 18); dead bodies (vv8, 9); dwell on the earth (v10, twice); earthquake (vv13, 19); heaven (vv12, 13, 15, 19); reign (vv15, 17).

Contrasts

The measured temple ⟷ the court left to the nations (vv1–2). The witnesses' power (vv5–6) ⟷ their bodies in the street (v8). The world celebrating (v10) ⟷ great fear when they stand up (v11). Their enemies watching (v12) ⟷ the rest giving glory to God (v13). The kingdom of the world ⟷ the kingdom of our Lord (v15). The nations enraged ⟷ Your wrath came (v18).

Chapter theme (my words)

God knows exactly who is His, and His witnesses cannot be silenced until their work is done. The world may kill them and throw a party, but God raises them up in front of everyone. Then the last trumpet sounds, and the kingdom belongs to Christ forever.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 11:13 (KJV)

13 And the same hour was there a great ⇄ earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the ⇄ earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and ▲ gave glory to the God of heaven.

Measuring the temple (vv1–2)

Measuring in Scripture marks what belongs to God and what He protects (Ezek 40–43; Zech 2:1–5; Rev 21:15). Guzik weighs the view that the temple here is the church (Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5), but finds that it doesn't explain the specific details — the altar, the worshippers, the outer court. He takes it as a literal, future temple in Jerusalem, in line with Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Many other Christians read the temple as God's people, protected inwardly while the outward church is trampled. Both see the same comfort: God knows and keeps His own. Forty-two months, like the 1,260 days of v3, is three and a half years; Guzik places it in the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. Robertson defines "tread under foot" as "to trample with contempt."

Who are the two witnesses? (vv3–6)

Christians differ here. Some read them as a symbol — the witnessing church, or the Law and the Prophets. Guzik finds that the details (bodies in a street, three and a half days, a public ascension) point to two real men. Elijah is the most common suggestion: he shut the sky (1 Kgs 17:1; Jas 5:17), called down fire (2 Kgs 1:10), never died (2 Kgs 2:11), and was promised before the day of the LORD (Mal 4:5). The second is often Moses, who turned water into blood (Exod 7:20) and appeared with Elijah at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:3); some prefer Enoch, who also never died (Gen 5:24). Guzik concludes that their identity must not be terribly important, or we would have been told exactly who they are. The olive trees and lampstands come from Zechariah 4: oil that never runs out, the Spirit's power for God's servants — "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6). Walvoord: their power is such "that they are able to witness for 1,260 days in spite of the antagonism of the world."

Killed only when finished (vv7–10)

The beast cannot touch them until "they have finished their testimony" (v7). God's servants are immortal until their work is done. Guzik: "Witness is not something we do; it is something we are." The "great city" is called Sodom (immorality) and Egypt (bondage and oppression) "mystically" — spiritually — and is identified as the place "where also their Lord was crucified," which Guzik takes as Jerusalem. Leaving the bodies unburied was the worst humiliation; Johnson: "To have his dead body lie in view of all was the worst humiliation a person could suffer from his enemies." The world sends gifts — a dark Christmas — because the preaching of repentance "tormented" them (v10).

Raised before their enemies (vv11–14)

The "breath of life from God" recalls Ezekiel's valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:10). "Come up here" echoes the call to John (4:1). Their enemies watch them go. The earthquake kills seven thousand, and "the rest ... gave glory to the God of heaven" (v13). Guzik notes that the text leaves it unclear whether this is saving repentance or only terror.

The seventh trumpet (vv15–19)

"Has become" is a settled fact in Greek; heaven celebrates Christ's reign as already won, even before chapters 12–19 show how. Morgan: "In their praise, impending events are set forth, to be more fully described later." The elders praise God "who are and who were" — no longer "who is to come" (compare 4:8), because He has come. Newell: "Religion is decent, but surrender to God is intolerable to the nations of this world." The ark of the covenant, lost to human sight for centuries, appears in heaven's temple. Alford calls it "the symbol of God's faithfulness in bestowing grace on His people, and inflicting vengeance on His people's enemies." The lightning, thunder and earthquake echo Sinai (Exod 19:16–18).

Word study (Greek)

- **measuring rod — *kalamos* (G2563):** a reed, used as a measuring stick.
- **temple — *naos* (G3485):** the sanctuary itself, the dwelling of God.
- **tread under foot — *pateō* (G3961):** to trample.
- **witness — *martys* (G3144):** one who testifies; became our word "martyr."
- **sackcloth — *sakkos* (G4526):** coarse cloth worn in mourning and repentance.
- **olive tree — *elaia* (G1636):** source of oil for lamps.
- **lampstand — *lychnia* (G3087):** lampstand, as in 1:20.
- **testimony — *martyria* (G3141):** witness, the content of what is testified.
- **abyss — *abyssos* (G12):** the bottomless pit.
- **mystically — *pneumatikōs* (G4153):** spiritually, in a spiritual sense.
- **tormented — *basanizō* (G928):** to torture, vex.
- **breath — *pneuma* (G4151):** breath, spirit, the Spirit.
- **reign — *basileuō* (G936):** to rule as king.
- **Almighty — *pantokratōr* (G3841):** ruler over all.
- **covenant — *diathēkē* (G1242):** covenant, testament.

Cross-references

Exod 7:20; Exod 19:16–18; 1 Kgs 17:1; 2 Kgs 1:10; 2 Kgs 2:11; Ezek 37:5–10; Ezek 40:3; Dan 7:13–14, 27; Dan 9:27; Zech 2:1–5; Zech 4:1–14; Mal 4:5; Matt 17:3; Matt 24:15; Luke 21:24; John 15:18–20; 2 Thess 2:4; Heb 9:4; Jas 5:17; Rev 4:1; Rev 13:1–7; Rev 15:5; Rev 16:18–21.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 11:11 (KJV)

[11] And after three days and an half ★ the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and ★ they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

Command to obey — be a witness

"I will grant authority to my two witnesses" (v3). They didn't make themselves witnesses; God did, and He gave the power. Guzik's line stays with me: witness is not something I do, it's something I am. Today I'll tell one person what Jesus has done for me. For a man in recovery or just out of prison, his testimony is his strongest sermon — he doesn't need a seminary degree, just the truth of what God did.

Sin to confess — fear of being mocked

The world threw a party over the witnesses' dead bodies (v10). I confess that I sometimes go quiet because I'd rather be liked than faithful. Their prophesying "tormented" people, and they kept going anyway.

Warning to heed — religion is easy, surrender is not

The nations "were enraged" (v18). People will tolerate a little religion, but not a King who demands their whole life. I need to check whether I've given Christ my Sunday or my all.

Promise to trust — "the breath of life from God came into them."

The world thought the story was over at v9. Three and a half days later, they stood on their feet (v11). Many of the men I serve feel like their bodies are lying in the street — record, addiction, broken family, the whole world watching. God's breath still raises the dead. No man is finished until God says he is finished, and God's servants are safe until their work is done.

Example to follow — the witnesses in sackcloth

They had power to call down fire, and they still wore mourners' clothes (v3). Power and brokenness went together. I want to minister the same way: confident in God's authority, humble and grieving over sin, beginning with my own.

Worship

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (v15). With the elders, I fall on my face. He has taken His great power and begun to

reign.

Prayer

Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, thank You that the kingdom belongs to Christ. Fill me with Your Spirit like oil in the lamp, so I can witness with Your power and not mine. Take away my fear of being mocked. Breathe life into the men I love who feel dead in the street, and let them stand on their feet for Your glory. Amen.