

sHymns:        12 I'll Fly Away                                33 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder  
                    34 When We All Get to Heaven

Scripture:     Psalm 90:1-12; 30  
Big idea:       God's Two Witnesses

Today, we're continuing our welcome break from the waves of judgment upon the earth. But before we do, let's get our bearings by briefly recapping what we've covered in the book of Revelation so far:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is just that. The apostle John describes events centered around Jesus Christ as He is in glory. The account includes letters from Jesus to seven representative churches encouraging, instructing, and correcting them. Jesus then calls John in the spirit to the place of God's throne in heaven where he sees cherubim, other angels, elders, God the Father, and God the Son.

John describes Jesus as the only one worthy take a seven-sealed scroll from God the Father and begin to open it. Each seal unleashed a judgment. The first four represented by the white, red, black, and pale horses signifying the conquering Antichrist, war, famine, and death respectively. Many who trust the LORD during this time called the Tribulation will be martyred.

Opening the seventh seal kicks off the trumpet judgments. The first four trumpet judgments include – devastating destruction of one-third of sea life, water purity, ships, sun, moon, and stars. The fifth and sixth trumpets unleash demons from the earth which torment and then kill one-third of mankind.

Last time, in chapter ten we took a break from the judgments as the apostle John returned to earth and received a commission to pen the second half of the book of Revelation.

That brings us to our passage for today where the parenthetical break continues as we learn of the new temple of God on the earth and His two witnesses. In the interest of time we will just read the first verse to get us started and jump into our in-depth study directly from there.

Revelation 11

*[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.*

Revelation 11

*[1] And*

The story proceeds from the second commissioning of John to write.

*there was given me*

That's pretty non-specific wording. Who gave and what was given?

*a reed*

A *reed* traditionally indicated a measuring or writing instrument.

*like unto a rod:*

This measuring instrument had the form of a rigid pole like a bamboo fishing rod rather than a pen, ruler, or flimsy measuring tape.

*and the angel stood,*

Which angel? The most natural reading refers back to Revelation 10:9 reference to “the angel” which referred to the **mighty angel** that gave John the book to eat.

*saying, Rise,*

We last saw John taking the little book from the standing angel. His most likely posture would have been standing also. We can interpret the word for rise in this context to have the sense of *get going*, or just *go* instead of *rise*.

*and measure*

*the temple of God,*

John stands on the earth ready to measure the temple in Jerusalem. The destruction of Herod’s version of the temple by Titus of Rome occurred in A.D. 70. John wrote Revelation about A.D. 95. The temple mount no longer contained a temple but instead a pile of rubble. What temple could John measure? This would have to be the new yet-to-be-built temple that still does not exist today. John saw and measured that future temple.

Recall the temple contained the Holy Place where the priests sacrificed animals and the Holy of Holies where the high priest met God at the Mercy Seat once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people.

*and the altar,*

Which altar? We’re not told. In Revelation, the only altar referenced was the Altar of Incense before the throne of God. If we think about it, since the blood of Christ satisfied God’s wrath, once and for all (Hebrews 9:11-12, 28; 10:4, 10) there is no need for blood sacrifices any longer.

*and them that worship therein.*

While John could measure the temple, and the altar with his measuring stick, how can he measure the people who worship there (who are the Jews)? Could it be this measurement means to size up or appraise rather than to measure a distance? An alternative wording of the verse might be better understood as:

*Go, and mark out God's temple, His altar, and those who worship there as His own.*

[2] *But the court which is without the temple*

Ezekiel's temple layout (Ezekiel 40:1-42:20) and Herod’s temple each had a large outer courtyard that surrounded the temple proper.

*leave out,*

Do not consider in your measurements.

*and measure it not;*

Why? Often in scripture, we see detailed measurements related to things Jewish as we see here.

*for it is given unto the Gentiles:*

God makes provision for non-Jews in a larger, less sacred place.

*and the holy city*

Where is the holy city? That's Jerusalem of course.

*shall they*

Who are *they*? The Gentiles or non-Jews.

*tread under foot forty and two months.*

The Gentiles will take control of Jerusalem for **three-and-a-half years**. This time of occupation headed by the Beast, also called the Antichrist, marks the second half of the seven-year Tribulation period.

*[3] And I*

To whom does this *I* refer?

Do you remember the chain of authority we identified to start the book of Revelation?

Father → Son → angel → John

Let's work our way back.

*will give power*

Does John give power? No.

Does an angel give power? No.

Can the Father or Son give power? Yes.

*unto my two witnesses,*

Are these two witnesses John's or the angel's? No.

They witness for the Father or the Son.

*and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore **days**,*

There's that **three-and-a-half** years number again. We cannot say exactly when these two witnesses begin their ministry, but we know it must be before the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation period (Daniel 9:27) to enable them to prophesy for 1260 days (Revelation 11:7-9).

Note: this is exactly three-and-one-half Jewish calendar years each of which is 360 days (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 12:6).

*clothed in sackcloth.*

Jews wore sackcloth to indicate mourning (Esther 4:3; Psalm 30:11)

[4] *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*  
To understand this imagery, we need to go back and look at an Old Testament reference:

Zechariah 4

[11] *..., What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?*

Said Zechariah to the angel speaking.

[14] *Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth.*

Here we see these **two witnesses** predicted by Zechariah the prophet centuries before in an unmistakable analogy.

[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.*

We've heard of fire-breathing dragons. These men breathe out fatal fire against their enemies. But that's not all:

[6] *These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy:*

James 5

[17] *Elias was **a man** subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of **three years and six months**.*

Wow! There's that number again.

*and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*

Who in the Bible turned waters into blood and smote the earth with plagues? Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 7

[20] *...; and he [Aaron] lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, ... ; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.*

Exodus 9

[23] *And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.*

One of the questions most subject to speculation in the book of Revelation involves the identity of these two witnesses. Who are they? Top candidates are: Elijah, Moses, and

Enoch. While scripture does not reveal their identity, Jesus says we can know a person by his works (Matthew 7:20). Interestingly, the two Old Testament characters who appeared with Jesus during His transfiguration were none other than Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:20).

And there's this:  
Malachi 4

*[4] Remember ye the **law** of **Moses** my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.*

*[5] Behold, I will send you **Elijah** the **prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD**:*

We still await the return of Elijah. Jesus even referenced this event (Matthew 17:11; Matthew 11:14). Will these two witnesses be Moses and Elijah representing the law and the prophets (Matthew 11:13)? We cannot say, but the Bible gives strong reasons to support that premise.

*[7] And when they shall have finished their testimony,*  
There's a time when our work on this earth ends. This is that time for these two witnesses.

*the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit*

Isn't that interesting? Recall when we looked at the bottomless pit, we ran across this verse. The Beast / Antichrist comes from the bottomless pit where God holds demons captive. We saw the Beast riding the white horse in chapter 6 when the Lamb opened the first seal. So from the start of the Tribulation, he's been out and doing the bidding of Satan.

We have reached the point where the book of Daniel really needs to speak as well. Daniel 9:27 especially applies to our study here:

Daniel 9

*[27] And he [the prince that shall come (see Daniel 9:25)] shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week**: and **in the midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation [offering] to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, ....*

The Hebrew word for **week** means a **group of seven**, not just seven *days* as we understand weeks. For example, Jacob worked *weeks* of years for Rachel.

Genesis 29

*[20] And Jacob served **seven years** for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.*

Rachel's father Laban tricked Jacob and gave him Leah, Rachel's older sister. Jacob objected and Laban said:

*[27] Fulfil her **week**, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet **seven** other **years**.*

*[28] And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her **week**: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.*

Daniel 7

*[25] And he [the Beast, Antichrist, prince that shall come] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a **time** and **times** and the **dividing of time**.*

While the Beast will be around during the entire seven-year Tribulation period, he will have full control of the earth for  $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3 \frac{1}{2}$  years. There's that number again! Further study makes it clear that these *times* are *years* and not *days* or *weeks*.

*shall make war against them,*

Here, the Beast makes war against God's two witnesses.

*and shall overcome them,*

The witnesses had completed their mission.

*and kill them.*

As God permitted evil men to behead John the Baptist and crucify Jesus Christ, He now allows the Beast to put God's two witnesses to death,

*[8] And their dead bodies shall lie in the street*

but interestingly their dead bodies remain intact and in view.

*of the great city,*

Which great city?

*which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt,*

We know Sodom as a place of sexually immorality and Egypt as a place of idolatry. Both rejected God and went whoring after other gods. This is called spiritual adultery. This great city is a place of spiritual adultery.

*where also our Lord was crucified.*

That nails down the city as the great city Jerusalem.

[9] *And they of  
the people  
and kindreds  
and tongues  
and nations*

We see this list frequently in Revelation representing all of humanity.

*shall see their **dead bodies***

It's interesting that young people would find this statement as rather routine. After all, everyone has a smartphone or television beaming live images from around the world via satellite. But even I remember a time when I would wonder exactly how God might pull this off. Today we know.

*three **days** and an half,*

There's that 3 ½ number again, but this time it explicitly says **days** rather than years.

*and shall not suffer their **dead bodies** to be put in graves.*

The dead bodies of these witnesses will remain on display for all to see. Just as the enemy sealed Jesus' tomb and set a guard to guarantee no one would steal His body, here the enemy does God's bidding by clearly showing these two bodies.

Unfortunately, we must stop there for today. Did the forces of evil win? Is that it for these two witnesses? Tune in next time for the exciting conclusion of this story.

### **Application**

As with these two witnesses, God has appointed the times for us as well (Hebrews 9:27). Each day of life is a precious gift from Him. For each of our remaining days, let's take care to use them wisely and faithfully.

### **Benediction**

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).*