

Chapter 11

Introduction:

The seventh trumpet is about to signal the end of time -- the destruction of the world. The six previous ones called on the unrighteous to turn from their ways. But, in spite of the graphic description of the fate of the wicked, the sixth trumpet declares, “... *nevertheless they did not repent!*” In chapter 10, the “Mighty Angel” warns that time is getting short.

Before this last trumpet sounds, though, we are going to witness the same scene we saw back in chapter 7, before the seventh seal was opened. Only this time our focus is not on the righteous -- the sealed -- but instead on the unrighteous -- those left unsealed. Here, the sealed are said to be in the Kingdom of Christ – the church that Jesus established. By extension, then, we can conclude that the unsealed are NOT a part of this church. Even though we now begin to realize that everyone falls into one of two categories: “in the church” or “outside the church,” (righteous vs. unrighteous), do not make the mistake that many make in assuming that we will be judged on that last day as a “church”. Each person must still stand before God on an individual basis! And, sadly, some of those deemed unrighteous in this chapter include individuals IN the church. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*” Contrary to what some think, simply being a member of a church will not be enough to save us – we must be a member of the Lord’s church, **and we must do the will of God!**

So, let’s be clear that at this point the church is brought into focus collectively, as a group of servants of God. But, a second group is added, made up of those who are NOT servants of God even though some of them assume that they are. This is the chapter where we learn which group we are in and, at this point, there is still time to repent. It begins thusly:

“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.’”

This “*measuring rod*” will be used to determine who will be among the saved and the doomed. We need to carefully read the text of chapter 11 and fully understand its meaning because, quite frankly, our soul’s salvation depends on it. Then we will discuss the answers to these three questions:

What exactly is measured?

What is the measure used?

Who is doing the measuring?

The vision of the two witnesses – Chapter 11:1 - 14

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. 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. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. And

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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. 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. 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. The second woe is past, and behold: The third woe cometh quickly.

John is told to measure three distinct things: *“the temple of God, the altar, and them that worship therein.”* The *“reed”* John is given is an instrument of measure similar to a yardstick, a “standard” to which something may be compared. Even though the verse does not say, many speculate it was the angel that gave him this reed. I disagree. I believe John was given the reed by either the Holy Spirit or One representing The Holy Spirit because we will learn that the **“standard”** by which these three things are to be measured is the **Word of God** and the Holy Spirit inspired its writers.

Not only is John told what three things TO measure, he is also told NOT to measure the court outside the temple because it has been given to the “Gentiles” which will trample the holy city for 42 months. These are very important verses, so let’s dig a little deeper.

The “Temple of God”

Many believe he was being told to measure the physical temple located in Jerusalem when Jesus walked on the earth. That would, of course, be the temple that Herod expanded around 20 BC, depicted in this image. That temple sat on the Temple Mount and was the one Jesus “cleansed” more than once during His ministry, long before John’s exile on Patmos. However, that temple can not be the



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one John was told to measure at the writing of this book in 96 AD, because it no longer existed! In 66 AD history records that the majority of the Jewish population in Jerusalem rebelled against the Roman Empire, and aroused the anger of Rome. Four years later, Roman legions under the leadership of Titus surrounded the city of Jerusalem, broke down the walls, attacked the city, and totally destroyed that temple. It is said by one historian's account of that siege, "...not a block was left standing on another." Therefore, if we accept that John wrote the book of Revelation around 96 AD (the "late view" as outlined in the introduction) the temple pictured above was long gone!

As a matter of fact, the temple being spoken of in this text is **not a physical temple at all**. It is a spiritual one. I refer you to Revelation 3:12 in the letter to the church in Philadelphia, when Jesus said: ***"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out..."*** In that letter Jesus tells John that He (Jesus) will ***"write a new name upon the ones that overcome..."*** and they shall dwell in a new city ***"which is the New Jerusalem that cometh down out of heaven from my God..."*** We will see that ***New Jerusalem*** in chapter 21. So, the ***"temple of God"*** spoken of here is in this ***"New Jerusalem,"*** and is the dwelling place of all the righteous. It is the kingdom of Christ established upon His resurrection, and it is comprised of two parts: earthly and heavenly. Those still alive are in His earthly kingdom: **His church**. Those faithful followers who have died or who will die before the end of the earth are in His **heavenly kingdom**, a home He has promised us. The ***"temple of God,"*** that John is told to measure in this chapter is the earthly part – the **church that Jesus established!**

The "Altar" –

Notice that John is not told which altar to measure, but simply is told to measure the altar. I believe that indicates there is only one. Earlier when we were discussing the fifth seal, we came to understand that the altar is a symbol of sacrifice. During the period when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness the tabernacle served as their place of worship. But, once Solomon's temple was built, it replaced the tabernacle. In both, there were two altars: the Altar of Incense inside the Holy Place, and the Altar of Sacrifice in the courtyard. If you recall, we discussed these at length in the previous lesson.

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Worship was vastly different under the Law of Moses than it is under the new dispensation in which we live. Under the Old Covenant people did not gather together in the temple to sing, pray, and commune together like we do now. They were deemed pleasing to God when they carried out prescribed physical activities such as observing special days and rituals, offering various sacrifices, practicing the laws of cleanliness, paying their temple taxes, giving alms to those less fortunate, and presenting themselves in Jerusalem for certain feasts and observances. When a sacrifice was required, they would take it to the priest and he would prepare it and offer it on the Altar of Sacrifice in the courtyard, outside the temple proper. Even though the people were demonstrating obedience by their adherence to the rituals mentioned above, the true devout worship only occurred inside the Holy Place where the priest made offerings and prayed as he burnt incense on their behalf.

However, when the Old Law came to an end (*that Friday afternoon in 33 AD when Jesus died on the cross*) and the New Testament church was established 50 days later on the day of Pentecost, all those old rules and customs were rendered obsolete. At this point, the church Jesus established, not the temple, became the place for spiritual worship. Now, ALL of the faithful had direct access to God through prayer. While it is true that we are commanded to assemble for worship to sing, pray, take communion, give of our means, help those less fortunate – all physical things – the real difference is in the spiritual realm. We no longer sacrifice on an altar because Jesus became that sacrifice for all the faithful. Other than the command to worship on the first day of the week, we no longer observe special days, rituals, or customs. Remember, we are told in Rev. 1: 6, that under the new covenant Jesus has ***“made us kings and priests unto God, His Father,”*** so as spiritual ***“priests”*** we are symbolically allowed into the Holy Place (where the Altar of Incense is “before God”) to offer our worship, praise and prayers. Therefore, John being told to measure the “altar” is really **a measuring of our spiritual worship in the church that Jesus established** as we sing, pray, study His word, and partake of the emblems of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. To be true worshippers, we must remain close to the symbolic altar of incense – by wholly participating in the worship services, keeping ourselves free from sin and maintaining an active prayer life.

“Them that worship therein” –

This of course refers to those that worship in The Lord’s church. It should go without saying that our role is not simply to “show up and sit there.” We must participate in the service mentally as well as physically. And, for God to recognize our worship, we must be pure when we offer it up to Him. We are fallible humans who err repeatedly, but through Jesus’ sacrifice, God has provided a way whereby we can worship him in purity. This is why those who offer the opening prayer at our worship services ask for forgiveness of our sins – so we can enter into the service in the way in which God requires.

I believe the **“measuring”** John was asked to do – the comparing of each of us to the “standard” – serves more than just a single purpose: First and foremost, it is to determine whether or not we as individuals come up to that standard. Also, it helps each of us see just where we are in regard to that standard. If we find we do not “measure up,” then we can make some changes in our lives. But it also provides an accurate numbering or “keeping track,” if you will, of how many are being saved. I have been asked many times when I believe the Lord will return. If I am correct when I answer that question, it is when there are no more lost souls turning to Christ and being saved. As long as the number of saved keeps increasing, the days on this earth keep coming. Our job on this planet is to spread the Word of God to a lost world. As long as people are searching, God will grant us the time to convert them.

One further question needs answering: **“Who is doing the measuring?”** It is only fitting that the reed (the measuring “standard”) was given to John, because the apostles were the first ones to deliver the Gospel of Christ to the world, and John is the only one of that group still alive at this writing. However, we know from our earlier study of the letters to the churches in chapters 2-3, that John is not the one doing the measuring, Jesus is. He is the one who has the power to remove the candlestick of a church. So, John may be figuratively holding the reed up to each of us, but **Jesus is the one that makes the comparison to His word!** In John 12:48, he quotes Jesus as saying, ***“He that rejects me, and does not receive my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”*** That is a

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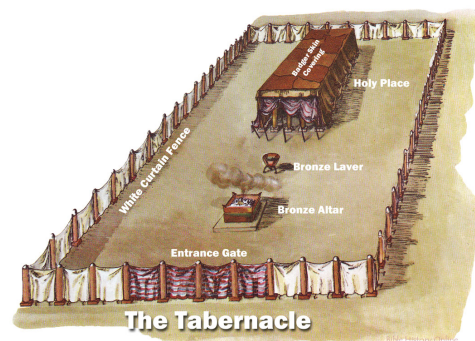
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clear, simple statement, and I believe it indicates that our Savior constantly “measures us” – both the individual and the congregation – to see how closely we adhere to His word. As we saw in those letters to the churches, it is certainly possible for error and falsehood to creep into any congregation. And we must remember that we will not be judged on our opinion of what God wants, but rather by the original pure message found in the New Testament!

Since I said we are all individually judged, one might ask why I mention a “collective” measuring of congregations. That is because the congregation where we worship greatly influences our manner of worship. Look back at the letters to the churches at Laodicea and Ephesus. If we worship with a congregation that might be deemed “*neither cold nor hot*” or one that “*has left its first love,*” can you see how that might affect our worship? Unfortunately, in today’s society, too many churches are being influenced by the morality of the time, or by “political correctness,” or even by governmental “suggestions.” The result is obvious: many churches have given in to the pressure of society and accepted modern practices that directly contradict Bible teaching! And way too often, the membership goes along with those decisions believing that as long as they are under the umbrella of a church, they are “protected” and will be pleasing to God. But sin is still sin regardless of how it may be disguised! We might *think* we are doing God’s will and therefore worthy of receiving eternal life, but if we are transgressing God’s word, it is never pleasing to Him. That is why in the letters to the churches, He said to some: “*I know thy works, I have something against thee,*” and “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!*”

Then, in verse 2 John was told not to measure the “*court which is outside the temple, for it has been given to the Gentiles.*” I believe this passage refers to the Tabernacle where the Israelites brought their sacrifices to be offered on the altar in the courtyard. That courtyard serves as a symbol of those we have just discussed – ones who believe they are acceptable to God because they are a member of a church – when actually they are not acceptable to God because they have



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integrated into their worship services practices that contradict the bible's teaching. These people who are perverting the word of God are not to be counted among the true worshippers.

As verse 2 continues, it is those *"in the outer court"* – those who believe they are rightly worshipping – that are going to be *trampling under foot the holy city* for 42 months. The *"holy city"* is spiritual Jerusalem, which in the book of Revelation is recognized as the symbol for the church. We might ask, "How does one trample under foot the church?" It can be done in 3 ways:

1. By adulterating the Truth with practices that contradict biblical teaching;
2. By not standing firm for the truth; and
3. By undermining the principles of the church.

Why is it said that the Gentiles will be the ones trampling the holy city? In the period of the Old Covenant, the Israelites recognized only two classes of people: themselves and "everyone else." Anyone who was not an Israelite was referred to as a Gentile. The Israelites were "God's people" and the Gentiles were not. Hence, any group referred to as "Gentiles" are people who are not in favor with God.

Why do you suppose these *"Gentiles in the outer court"* (the faltering Christians) will tread underfoot the holy city for *"Forty and two months"*? First off, let's recognize that 42 months is not referring to a period of time. As mentioned in the introduction, the number three and a half symbolically represents something that is "less than perfect" (half of the number 7). Since 42 months = 3 ½ years, this symbolically denotes something that is broken or uncertain, in other words, less than perfect. We see the number "three and a half" used in six other places in the Holy Scriptures, but always in an apocalyptic book. It appears in the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah in the Old Testament and here in Revelation. We see it expressed three different ways: as 42 months, as 1260 days and as "Times, time, and half a time." While I strongly doubt it means an actual 1260 days in any of those places, it certainly does mean a period of persecution. The severity of the persecutions is not mentioned. The "trampling" is

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being done by those unbelievers to speak harshly and negatively of the word of God, ridiculing the believers and attempting to undermine their work.

After being directed to “measure” using the “standard”, John is told “... *I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.*” (Rev 11:3) This quote is from the KJV, and the word “power” is inserted even though it is not actually in the original manuscripts. The better manuscripts simply say, “*I will give unto my two witnesses...*” implying the “**authority**” they will be given to prophesy and teach. There is no question these next few verses are very difficult. In regard to them, Adam Clarke says: “*This is extremely obscure; the conjectures of interpreters are as unsatisfactory as they are endless.*” I agree. Each commentator has his own idea as to the identity of the two witnesses – and there are as many ideas as there are commentators. When presented with difficult passages, the only thing we can do is carefully research the meaning of all the words used, put them together, and try to make the proper application. That is what I have attempted to do here.

First, since we are studying an apocalyptic book rich in symbolism, I don’t believe these two witnesses are actual individuals. I prefer to believe the two witnesses are the Old and New Testaments, but they are personified in this passage so that we view them as individuals.

Second, since the angel speaking switches to first person in these verses, I believe he is now representing Jesus Himself because He uses the term: “**My two witnesses.**” We are told in verse 4 that the two witnesses are represented by the “*two olive trees*” and the “*two lampstands*” standing “*before God of the earth.*” In the throne scene we saw earlier, the Lamb was the only one worthy of opening the seals, and we identified the Lamb as Jesus. He is now standing before the throne and proclaims **His two witnesses** will prophesy during this period of persecution.

Third, the way Jesus uses the phrase “*My two witnesses*” without any further identification makes me believe these witnesses were well known, or easily recognizable as His witnesses. It is an established fact that the Old Testament foretells with many prophecies the

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coming of a Messiah and how He will establish a new kingdom in which ALL the righteous will dwell. It is also an established fact that the New Testament tells the story of Christ's coming. He did come and He did establish His new kingdom – the New Testament church!

Lastly, the two testaments combined embrace ALL the Righteous regardless of when they lived. The combination of these two testaments also explains why, in apocalyptic books, the church Jesus established on earth is always viewed with Old Testament terminology. That is why we see words such as “temple,” “altar,” “sacrifice,” etc. indicating that all those things are still being observed in the New Kingdom, but they are now spiritual and no longer physical practices.

So, with those four things in mind we are told (using symbolism) that the two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks. The “merging” of the “two olive trees” and the “two candlesticks” – which at first might appear to be 4 witnesses – into 2 witnesses is easily accepted if we view the two candlesticks as one source of light – God's Word – to both those living under the Old Covenant as well as the New Covenant. God's word is the Truth that shines brightly in both dispensations. But, candlesticks without fuel to burn cannot provide light. So, that is where the olive trees come into the picture – to provide the oil that allows the candlesticks to shine. Even though the oil is burned in two different lampstands, it is the same oil in both: the revealed truth of God to both dispensations. ALL mankind, then, has access to the promised salvation if they will only listen and obey.

Next we read, ***“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.”*** If someone should attempt to cover, darken or extinguish the candlesticks, the fire would flare up and devour those who try. Of course, enemies of the Word don't want to hear truthful testimony. They attempt to inflict hurt by extinguishing the light. The hurting might also refer to an attempt to discredit the testimony, which is a technique followers of Satan frequently employ.

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These two witnesses – the Old and New Testaments – contain the truths of the Word of God. The “fire” proceeds from the mouths of prophets, apostles and other inspired men of God when they speak this truth. And, it cannot be extinguished. It will overpower any attempt to quell or dishonor it. The truth prevails! This “fire” shines far brighter than the false testimony of those trying to discredit God’s word. Some believe the mention of a devouring fire indicates a more severe punishment to those who attempt to harm God’s word, but I can’t agree with that. In chapter 20 we are told that all the unrighteous are cast into the “lake of fire.” That suggests the same punishment for all, but I can concede that this might mean a greater torment on them while here on earth.

“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.” These what? These testaments? We know that neither the Old nor the New Testaments – since they are only books – have the power to “shut heaven.” However, God does have that power and the content of the Testaments indicates He can and will use it if necessary. Through His prophets, He turned water to blood, and brought on periods of famine and drought. The point here is that God supports His witnesses.

“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.” The first part of this passage speaks of the witnesses having “finished their testimony.” That seems to suggest they have said what they came to say and are done. If we accept that these witnesses are the Testaments, we also accept that all truth is contained therein and no third testament or “sequel” will be necessary or forthcoming. And, we can rest assured they will never stop testifying! History records the men have tried more than once to rid the world of the bible but have always failed. The bible will still exist when the world comes to an end.

The Testaments have been written. Prophecies and testimony are found in their pages and will continue to be. But, what if there are no new listeners? In I Kings 17 a similar time is described, when the very foundation of God’s word was being ignored. It is spoken of as a time

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of spiritual apostasy and moral decay – the nation of Israel had abandoned God’s law and turned to the worship of Baal. It is a very interesting account and I suggest you read it.

This verse ends with the beast emerging from the bottomless pit and killing the two witnesses. This is the first time in the book of Revelation that **“the beast”** is mentioned, and there is a lot to be said about him, but we will save that for later when we have a better picture of what he is about. The beast does not literally kill the witnesses (*they are, after all, the Word of God which will exist forever*) but, since we are speaking symbolically, we can see that the beast’s influence will kill the intentions of those desiring to learn the Word of God, to the point that they are no longer interested. For those people no longer listening to the witnesses, it was as if they were dead.

In the next several verses, 8-12, we see the unrighteous “making merry” and sending gifts to one another over the apparent death of the witnesses. Christians are forewarned that, as time passes, faith will wane. We also might assume that those who do not want to hear God’s Word would celebrate its apparent disappearance. In the parable of the persistent widow, Jesus asks, **“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”** We are told in the Old Testament there will always be a “remnant” of God’s faithful, and that His desire is for ALL to repent and turn to Him. But the sad reality is that many will not. This is why Matthew 7:14 says, **“Narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leads to heaven and only a few will find it.”**

But in verse 12 the witnesses hear a great voice calling them up to heaven, and it is said they **“ascended up to heaven in a cloud and their enemies beheld them.”** Do not forget that all of this is symbolic. The message for us is that the witnesses are triumphant! After making faithful testimony and enduring persecution, even their enemies now know the witnesses were right all along.

“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,

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and gave glory to the God of heaven.” (Revelation 11:13) In his commentary, Spence remarks that this whole account appears to relate to the judgment day, “but is certainly obscure.” There is so much controversy over this verse that I doubt we can be certain of the meaning of everything we read here, especially the numbers. It does, however, seem clear that the earthquake symbolizes the agitation that must have arisen among those enemies when they realized they were wrong. The “**city**” would be their seat of power and the “**fall**” of that power within the very core of the unrighteous would certainly cause the rest to be frightened. I suspect those that remained had a new respect for the power of God, which they previously had ignored. Even though we may not understand the symbolic details of this verse, the underlying message is still clear: The Righteous win! God prevails and Satan is defeated.

In verse 14 we read, “*The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.*” We have been discussing the events following this second “woe” (the sounding of the sixth trumpet) since chapter 9:13 and we have seen a good description of the punishment inflicted on men as a natural consequence of their sins. It should have been sufficient to lead them away from their worldliness, but it does not. So, despite all the warnings “*...behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.*” The third woe is the end, the total destruction of the earth, which is announced by the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Read the text and let the scene form in your mind...

The text of the Seventh Trumpet – Revelation 11:15 - 19

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth. And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there

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was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

If you think back to our study of the seals, you will remember that after the opening of the seventh one, there was no description given for what occurred on earth. We are only told *“There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.”* The same thing happens with the seventh trumpet. Immediately after this last trumpet sounds, our view switches to heaven where we are told there is rejoicing, praise and worship of God. Nothing is said in regard to happenings on the earth, and that is for a very obvious reason: it no longer exists – it has been destroyed.

We see in verse 19 a new vision of the temple of God – the Heavenly Kingdom! John does not, however, pen a complete picture of either the blessings of heaven or the woes of hell. He does record that the unrighteous (the “nations” mentioned in verse 18) were angry that the Lord gathered up the faithful. That certainly stands to reason. Now, they see that they were wrong all along. Now, they understand they are going to be judged. Now, they realize (perhaps for the first time) that they will be found lacking. I feel sure they see the righteous ascending to meet the Lord in the sky while they are powerless to anything other than await their own fate.

Thus ends our second journey through the period of time beginning with the establishment of the church and ending with the destruction of the earth. A third and final sojourn through this same period awaits us in chapter 16 with the seven bowls of wrath. But, to help us prepare for that final “expedition” and to give us a better understanding of what it will include, we will spend some time in chapters 12-15 where we will learn of a great Dragon that hovered over a woman about to give birth. We will see him thrown down to earth and two beasts called up from the bottomless pit. We will revisit the topic of the 144,000 and the Lamb, and will see seven angels with their plagues. Hang on! Things are about to get exciting.