

Notes on chapter 11

Measure the temple, the altar, and those who worship in it.

In terms of O.T. symbolism the temple is the dwelling of God, the altar the worship offered to him, and those who worship in it are its priests. Together they symbolize that which is holy and right.

Measuring is a symbol of protection.

Leave out the outer court; it is given to the nations; they shall tread under foot the holy city for 42 months.

If the temple refers to the people of God, then the outer court symbolizes that which cannot come into the presence of God. Those who are not his true priests.

What is differentiated in this vision?

View #1--What is differentiated in this vision is the true Israel vs. the false Israel. It is false Israel that is given to the nations. Here God is suggesting the very thing spoken of in O.T. prophecy, the desolation of Jerusalem. 42 months comports with the time the Romans were to trample the holy city. Cf. Jesus' own words, Lk. 21:20-24. In that prophesy Jesus predicts the trampling of the "holy city" as a manifestation of the "wrath" of God, resulting in the death of many and the captivity of others into all the nations. Such would continue for the "time of the Gentiles". There is implied the later overthrow of all Gentile powers and the "gathering together" of God's elect (Cf. Mt. 24:31).

Rev. 13:10 also has a parallel idea as it describes the consequence of Roman war with the saints, "killed with sword" or "to captivity".

View #2--What is differentiated in this vision is the spiritual part of the church vs. physical part. God's people may be trampled externally but never internally. As God's holy city they may be trampled, but their spiritual life cannot be taken away. It is always under the protection of God.

God's two witnesses

They prophesy or bear witness. Cf. Mt. 24:14; Mk. 13:10-13; Lk. 21:12-17

1260 days. Is this period of prophesying prior to, coextensive with, or subsequent to the trampling of the holy city? Is it the period of protection of the woman in the wilderness in 13:14? Is the woman the same as the two witnesses?

It is prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The testimony consists of "this gospel of the kingdom" mentioned by Jesus in Mt. 24. There are two significant points. The destruction of Jerusalem was but a forerunner to the establishment of the kingdom of God in the defeat of all enemies of God, both Jewish and Gentile (cf. Lk. 21:28,31). The judgment would not fall on either until God's prophets gave their testimony to that fact.

This is likely the period of nourishment and protection suggested by 12:6,14-16. However, the period is short-lived; the testimony leads to conversion of many Jews and Gentiles, but also animosity and death.

Clothed in sackcloth

Their message is one of doom, calling for penitence.

The testimony of the church is "good news" in one sense but fearful in another. For it announces the "day of the Lord" for those who do not repent, first among the nation of Israel and then among all men. Cf. Ac. 2:40.

They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

Olive trees are the source of oil for the lamps. They symbolize the Holy Spirit who supplies the witnesses with the power they need to accomplish their task. There is here a remarkable parallel to Joel's prophesy of the Holy Spirit's coming resulting in many prophets prophesying before the great day of the Lord.

The lampstands are the bearers of light. Those God uses these to prophesy his message of doom.

Fire proceeds from their mouths and devours their enemies. Perhaps this suggests the confirmatory signs that prevented their destruction while the period of testifying goes on. Cf. Mk. 16:17ff; Ac. 13:8ff They have power to shut up the sky, to turn the waters to blood, to smite the earth with every plague as they desire

Like Elijah

Like Moses

They torment those who dwell on earth. Their proclamation is not a pleasant one. It denounces sin, announces judgment.

After their testimony is finished, the beast that comes out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

Cf. Mt. 24:9 Clearly death was the result of the testimony of God's prophets. Men like Peter and Paul were put to death after they had borne witness to "kings".

The beast that comes out of the abyss is, of course, Rome. As with Jesus, so also now, the Gentiles and the Jews join together against God's prophets killing them. But their experience is the same as that of the Savior.

Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city

This time the enemies do not allow the witnesses to enter a tomb. There can be no trickery this time from these Christians. The enemies want to stamp out Christianity once and for all.

Sodom & Egypt--both were cities of escape, from which the righteous were warned to flee.

Where their Lord was crucified--This identifies not only the city but also the witnesses. They are those whose Lord is Jesus. The city is the city where Jesus was crucified.

The enemies will not allow them to be buried and rejoice over their death.

This shows the continued dishonor and hatred the people for the witnesses. Cf. Jesus' own statement of Mt. 24:9.

They come to life

A resurrection from the dead conveys the idea of victory. The idea is that they share the victory of their Savior whom they follow, who was raised from the dead. Their

resurrection symbolizes the inability of the enemies to defeat that for which they have died.

Later the book will have another instance of this concept in Rev. 20:

A great earthquake and a tenth of the city fell, 7000 die.

Here we see judgment on the city itself for its sins of killing God's people.

This is yet another trumpet warning that the kingdom of God is about to arrive.

The rest give glory to God.

This picture establishes the effect of God's judgment on the remaining inhabitants of the city.

God's judgment of Jerusalem was to bring his people to repentance. It was his way of purging the evil. Cf. Zech. 13:7-9.

The Romans have only served to purify the nation of Israel by their trampling of the city. All that God has promised concerning the establishment of his kingdom, with the full participation of the Jewish people has not been defeated.

The seventh trumpet sounds

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord.

Cf. Lk. 21:28,31

The twenty-four elders declared what has transpired in the trumpet warnings.

The nations were enraged (Here is the fulfillment of Ps. 2; the Gentiles opposition to the purposes of God). Note the fascinating analysis of who the nations are in the apostles prayer of Ac. 4:27: "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel!" They were all working together to fulfill God's purpose by opposing Jesus and his followers.

Thy wrath came (this is God's judgment against his enemies). It is the time for the dead to be judged and their reward to be given to the prophets and saints and those who fear God's name and to destroy those who destroy the earth.

Here at the midpoint of the book is an explanation of what the whole book is about--the exercise of God's wrath against the forces of both Rome and Jerusalem, who joined together not only against the Lord but also against his people.