

A farmer walked into a restaurant and asked the owner if he could use a million frog legs. Wanting to put frog legs on the menu, the restaurant owner asked the farmer where he could get so many. The farmer replied, “My pond is overflowing with them. Their croaking is driving me up the wall and I’d love to get rid of them.” So, the restaurant owner told the farmer to bring him as many as he could.

A week later, the farmer returned to the restaurant with an embarrassed look on his face. He held up two frogs and said, “I was wrong about the million frog legs. It was these two frogs that were causing all the racket. I never knew two frogs could make so much noise.”

This morning we are going to look at two individuals, who during the Tribulation period, will create a lot of racket and make a lot of noise just like these two frogs.

We are still between the sixth and the seventh trumpets during the last portion of Tribulation period, and if you recall from last week in **Chapter 10**, we came to a pause in the action where the Apostle John shared some things with us that left us scratching our heads, so to speak – it was a chapter of mysteries and uncertainties.

This morning, for the most part, we are still in this pause in the action, and in this pause, John presents us with material, that is thought by many, to be the most difficult to understand in the book of Revelation. So, if you are daring and have your Bible, turn to **Chapter 11** and we will begin with **verse 1**. John says,

¹Then there was given to me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. ²Leave out the courtyard which is outside the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

This passage requires some explaining, and I want to start with something that Charles Swindoll had to say about it. He said that in movies, action scenes often begin with what screenwriters call an “*establishing shot*”— a distant, wide-angle image of a building, a city, or even a planet. It’s the “*establishing shot*” that helps to orient the audience to the setting within which the scene will take place. For example, if the “*establishing shot*” reveals a building marked “Police Headquarters,” you know the tough-looking guy at the desk shuffling papers in the next scene isn’t a kindergarten teacher. Or if the camera shows a train rolling into a dusty western town in the middle of a vast prairie, you can guess that the next shot of a cowboy walking down the street isn’t going to a costume party. The goal of the “*establishing shot*” is to create context – it sets the stage, and the stage for this scene, for this chapter, is the **temple** in the city of Jerusalem.

In this scene, where John is personally involved, we are told that he is given a **measuring rod** – which is a long hollow reed, cut to length and used for taking measurements, and he is told to measure the **temple of God**, the **altar**, and **those who worship in it**. Now keep in mind, John wrote the book of Revelation around 95 A.D., and the Jewish temple in Jerusalem had been completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. – twenty-five years earlier – meaning that at the time of John’s writing, there was no temple in Jerusalem, so, **what is this temple that John is being asked to measure?**

Well, let’s go back to **Daniel 9:27**. In this verse the angel Gabriel tells the prophet Daniel,

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

We have looked at this passage before. It speaks to that seventieth week, that last seven-year segment we call the Tribulation period, and here we are told how it all starts – it starts with a **covenant** – a peace treaty. If you recall, the Antichrist, that rider on the first horse, a white horse, will establish a seven-year peace treaty between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Yes, it’s a false peace and it’s a short-lived peace, but in this treaty, the Jews will be permitted to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem and reestablish their sacrificial offerings according to the Mosaic Law until at the midpoint of the Tribulation period, the Antichrist will stop their sacrifices, take his seat in the temple as the abomination of desolation, and he will demand to be worshipped as God.

So, that’s the temple John is seeing here. It’s this rebuilt temple that he’s being told to measure – he’s not told why – maybe it’s to establish *who* and *what* belongs to God – but in his tasking to measure, John is told to leave something out. He is told not to measure the outer **courtyard** which is also called the “Court of the Gentiles,” and this outer court was the closest a non-Jewish person could get to the temple without incurring the wrath of the Jews.

John is told to measure the areas of the temple used by the Jews and to exclude the area used by the Gentiles, and I think it underscores something I have said to you on a few occasions about the Tribulation period – it’s primarily intended for the Jews – to bring the Jews, once and for all, to their true Messiah Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to share something that you might find interesting. When the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70 A.D., they destroyed the city so completely that the foundations of the temple were non-existent. All that was left was the western wall, called the “Wailing Wall.”

Today, the Jews want to rebuild their temple and there is an active movement to do so which includes the training of young men to serve as priests, the manufacturing of the priestly garments and the utensils used for worship, and the teaching of the ancient rituals. Today, the Jews are preparing to have a functioning temple, but unfortunately, the supposed temple site just so happens to be situated on the most hotly contested plot of land on the planet – for on that same plot of land stands the “Dome of the Rock” which is the place Muslims believe Mohammed ascended to heaven. This is a very holy place to the Muslims and they will not give it up.

Tradition holds that the destroyed Jewish temple and the Dome of the Rock sit on the same plot of land; however, there is strong archaeological evidence that the temple may have actually been just north of the Dome of the Rock, and if the temple were to be rebuilt at its old place, the Dome of the Rock would actually be located in the outer court – the Court of the Gentiles. If this is the case, then it may explain why John was told not measure the outer court, for it may be given to the Gentiles as part of the peace treaty brokered by the Antichrist at the beginning of the Tribulation period.

Now, in the last portion of our passage, John shifts his focus ever so slightly from the temple to the city of Jerusalem, where we are told that the nations, the Gentiles, will be permitted to **trample the holy city for forty-two months** – three and a half years. I take this to mean that during the first half of the seven-year Tribulation period, the Jews will possess the city of Jerusalem and worship in their rebuilt temple, but during the second half of the Tribulation period, after the Antichrist sets himself up in this rebuilt temple to be worshiped as God, the Jews will lose possession of the city and it will be overrun by the Gentiles.

So, having established the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem as our stage, John directs our attention to a couple of individuals who make a visit. Let’s pick up with **verse 3**.

³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. ⁶ These have the

power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

In some respects, these two individuals are like those two frogs causing all that racket. They show up in Jerusalem, they are empowered by the Holy Spirit, and they speak boldly for God – and when it comes to these two, the question is often asked – *who are they?*

Well, consistent with the uncertainties we saw last week, we are not told who they are – it's another mystery. Some believe these two are Moses and Elijah because both were present during the transfiguration of Jesus and because their miraculous powers are consistent with the miracles they demonstrated back in the Old Testament. Others suggest it's Enoch and Elijah because neither of these two men died – they were just taken up into heaven – but at the end of the day, the truth is – no one really knows who they are. They could be Moses and Elijah, they could be Enoch and Elijah, or they could be others, but whomever they are, they are mighty and fearless and outspoken.

We are told they **will prophesy for 1,260 days**. That would be equal to three and a half years, which brings up another question – *when do they show up? Do they show up during the first half or the second half of the seven-year Tribulation period?* Well, I'm not entirely certain, and I could be wrong here, but it seems that these two witnesses are connected to the rebuilding and the reestablishing of worship in the temple during the first half of the Tribulation period, and I say this partly because of what we read in the next verse – **verse 4**. We are told,

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

This is a reference in the Old Testament book of **Zechariah**, where two individuals – a high priest and a civic leader, identified in the same way, were empowered and tasked by God with finishing the difficult work of rebuilding the temple after the Babylonians had destroyed it and reestablishing temple worship.

So, I believe these two witnesses lead Israel into revival with the culmination of a rebuilt temple, and John tells us they demonstrate miraculous power. They will be able to protect themselves by calling down fire on anyone who tries to harm them, they can withhold rain, they can turn water into blood, and they can bring plagues upon the earth, but *why these specific miracles?* I think these miracles because they are similar to what occurred in the Old Testament, and as a result, they would

be very significant and meaningful to the Jewish people. Again, this Tribulation period is primarily about turning unrepentant Jews to Jesus as their Messiah.

Now, beginning with **verse 7**, John tells us a little more about these two witnesses. He says,

⁷ 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. ⁸ And their dead bodies will lie on the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ Those from the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. ¹⁰ And those who live on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who live on the earth.

These two witnesses have been untouchable for three and a half years, but when they have finished their work – at the Lord’s appointed time, the **beast** – the Antichrist, a man with a hellish origin, empowered by Satan, will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. I believe this occurs at the midpoint of the Tribulation period and this helps to solidify the rise and the rule of the Antichrist over the entire world.

After the Antichrist kills the two witnesses, John tells us their dead bodies will lie in the street of Jerusalem – a city described as **Sodom and Egypt**. It will be a **great city** by human standards – dominated by the world, but from God’s perspective, the once holy city of Jerusalem will become as morally corrupt as Sodom and be as rebellious and proud as Egypt, and it’s in this city that the bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street on public display.

In biblical times, exposing an enemy’s dead body was the ultimate way of dishonoring and desecrating them – that’s how bad this is, but what’s even worse is the people of the earth will celebrate their deaths, even giving **gifts** to one another.

My guess is this entire episode will have satellite coverage, it’s being watched on live T.V. across the world for all to see, the Antichrist gloats in his victory – he’s apparently defeated God’s mighty men, and a party breaks out upon the earth. This is another reason why I believe these two witnesses appear during the first half of the Tribulation period and not the second half, because that would mean the Antichrist and all his wicked followers would be celebrating and sending gifts in the very last hours of the Tribulation period while God pours out His final wrath at

a fever pitch upon the earth – and that isn't happening. As I look ahead to the next judgments – the final bowl judgments which are fast and furious, no one on the earth, anywhere is celebrating anything.

So, these two witnesses are dead – killed by the Antichrist – but their defeat turns into a display of God's glory. Let's continue with **verse 11**.

¹¹ And after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. ¹² And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. ¹³ And at that time there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Just as the Lord did with Lazarus, God waits until there is no question about their death, and then, surprise, surprise – God crashes their party.

After three and a half days of lying in the street on public display, the two witnesses come back to life and stand on their feet. **Can you imagine that breaking news coverage on T.V.?** We are told that **great fear** grips those who are watching this unfold, but it gets even better.

John tells us that they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, **"Come up here,"** and as their enemies watched, the two **went up into heaven in the cloud**. And in that hour, there was a great earthquake where 7000 people were killed, and **the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven**. Interestingly, this is one of the few times in the book of Revelation where the inhabitants of the earth give glory to God.

All of this brings up a good point. As followers of Jesus Christ, we can praise God in our circumstances, even in those circumstances that involve defeat, because we know that God can use it and because we have something that can't be taken from us – eternal life. No matter how we leave this earth – whether it's by our physical death or we are taken up just like these two witnesses, we have something better waiting for us – our destiny is to be with the Lord forever and that is the gospel truth. We can trust God, in the here and now – no matter what, so that He may be glorified in us.

Now, finally the pause is over and we come to the seventh trumpet. Let's begin with **verse 14**.

¹⁴ The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. ¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying, “We give You thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, the One who is and who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸ And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.” ¹⁹ And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.

In these last six verses, victory over God’s enemies and the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on the earth are announced, even though, the remaining seven “bowl judgments” have not been poured out.

So, how can there be joy like this in heaven, as if it has already happened, when God’s judgment and wrath are still occurring on the earth and Jesus has not yet returned as the King? Well, it’s a matter of perspective. From our perspective, the joy in heaven may seem premature, but from God’s perspective, it’s a done deal, the results are certain – God’s purposes will be accomplished. It will happen just as God has planned it.

Think of it this way. At the headquarters of a successful political campaign on election night, there is joy for the winner, even though it will be a while until their candidate is actually installed into office. The joy anticipates the final outcome – and the final outcome reveals mystery attached to the seventh trumpet – and what is the mystery?

The kingdom of the world will become Christ’s kingdom. Jesus will one day return and reign over all the earth, the world will be transformed, there will be a final judgment for those who have rejected Christ as Savior and Lord, there will be rewards for those who have received God’s grace and mercy and forgiveness and have followed Him, sin and death will be vanquished, and in the end, God’s purposes will be accomplished. In the end, God wins and so do we.

At the beginning of **Chapter 11**, John was told to measure the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and at the very end of this chapter, John's focus was directed to another temple – the temple of God in heaven – and we are told it was **opened**.

As children of God, because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, we can boldly come before the throne, enter the holy of holies in heaven, and we confidently approach Him. We have open access to God by His grace.

This morning, we were given the privilege to look ahead and to see how it will all play out in the end, but in the meantime, while we wait, we pray for His kingdom to come on earth just as it is in heaven. In the here and now, it's His kingdom come – not yours and not mine. In the here and now, it's His will be done – not yours and not mine. And so, we follow Him, we serve Him, we trust Him, we place our hope in Him, and when given the opportunity, we share what we know about Him.

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