



**Bible Study Notes from Calvary Chapel Portsmouth's verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation
April 2016**

The Two Witnesses

Introduction

Various Bible commentators see this chapter as possibly the most difficult in the book. Certainly the first two verses by themselves raise many questions. The good news is that we have 66 books, by 40 or so authors, written over approximately 1600 years that are in essence, a single message from a Sovereign God to His creation; so these opening verses are not by themselves, the rest of scripture stands by to answer the questions that are raised.

If we view this chapter as a single unit without the light of the rest of scripture, it is not just hard, but almost impossible to understand what is going on in these verses.

As is so often the case when it comes to understanding the book of Revelation, scholars are divided as to whether the events recorded are actual literal events, or if they are just pictures pointing to a deeper truth. We have the liberal theologians on one side telling us this is just picture language, a mystery wrapped up in an allegory, and on the other side we have those who take the Bible seriously – by that I mean those who take it at face value and believe what it says, wherever possible taking the text in its usual literal sense.

As we have already noted in our study, God gave this Revelation to John that we might know what is coming to pass (Rev 1:1). In that very fact there is a mandate to accept the things recorded as literal future events, for it would make no sense to tell John to record the things that are going to come to pass and them merely impart spiritual truths through a series of dramatic visions, particularly when any supposed 'deeper truths' are so ambiguous as to be of no help at all!

John may not have understood where all this was leading, but he knew what he was seeing! None of this was intended to be confusing. God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33).

As we have dealt with in the past, when it comes to interpreting scripture, the golden rule is: **When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages indicate clearly otherwise** (see Appendix A - Rules of Interpretation).

Important Background for Chapter 11

When the disciples asked Jesus *"when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, at the end of the world"* (Matt 24:3), Jesus pointed them to the book of Daniel and in particular, chapter 9 vs 24-27. The same passage is the key to our understanding the 'end times' in general and in particular, the opening verses of this chapter.

Daniel was just a teenager when he was taken away captive from his home in Israel to Babylon; however, by the time we get to chapter 9 of his book, almost 70 years had passed. Daniel remembered that God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah that Israel's captivity would last for 70 years. Therefore, understanding that the promise was to be taken literally, (God had said 70 years so Daniel figured that that was what He meant!) Daniel started to pray and ask God about the future of his people and the city of Jerusalem.

God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel the answer:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" This tells us 'how long' and to 'whom' this prophecy refers.

Note: Although 'seventy weeks' is a strange term to us, it was not to the Jews. There are several Hebrew words that are all translated as 'week' in the English. There is a week of days (i.e. 7 days), a week of weeks (i.e. 7 weeks) and a week of years (i.e. 7 years). The word here is 'shawbooah' and in this context means a week of years. The same word is used in Genesis 29:27 when Jacob worked for 7 years to marry Rachel, only to find that he had married Leah by 'mistake'! Jacob protested because he had already served 7 years for Rachel, so Laban told Jacob to fulfil Leah's 'week', i.e. work for another 7 years to pay for Leah, and he could have Rachel too.

So in effect Daniel was told that seventy 7-year periods (= 490 years) were determined on his people, the Jews, and on his holy city, which was of course Jerusalem. Gabriel then told Daniel what would be accomplished during this time:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city..... to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy".

By the end of the seventy 7-year periods, all of these things would be done. It is obvious to even the casual observer that this list has not been fulfilled to date; the next three verses explain why this is so.

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times".

Here Daniel is given the starting point for the 490 years, which from history we know was 1st Nisan 445BC when king Artaxerses Longimanus signed a decree allowing the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Just as Gabriel prophesied, the streets and walls were built again in 'troubled times' as recorded in the book of Nehemiah.

We are also told that 'unto the Messiah' there shall be 7 weeks + 62 weeks = 69 weeks = 483 years. This is one of the most amazing prophecies in the entire Bible, because after an interval of 483 years - to the very day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilling the prophecy from [Zechariah 9:9](#). This prophecy in Daniel 9 was written down over 500 years before the event and serves as undeniable proof that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Bible is the Word of God.

This accounts for 483 years of the 490, so we are left with just one 'week' still remaining. However, before that last week could begin, certain things must happen. We are told: "[after threescore and two weeks](#), [but before the last week] [Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself](#). Less than a week after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem in AD32 Jesus was crucified – but not for Himself. He died to pay for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

[.....and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.](#) The people who destroyed the city of Jerusalem were the Romans in AD70 – an event prophesied by Jesus in Luke 19 / Matt 24 etc. – but this verse introduces us to the 'prince that shall come', and tells us that it is going to be a bumpy ride for the Jews up until the end.

Clearly then, there is an interval between the 69th and 70th week during which Messiah was to be 'cut off' (AD32), Jerusalem was to be destroyed by the Romans (AD70), and the Jews would suffer persecution. Throughout this time, which has now lasted almost two thousand years, it is as if God's clock for Israel has been put on hold while the Gentiles are 'gathered in'. However the final verse of this prophecy draws our attention to the event that will trigger this last 'Week' (7-year period) and restart the clock thus completing the 490 years of the Gabriel's prophecy.

[And he \[the prince that shall come, from verse 26\] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."](#) Dan 9:24-27

So the 'trigger' that restarts the prophetic clock is when this 'prince' will confirm a covenant intended to last for 7 years – the final 7 years of the prophecy.

However there are certain requirements that must be met before this 'week' can begin:

- 1) For a covenant to be confirmed with Israel, they must be back in their own land. This prophecy could not have been fulfilled before May 14th 1948 when the Jews were once again given the land of Israel as a homeland. For almost two centuries up to this point the 'wandering Jew' was spread all around the world in fulfilment of Deuteronomy 28:25, 65-66. Now talks of peace agreements in the Middle East are daily news.
- 2) For this 'prince' to cause sacrifice and offering to cease, it must have been happening prior to this point – otherwise he can't stop it! However, for the Jews to be making their sacrifices there needs to be an altar, and just as importantly a Jewish temple in Jerusalem in which to do it. It is no secret that the Jews are even now preparing to rebuild their temple. Today in Jerusalem, in the Temple Institute, you can see the priestly robes and utensils, the Incense Altar, the Table of Showbread, + more that they have already prepared. Special dice has been manufactured, and animals are already being bred in anticipation of this time.

One potential hindrance to this is the Muslim Dome of the Rock, which is on the temple mount. However there are those who believe that the Jewish temple could be rebuilt on the original site of Solomon's temple without interfering with the Muslim shrine.

We will discover later in our study of Revelation (chapter 13), that in the middle of the week (half way through the 7 years) this 'prince' (who will be Antichrist) will not only stop the Jews from sacrificing, but he will put a statue of himself in the holy of holies inside the temple – this is the abomination of desolation that Jesus spoke about.

To conclude (the introduction!):

From this brief overview (and you are strongly encouraged to do a serious study of Daniel ch 9 on your own), we can clearly see that there is a final 7-year period marked out for the Jews, completing the 490 years as prophesied by the angel Gabriel.

Before* the start of this 'week' (7-year period), the Jews will rebuild their temple and begin sacrificing according to the Law of Moses. For this to happen the Dome of the Rock will either have to be destroyed in war, through an earthquake, or by other means; or it will be discovered that the Jews will be able, by their continued archaeological research, to prove where Solomon's temple once stood, thus enabling both Jews and Muslims to have 'temple's' on the temple mount.

This could happen at any time, but the Jewish temple must be standing before the mid-point of the Tribulation in order for Antichrist to stop the sacrifices and put his image inside.

*Some scholars wonder whether the temple will be built before the seven years begin or built during the first 3 ½ years. If the temple is not built before the start of the Week, then the covenant that Antichrist confirms will no doubt be the go ahead to build it. However from Rev 11:1-2 it would seem that the temple is standing at the start of the week for John to be able to measure it. This is the view held here.

Timing

The final piece of the jigsaw to put in place before we begin our verse-by-verse study of chapter 11 is the chronology (or timing) of the events we are about to study. This will make it much easier to understand how it all fits together.

It is important to remember that in the original Greek there were no chapter or verse divisions, these were added later for convenience. Therefore, at the risk of stating the obvious, chapter 11 is just a continuation of chapter 10, where John had just reached a crescendo with a mighty angel declaring that 'time has run out' for the people of the earth. In other words, the warning period that we call the 'Beginning of Sorrows' is now over, the Great Tribulation is about to begin.

However, before John is shown what will happen on earth during this time, he is given additional information in chapters 11 through to 14 that describe events and situations that occur both during the Beginning of Sorrows and in the middle of the 'week'.

Chapter 10 ends with the mighty angel telling John that he must now 'prophesy again'. This is as if the angel has pressed the reset button and John now 'rewinds' to the beginning of the 'Week' / Tribulation. As chapter 11 unfolds we are taken through the first three and a half years from a different camera angle, so to speak. By the end of this chapter, John will have brought us back to the point he left off at the end of chapter 10 and introduce the seventh and final trumpet judgment.

The 'Beginning of Sorrows'

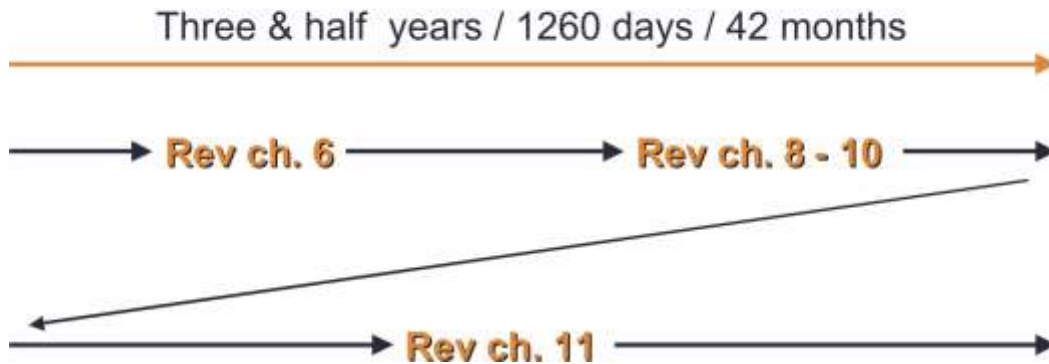


Diagram 1 – Chronology of Chapters 6-11

Having now done our homework, this chapter becomes much easier to understand.

CHAPTER 11

Rev 11:1-2

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.

As we now come to the first verses of this chapter, we are immediately faced with a temple, an altar and those who worship therein. Some scholars have tried to make this fit the church, but the language and context just don't allow for that. Others see this as the heavenly temple, but again this view does not fit the context. This is a temple in Jerusalem – the holy city – and therefore must be the rebuilt temple on the temple mount. The altar and the fact that there is worship in this place, show that there are sacrifices taking place. Therefore this must be during the first 3 1/2 years of the Week, because in the middle of the Week, the sacrifices and offerings (worship) are stopped by Antichrist.

Regarding verse one, J Vernon McGee comments: "Every time you see the beginning of measurements, in either the Old or New Testament, it indicates that God is beginning to deal with the nation Israel (see Jer. 31:38–39; Zech. 2)" With the commencement of the 70th week of Daniel, God's clock for Israel starts ticking again. It is as if God has two stopwatches, one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles, but only one of them is used at a time. This is another reason the church has to be removed prior to the 70th week starting. Consistent with this, and building on the concept of the 490 years that we mentioned a moment ago, it is remarkable to observe that the entire history of Israel is divided into four 490 year periods if we deduct the time they were under Gentile 'rule'. (See [Appendix C](#))

In the Bible, on various occasions a rod is seen as indicating Judgment (Lev 27:32 / 2 Sam 7:14 / Job 9:34 / Ps 89:32 / Prov 22:15 / Ezek 20:37); some scholars feel that John is being told to measure 'with a reed like unto a rod' as a type of being weighed in a balance, seeing how the Jews are 'measuring up' as Daniel's 70th Week starts.

The reference to leaving the outer court 'for it is given to the Gentiles' is provocative, as one of the possible locations for the temple to be rebuilt would make it possible for the main structure to be built alongside the Dome of the Rock, but this would require that the outer court would be omitted falling as it would in Arab (Gentile) control.

In Luke 21:24 Jesus spoke of Jerusalem being trodden underfoot until the times of Gentiles were fulfilled. Some have thought that this period ended in 1967 when Israel recaptured Jerusalem and the Temple mount; however verse 2 clearly shows that even during the Tribulation time, the Gentiles will tread Jerusalem underfoot. The times of the Gentiles will not be complete until Jesus returns at the Second Coming and puts an end to Gentile rule.

(See Dan 2:44 / Dan 7:12-14)

Forty-two months* (see note on following page) is three and a half years taking 360 days per year. Again this must be the first half of the 'week' / Tribulation because as we will see in chapter 12, in the second half of the 'week', the Jews flee into the wilderness to a place prepared for them by God. This is to escape Antichrist who will try and destroy them during this time for the simple reason that a prerequisite condition of Christ returning, is that the Jews petition Him to come (Hosea 5:15). As Satan tried to kill the babies at Bethlehem, and before that, sent the Giant tribes to destroy Israel, so he will stop at nothing in his attempt to destroy the Jews in a vain attempt to thwart God's plan.

As an aside, 2 Thessalonians 2 is another example in scripture that clearly shows the Jewish temple must be rebuilt in the last days, for Paul, speaking of Antichrist says: *".....for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth **in the temple of God**, shewing himself that he is God."* (2 Thess 2:3-4)

Note:

*Three and a half years are referred to in three different ways: 42 months, 1260 days and time, times and the dividing of time (with 'time' singular = 1 year, 'times' plural = 2 years and the dividing of time = half a year).

Twice we have 42 months:

The first time it is in reference to the 'Beginning of Sorrows' (Rev 11:2).

The second time it is in reference to the 'Great Tribulation' (Rev 13:5).

Twice we have 1260 days:

The first time is in reference to the 'Beginning of Sorrows' (Rev 11:3).

The second time it is in reference to the 'Great Tribulation' (Rev 12:6).

Twice we have time, times and half a time:

In both cases these are in reference to the 'Great Tribulation'. (Dan 7:25 & Rev 12:14)

In this way we are left in no doubt how long Daniel's 70th week will last because we are given it in days and months for both halves. Therefore the entire period will last exactly 84 months, or 2520 days, which is seven 360-day years – to the day.

This also underlines the fact that this is not allegorical; this is a real period of time and therefore the events that we are told occur during this time are also real; and therefore cannot be merely a spiritual story designed to illustrate a 'deeper truth'.

Rev 11:3

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

During this period (the first half of the Tribulation), God will send two witnesses to preach to whosoever has ears to hear. The fact that God sends them to witness is in itself another indication that this is the first 3½ years; because God's character throughout the Bible has been to warn before he brings His judgment. As Peter says: *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9)

Whilst the judgments of the first half of the Tribulation are like nothing ever seen before in earth, Jesus Himself said of the last half: *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."* (Matt 24:21-22)

These two witnesses being sent are another example of God's love and compassion for His creation; it is a final warning before the coming of the 'Day of the LORD'

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." (Isa 13:9-11)

Rev 11:4

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

Olive trees are mentioned 7 times in scripture and there seems to be the idea of fruitfulness associated with them. It may well be as a result of the preaching of these two witnesses that the 144,000 Jewish evangelists that we encountered back in chapter 7 are saved. They too will be preaching during this time.

Candlesticks were seen in chapter 1 as representative of the Church being a witness. But now the Church has gone, these two witnesses pick up the baton.

There is a curious passage in *Zech 4:11-14* where it appears we see a model (or prophetic vision) of these two witnesses: *"Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth."*

Rev 11:5

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.

How many people will try to destroy these two witnesses before they realise that they are indestructible?! This verse implies that some will try. This is obviously going to draw a great deal of attention; if a whale swims up the Thames on a 'quiet news day' it will be on TV sets around the world, how much more so for two supernaturally protected men of God who can shoot fire out of their mouths!

Rev 11:6

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.

The days of their prophecy will be 1260 or three and a half years as we saw in verse 3. They will have a worldwide impact; and the fact that will 'smite the earth with plagues' shows that the effects are not just confined to Israel.

Now we turn to the big question: Who are they?

The truthful answer is that we cannot be 100% sure, however as we know from [Proverbs 25:2](#) *"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."* Certainly we are given some very provocative pointers that suggest their identity as we will explore.

Two theories that are worth mentioning, but are short of any real substance are 1) They are Joshua & Zerubbabel, because of the verse we read earlier from Zechariah 4 – although this seems to be the only support for this view. Or 2) they are Elijah & Enoch. We will deal with Elijah in a moment, but the reason that Enoch has been suggested is that he was raptured and therefore did not taste death. In [Hebrews 9:27](#) we read *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"* Because of this, and the fact that both Enoch and Elijah have not yet died, it is suggested that these could be our guys. However the passage in Hebrews is laying down a general principle and not a hard and fast rule. Whilst Enoch and Elijah are indeed the only two people recorded in scripture that have not died once, we have many examples of people who have died twice. Lazarus / Jairus daughter / Those who rose at the time of the Resurrection (Matt 27:53) and various examples in the Old Testament. Thus using Hebrews 9:27 to support this case is not what it may first appear to be, and there is really no other reason for Enoch to be put forward as one of our witnesses.

Elijah on the other hand is a very good candidate for the position. Elijah was known for calling down fire from heaven on his enemies (2 Kings 1:10 / Luke 9:54) and for stopping the rain for 3¹/₂ years in the days of Ahab king of Israel. This is confirmed in [James 5:17](#) *"Elijah 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."* The fact that we have the same miracles and the same time period is not conclusive but certainly points to Elijah as a possibility. However the case for Elijah is made stronger still in [Malachi 4:5-6](#) where we are told: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

The day of the Lord, as we have seen, specifically refers to the Great Tribulation, the last 3¹/₂ years; so the fact that it is prophesied that Elijah will return before this again supports the view that these events are taking place during the first 3¹/₂ years.

Because of this prophecy in Malachi, the Jews even to this day leave a spare chair out at their Passover meal in case Elijah turns up.

What is also interesting is that Elijah is not the only prophet that the Jews are expecting to return. In [John 1:25](#) the people asked John the Baptist *"Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"* The prophet that they were referring to was none other than Moses. From a prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 the Jews believe that Moses himself will return. The pieces of our jigsaw now start to fall neatly into place; for in the list of miracles that the two witnesses will do, half of them have been done in the past by Elijah as we have just seen, but the other half were performed at the hand of Moses.

In Exodus 7:17 Moses turned the water to blood, and from Exodus 7 through to 11 Moses unleashed a total of 10 plagues on the land of Egypt.

One further observation would seem to pair these two together as our supernatural preachers for the Tribulation.

In Matthew 17:1-13 we read of a strange encounter: *"And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them **Moses and Elijah** talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*

In Luke's account he says: *"And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: Who appeared in glory, and spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:30-31)*

Clearly Moses and Elijah appear together in this scene (both apparently looking the same despite the fact that Elijah had been raptured), but another insight is drawn from their topic of conversation – Jesus' death! Why would Jesus call for Moses and Elijah, (or why would God send Moses and Elijah) to discuss with Jesus something about His death?

Under the Mosaic Law two witnesses were required to establish the truth about any given situation. Jesus Himself confirmed this in John 8:17 *"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of **two men** is true."* On the morning of the resurrection Luke records: *"And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, **two men** stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:4-5)*

Luke specifically uses the word 'aner' which means 'man' (and not angel). Although Luke wasn't there at the tomb himself, he labours the point that he thoroughly checked out all the details he recorded in his Gospel (see Luke 1:1-4), and as a physician, he knew the difference between a man and an angel!

As an aside, there were at least **three** angels in addition to these two men at the tomb that resurrection morning; one mighty angel rolled the stone away (Matt 28:2) and two 'Cherubim' were seen by Mary Magdalene sitting at either end of the 'box shaped' cut out where Jesus' body had been laid, seemingly acting out the scene from Leviticus 16 where the blood of the innocent sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat atop the ark that had the golden Cherubim at either end.

Could it be that these two men, clothed in shining garments, were the same two men that had spoken to Jesus only a short while before about His death? Could it be that the purpose for that conversation was to ensure that there were two witnesses present to witness the resurrection?

We also see, what would seem to be these two men witnessing the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:10: *"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, **two men** stood by them in white apparel";* On this occasion they spoke to the disciples about Jesus' return.

If Moses and Elijah are indeed the two witnesses of Revelation 11, it would make sense because they represent the Law and Prophets = God's written Word, which is the greatest witness of all. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, the rich man dies and goes to hell, whereas Lazarus dies and is comforted in 'Abraham's bosom'. The rich man calls out to Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his brothers of their fate but Abraham replies: *"They have **Moses and the prophets**; let them hear them"* but the rich man said: *"Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent"* Abraham, speaking prophetically, closes by saying: *"If they hear not **Moses and the prophets**, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."* (Luke 16:29-31)

Jesus did rise from the dead, but as Abraham foretold people still will not believe. In this last great act of mercy before the Day of the LORD, God will send His two witnesses to testify of the truth. The Law and the prophets as recorded in the pages of the Bible are sufficient to convict and convince all men if they will but listen. Who better therefore than Moses and Elijah themselves to bring this final warning before the Great Tribulation? Moses as the great proponent of the Law, and Elijah as representative of God's prophets. He who has an ear, now is a really good time to hear!!

Rev 11:7

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.

They couldn't be touched until God's appointed time. This should be a great comfort to us because until we have finished our course and accomplished that which God has called us to do, there is nothing that man or the devil can do to us to thwart God's plans. *"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"* (Ps 118:6)

Paul Said: *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"* (2 Tim 4:6-7)

Earlier in his ministry Paul told the Corinthians: *"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."* (2 Cor 11:24-27)

On the occasion that Paul was stoned people thought that he was dead! (Acts 14:9) And yet God still had work for him to do. Likewise God will not allow anything to touch you that is not in His will for your life. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Rom 8:28)

This is the first mention of the beast – Antichrist. From this point he is referred to as the beast 36 times (which is 6 x 6!). Although Antichrist will be a man, he is obviously possessed by a supernatural power, which we are here told comes out of the bottomless pit. This power will not 'indwell' Antichrist until the half way point of the Tribulation, at which time Satan is cast out of Heaven (as we will see in chapter 12), and Satan then 'calls him up' out of the nations of the world and gives him his power (as we will see in chapter 13). One of Antichrist's first acts with this supernatural demonic power will be to silence the voice of the two witnesses. This shows that the end of their ministry will be at the mid point of the tribulation when Antichrist is empowered. Thus it confirms that their ministry will be for the first 1260 days of the Tribulation (the Beginning of Sorrows), and this also underlines the fact that they are sent as two lampstands to bear God's light before the darkness of the Great Tribulation – The Day of the Lord - comes. In the midst of judgment, God still reaches out His hand in mercy.

Rev 11:8

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.

Jerusalem – in case you're not sure!

Rev 11:9

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.

Quite why no-one wants to bury them is not clear; maybe people are still fearful that fire will come down from Heaven if anyone touches them. The fact that we are told the whole world is going to see this seemed an exaggeration even 50 years ago. However, we are now in the digital age when events taking place on the other side of the world are beamed into our living rooms in seconds. No doubt CNN / Sky News / BBC News 24 etc will all be there covering the dramatic events as they unfold.

Once again it appears that the news media of the world have missed out on the exclusive! It appears that Asaph, the psalmist of Israel, beat them to it by about 3000 years: *"O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them."* (Psalm 79:1-3)

Rev 11:10

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.

The phrase 'they that dwell/dwelt on the earth' occurs nine (the number judgment) times in Revelation, and the meaning is really 'those who have made this world their home'. This is in contrast to those who have given up this world for something far better – Jesus Christ.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

The world loves any excuse for a party, but how sick the world has become that people actually celebrate the taking of life. The Word of God as preached by these two witnesses is sharp and living and will cut to the heart the people who refuse to repent. Being faced by the truth and righteousness of the Word will be torment indeed for these unbelievers.

Rev 11:11

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.

Can you imagine the look on people's faces as they watch the TV and see these two witnesses get up and dust themselves off? They were really not expecting this – and just think of all that money they have just wasted on presents! No wonder great fear falls upon them.

Rev 11:12

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.

'Come up here' is a rapture call – the same Greek as used in Rev 4:1

This must be terrifying for all those on the earth; you can almost feel the anxiety – "what's going to happen now?"

Rev 11:13

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.

The great fear of the people (v11) was not without a reason. Now we see God responding via an earthquake that destroys 10% of Jerusalem, killing seven thousand people. It is worth noting that the largest geological fault line is known as the Great Rift Valley and runs all the way down from Syria, through the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea, down to Africa.

It is hardly surprising that the remnant were scared; but what is remarkable is that whilst they give glory to the God of Heaven, it appears that no one repents. How can it be that people give glory to God for His greatness but choose not to repent? This would be more of a puzzle if it were not for the fact that we see the same thing each Sunday. Christians in churches all around the world meet to give glory to God, recognising Him as the Lord of all; and yet so many Christians have things in their lives – things left over from the 'old life' – that they are not prepared to lay at the cross and ask forgiveness for. God wants us to walk with Him in victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil; but unless we choose to yield all to Him, put to death the *"old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts"* (Eph 4:22), then we will not be able to walk with Him in victory. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart! It is where we have placed our treasure that counts, and these people will acknowledge God with their lips, but their heart will be far from Him.

Amos 3:3 asks: *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* How can we truly walk with God unless we are going in the same direction as He is? Unless we have the same attitude to sin that He has. Just because people give glory to God does not mean that their hearts are right with Him.

"He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me". Mark 7:6

Rev 11:14

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

We are now back to where we were at the end of chapter 10 and rejoin the time line

Rev 11:15

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.

The mighty angel in chapter 10 claims the earth and sea for Jesus, carrying the title deed with all the seals now opened; here heaven celebrates that Jesus has the legal title to the throne of planet Earth. What is to follow as we enter the Great Tribulation / The Day of the Lord is that Jesus will begin to purge the earth in preparation for His coming in power to take position of what is now rightfully His.

The Seventh Trumpet lasts throughout the Great Tribulation cf. Rev 10:7

Rev 11:16

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

Unlike those on the earth, those in Heaven not only give glory, but worship as well. This worship is the kind the Father desires, in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24)

Rev 11:17

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.

The meaning behind the phrase 'and hast reigned' is not clear to understand from the way it has been translated – in the Greek the tense of the word is the **ingressive first aorist active indicative** (according to Dr Chuck Missler!). It should read "Thou hast begun to reign". This is consistent with all that we have understood about this time and commented on thus far.

Rev 11:18

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.

Thy wrath is come – the Great Tribulation is here. As a result, all the other things will now follow; including the judgment of the dead, the rewards to the prophets, saints and those who fear His name, and God will destroy those who destroy the earth. The good news for supporters of Greenpeace et al is that God cares about the earth and will restore it; the bad news is that unless they repent and put their trust in Him they won't get to stay around and enjoy it.

Rev 11:19

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.

John is now taken from the scene on earth in verse 18 back to Heaven and our attention is drawn to the Temple in Heaven being opened. Inside we see the original ark of which Moses made a copy at God's instructions. The effects that are witnessed, lightnings, thunderings, earthquake & great hail, are seen happening on earth as a consequence of what is happening in heaven.

To be continued...

Appendix A - Rules of interpretation

- 1) The Golden Rule: *When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise*
- 2) The Law of Double Reference: *This law observes the fact that often a passage or a block of Scripture is speaking of two different persons or two different events that are separated by a long period of time.*
- 3) The Law of Recurrence: *This law describes the fact that in some passages of scripture there exists the recording of an event followed by the second recording of the event giving more detail to the first.*
- 4) The Law of the Context: *This states that a text apart from its context is a pretext – i.e. will probably not reveal the real meaning of truth of the text in question.*
- 5) The Law of First Mention: *This law states that the first time a word or idea is used in Scripture is usually indicative of its meaning in subsequent usages.*
- 6) The Law of Expositional Constancy: *This law states that the Bible is consistent with its use of ideas or figures throughout the Bible (eg 'fowls of the air' as seen in Matt 13 are 'workers of iniquity' and whenever fowls are seen in Scripture they are usually seen in this light.*
- 7) Scripture is self interpreting: *Any passage of scripture that on the surface may seem to be difficult to understand will be explained elsewhere in scripture, thus eliminating guesswork and human opinion as to its meaning.*