

12. The Two Witnesses and the Seventh Trumpet (Revelation 11)

Chapter 11 continues to tell of the happenings at the sounding of the sixth trumpet. In chapter 10, the *little book* contained the revelation of God. Now the two witnesses become symbolic of the human vessels through whom the revelation came, as expressed by Paul in 2 Cor 4:7-12:

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be **revealed** in our body. [Emphasis added.]

Measuring the Temple of God and the Altar (Revelation 11:1-2)

11:1 *I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there. 2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.*

John now continues an active role into the vision. In chapter 10, John learned that the revelation of the mystery of God, the word of God, is the weapon used against those who do not repent and the 200 million deadly troops. Chapter 11 elaborates on the concept by identifying those who will wield this weapon of truth. John already knows that he must continue his work of prophesying. The voice that he had heard from heaven tells him to measure the temple and the altar and count the worshippers there. Before we understand the measuring, we must understand the nature of the temple of God.

The Old Testament temple was a shadow of the true temple of God. Jesus, himself, began teaching about a spiritual temple in Matthew 12:4-6: "Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? 6 I tell you that one greater than the temple is here." In John 2:19, Jesus spoke of his body as a temple, "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.'" At his death, Jesus removed the symbolic meaning from the Jewish temple:

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. Matthew 27:51-53

The temple of God replaced the Jewish temple. Matthew used the term *holy city*, repeated in in this chapter and in the Revelation as the church, New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. The saints are the temple of God as Paul said, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. Paul also compared this temple of the living God with the temple of idols: "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 2 Corinthians 6:15-16.

In Christ, we exist as the temple of God. "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." Ephesians 2:21-22. Peter affirms this very teaching: "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4-8. Jesus also taught

explicitly: “12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.” Revelation 3:12.

The temple of God is a spiritual temple, and therefore, what must be measured and counted are the spiritual dimension of the church here on earth and those who have already died for the Lord. That number is readily available:

- “Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever.” Revelation 4:9-10.
- “Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.” Revelation 5:11-12.
- “Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.” Revelation 7:4:
- “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.” Revelation 7:9-10.

These enumerable hosts of righteousness contrast to the 200 million troops of evil plus the impenitent of chapter 9. These hosts of righteousness are they who wield the spiritual sword, the word of God. The worshippers are a spiritual Israel, as it were, and the temple is a spiritual temple, the church. The word *gentiles* takes its meaning from the ordinary and general use of the word, not the specific use as in the phrase *Jews and Gentiles*. Vine tells of the first meaning of *ethnos*: “denotes, firstly, ‘a multitude or company’; then, ‘a multitude of people of the same nature or genus, a nation, people.’” (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The nation or people spoken of here is the nation described at the beginning of the sounding of the sixth trumpet – the troops of the evil and the impenitent of chapter 9. The temple is the church and the court is the world. From the court or the world, they will trample the holy city. Ordinarily we would think Jerusalem. However, all the cities of the revelation are symbolic. This symbolism continues in verse 8, “Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.” Revelation 11:8. In addition, Revelation itself clearly defines the meaning of the term holy city:

- “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” Revelation 21:2.
- “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” Revelation 21:10.
- “19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. Revelation 22:19.

The holy city is the bride, the church, in heaven as clearly shown, and on earth – the church now and the church in eternity. That the holy city is the church now is clear; for Hebrews 12 spells out its exact nature. Hebrews 12:22-24 uses the present tense “*you have come*” of the *heavenly Jerusalem, city of the living God, and the church of the firstborn*:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:28-29 affirms the nature of the church in the present and not in the future, but in fact they are one and the same: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

While the temple encompasses those before the throne of God, the holy city describes the church and the suffering it endures as the troops of evil and the impenitent trample it for 42 months. We must view the indefinite *42 months* in the sense of the sweet and sour nature of the revelation in chapter 10. Those who obey the word by eating the bread of life will suffer intermittently while enjoying the blessings of God in this life and the one that is to come. Jesus used this same analogy in John 6:35-40:

35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life . He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.. . . 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

The ongoing struggle of good against evil goes on in the outer court against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. This struggle began with the fall of man and the casting out of the devil. It is in this context that the Lord gave power to his two witnesses in verse 3.

The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:3-6)

3 And I will give power 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 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

The two witnesses' episode is the last part of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, the second woe. In the immediate context, they are empowered by God as witnesses of great abilities to uphold and deliver the revelation against the enemy who are trampling on the holy city. In the broader context, the witnesses have appeared once before in the revelation of Zechariah 4: There they appeared as assurance to Zerubbabel as lampstands with olive trees for oil beside them. When asked what they were, the angel relied, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." The two witnesses, as those of old, are not by earthly power or earthly might but by the Spirit of the Lord Almighty. The two witnesses, also like those of old are "the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."

In summary, the two witnesses serve the Lord of all the earth and serve Him by the spirit of the Lord. After just experiencing the evil troops, 200 million strong and the gentiles trampling the holy city, we now learn that God's weapon is a spiritual one. The weapon of the Almighty is not physical might or military power. Jesus explained the nature and character of the struggle in John 18:36: "Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.'" In Revelation 5:6-7, John wrote of the Lamb: "He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all

the earth." The Lamb of God spoke to the church in Revelation 3:1, "These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." These selfsame spirits are before the throne of God, "Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God." Revelation 4:5-6. Jesus described this power of the Spirit of God in him in John 3:34-35: "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

In addition to the Lamb who had seven eyes and the seven spirits of God, the seven lights on the lampstands in Zechariah were "the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth." In these two contexts, we know that the witnesses have the sevenfold spirit of God; they speak the word of God; and they range throughout the world. The power of the witnesses is the power of the word of God—the revelation of His mystery. As the apostle Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." Romans 1:16-17. Thus, the witnesses as lampstands are a symbol of God's power in the word of their prophecy. We shall assert that one witness personifies the prophecy of the Old Testament and that the other personifies the prophecy of the New Testament. Indeed, chapter 11 verse¹⁰ calls them prophets.

The witnesses are prophet in the sense of forth telling and not foretelling. God's power in the word comes to bear through the prophets in the figure of the lampstands and the two witnesses, defining the nature of the battle. In the parable of the sower, the devil comes and takes away the word of God from their hearts, so they may not believe and be saved." Luke 6:12. In John 13:2, the devil had entered the heart of Judas and prompted him to betray the Lord. The opposing force is the word of God: "12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12. The servants of God take up this sword to fight the troops of evil and the nations who trample on the holy city the church: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17.

The word of God revealed in the prophets is exactly the subject of John's testimony. John wrote in Revelation 1:1-2: "John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw — that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Later in Revelation 19:13-14, John named the Lamb: "13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God." This is the same eternal word that was from the very beginning: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning." John 1:1-2.

Three divine characters align themselves against the forces of evil in the revelation: the Almighty God, the Lamb of God, and now, the sevenfold Spirit of God. These three, with the enumerable, true worshippers, are set against the heavenly hosts of wickedness.

The two witnesses, prophets, in a figure of speech called synecdoche (See notes on Revelation 2:1), stand for all the prophets of all time in two classes—the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles and prophets. The grouping of the prophets in this order agrees with Hebrews 1:1-3: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." Chapter 11, verse 6, calls the witnesses "two men."

The Spirit of God works in revealing the word of God through the prophets. 2 Peter 1:19-21 explains the process of all prophetic discourse:

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star

risers in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Paul summarized this process in the expression, God-breathed in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." The two witnesses are great warriors of righteousness across time from the fall of man to the final revelation to consummate at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (10:5-7). Even Abel in the very beginning was a prophet (Luke 11:49-51).

The 1,260 days is 42 months and the same as the 42 months (1,260 days) of verse 2. However, verse 2 speaks to the trampling of the holy city, the church. This verse speaks to the time the prophetic word of God protects God's children—a time soon to come with no delay. The prophets work—oral and written—parallels the assault of evil on the followers of God and will be over when the Lord returns, at the same time that all persecution ends. Notice that God protects the Woman and her child from the dragon, sporadically, for this same 42 month (see Revelation 12:6).

The Spirit of God empowers the witnesses with the sharp and two-edged sword and with awesome miracles to use against the powers of the prince of the air. "Fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies" As the troops of evil could destroy by fire of trial and persecution, the ultimate power of destruction by fire belongs to the Lord:

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

The Almighty God spoke directly in these very terms in Jeremiah 5:14: "Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: 'Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes.'"

"This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die" shows that just as the troops of evil have the power of sin to kill, the prophets have the power of the Spirit of God by whose judgment, the word of God, will judge and cast those opposed into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death (See Revelation 20:14; 21:8). God gave the witnesses other powers:

- Elijah used the power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain. I Kings 17:1; 18:1-45.
- Moses used the power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague. Exodus 7:20.

The Beast Overpowers and Kills the Witnesses (Revelation 11:7-14)

7 Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

At the point that they (the witnesses standing for all the apostles and prophets) finished their testimony, the beast attacks. Notice the witnesses have finished their testimony. This is our first introduction to what Paul called a power of this dark world (Ephesians 6:12). Chapter 13 fully describes the beast. For now, we know that the beast is from the Abyss and that it has the might to overpower the witnesses and to kill them. The beast affected the earthly lives of all the prophets:

48 So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49 Because of this, God in his wisdom said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute." 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. Luke 11:48-51

Jesus placed the time of the end of the prophets to a time within the generation to which he was speaking. Speaking retrospectively and prospectively of the plight of the prophets, Jesus included all the prophets and apostles in this group of those killed. Implicit in the language of John and the language of Jesus is the fact that the prophets were killed and their prophecy ended. Paul agreed saying, "But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away." 1 Corinthians 13:8.

Their bodies lie in the streets of the great city, contrasted to the holy city of 11:2. The scripture teaches plainly that the great city is a figure. The great city is Sodom and Egypt, but is also where they crucified the Lord, that is, secular Jerusalem. The phrase great city appears 13 times in the Bible—five times in the Old Testament and the other eight in Revelation. In the Old Testament, it refers to sinful Nineveh four out of five times. In the Revelation, it symbolically includes Babylon throughout chapter 18, where her fall receives detailed consideration. In Revelation 17:18, the great city is the woman who sits on the beast and the great city rules over the kings of the world. In Revelation 16:18-19, the great city splits into three parts because of God's wrath poured out on the earth. The great city, the secular city, contrasts to the holy city, the spiritual city, the New Jerusalem.

9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. Revelation 11:9-10.

The three and a half days is equivalent to the approximate time Jesus spent on the cross and in the grave. Having been crucified at the third hour of the day, he died about the ninth hour. Luke recorded the time of Jesus death and the prophetic nature of Jesus in Luke 24:19-24: "About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. 'He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.'" If this were the case, then Christ stands symbolically for the Old Testament and the New Testament prophets. From the cross, he looked back to the revelation from of old. Just as he had said on the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not think

that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Matthew 5:17-18. At the point of his death, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38).

As the death of Jesus ended the era of Old Testament prophecy, so his life began the era of the New Testament. He had told his apostles in John 15:26-27, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. 27 And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." Their mission, as Christ's mission, ended in persecution and, for most, martyrdom. History documents the tragic end of almost all the apostles. Two vivid examples are Paul and James. In Acts 12:2-3, James, the brother of John, was put to death with the sword, and Peter was seized. Paul understood how much he was to suffer from the beginning, "But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'" Acts 9:15-16.

The men of the all the earth celebrated and gloated because these two had tormented those who live on the earth. What appears to be a point of victory suddenly changes. "A breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them." The metaphor of Jesus, who stands for all prophets and apostles, past and present, continues as God raised them from the dead and took them up in a cloud. As the prophets were ending their time on earth, literally dying out, as it were, they become forever alive in the written word. Jesus had foretold this in Matthew 24:34-35: "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Peter quoted the prophet Isaiah, "'But the word of the Lord stands forever:' And this is the word that was preached to you." 1 Peter 1:25.

The metaphor extends to include the ascension of Christ as it relates to all the prophets, for they went up to heaven in a cloud. In Acts 1:9 tells us, "After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight."

The revelation by the prophets is complete, and it was to this very moment that John spoke, "And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, 'There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.'" Revelation 10:6-7.

Heaven's response to this event was immediately and momentous, but not so momentous as to be taken for the final demonstration of God's wrath, which is reserved for the last "Woe!" :John records, "13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven."

Summary of the Sounding of the Sixth Trumpet and the Second Woe

The events of the second woe may be summarized: the release of the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates (Revelation 9:13-16); the army of death, injury, and plagues; failure to repent (Revelation 9:20-21); the angel and the little scroll (Revelation 10); measuring the temple of God and the altar (Revelation 11:1-2); the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3-14); and the beast overpowers and kills the witnesses, who are raised from the dead (Revelation 11:7-14).

"14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon"

The Seventh Angel Sounded His Trumpet (Hebrews 11:15-19)

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.*

*18 The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.*

*The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great –*

and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the revelation opens with a loud celebration and worship in heaven. In contrast, the sounding of the sixth trumpet opened a scene of horror as the devil's destructive troops—200 million strong—stormed through the world. The sixth sounding had concluded with God's temple, the holy city and the witnesses were enduring in their battle. Now, victory is in air. The kingdom of the world now is the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, according to the loud voices in heaven. The temple in heaven and the prophets receive special attention in the worship.

That the kingdom of the world has ended and become the kingdom of the heaven is a central principal of the revelation. John has taught on two occasions that the saints are reigning (present tense) with Christ. In Revelation 1:5-6, we studied, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever!" Again, in Revelation 5:10, John wrote what the four living creatures and 24 elders sang in their new song,

*"you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."*

When did they become a kingdom? This question is important since many think it will occur at some future date and last for a literal thousand years. As we have studied, the use of the perfect tense verb, *has made*, is an action in the past preceding time of the main verb. At John's writing, the Lord had made the saints a kingdom. This is in agreement with the teaching of Jesus, who pinpointed the time of the coming of the kingdom in Mark 9:1, "And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" In Luke 22:29-30, Jesus used the present tense verb to describe the receiving of the kingdom, "And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul also uses the present perfect tense verb (time before the present time of Paul's writing in Colossians 1:12-14, "12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Finally, the Hebrew writer used the present progressive tense verb (an action continuing in the present), "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28-29

The preceding episode, represented in the sounding of the sixth trumpet, described the temple of God, the holy city, and the prophets of God as they overcame the army of the devil. After that victory, we come to the celebratory statement: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord (one supreme in authority. See Strong's. *Lord* is used of God Almighty in verse 17) and of his Christ (anointed, i.e. the Messiah in Hebrew, used of Jesus. See Strong's). The length of the reign is *for ever and ever* or literally, into the ages of the ages. There was no failure and no need for a future earthy struggle. The victory was certain and final in Jesus. Isaiah said, "A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory." Matthew 12:20-21. Paul agreed in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." John, in 1 John 5:4-5, taught, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

The twenty-four elders, on their thrones before God, fell on their faces worshipping God. Their worship concludes the rescue of a world destroyed by sin and man lost in sin, represented in the sounding of the trumpets. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, their worship summarizes this victory:

- *We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty . God is all mighty and all powerful.*
- *The One who is and who was. God is everlasting.*
- *Because you have taken your great power.*
- *And have begun to reign. With the victory of the Christ and resurrection of the prophets.*
- *The nations were angry. They thought the holy city was trampled over and the prophets dead.*
- *And your wrath has come. This is the third woe. The first woe was one of sin and death and the reign of the Destroyer. The second woe was one of savage troops which could not overcome the temple of God, the holy city, or the prophets, the word of God*
- *The time has come for judging the dead. The last enemy to be subdued will be death.*
- *And for rewarding your servants the prophets. The valiant prophets, Old and New Testament, of the preceding woe, receive their reward.*

- *And your saints and those who reverence your name.* There appears to be two groups: your saints, those set apart, and those who reverence God's name.
- *Both small and great.* There will be no distinction in degree of service or reward. —
- *And for destroying those who destroy the earth.* Paul describes his last great judgment:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Then God's temple in heaven opened. This is the same temple discussed in 11:1; however, we have added to the scene the ark of his (God's) covenant. The covenant, Old and New Testament, was complete with the work of Christ and the prophets. Paul wrote about its completeness: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Jude wrote about its completion: "I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that **was once for all** entrusted to the saints." Jude 3-4.

Forecasting the judgment of all things, *there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.*

In summary, the scene is set for the final judgment. The Lamb has instructed the churches, the Lamb has opened the seven seals, and the angels have sounded the seven trumpets. What follows will be the final episodes in the judgment forecast at the time of the fall of man and the curses upon mankind and the devil and the forces of evil.

The first will be the judgments outstanding between the woman and the dragon, the devil. Next will be the judgments against the beast and false prophet, followed closely by the disposition of Babylon and the prostitute. The serpent and his followers will receive their judgment, and last of all, the Lord will cast judgment on Death and Hades. Those whose names are in the Book of Life, the church, enter into the joys of the Lord.