

“The Rise and Fall of God’s Witnesses” (Revelation 11:1-19)

I graduated from high school in 1989. At that time, I don’t think I knew anything about the World Wide Web. If you can think back 15 years ago, you’d probably have to admit, you didn’t know a whole lot about the Internet either. The Internet zoomed from, “What’s that?” to universal awareness among North Americans during the 1990’s. Even people like me without computer savvy have learned to say, “dot.com” rather than, “period.com.” The Internet has become the ultimate tool for cruising the information highway. Virtually every fact and factoid in the universe could be accessed with just a few computer clicks.

The Internet, however, has not helped people discern truth. Any and every lie, rumor, and false claim has come via the World Wide Web. Moral filth has poured from thousands of web sites. This has caused many people to point to the factual errors and moral bankruptcy provided through the net. The Internet illustrates the awesome power that is neutral about truth and morality. Too often contemporary Christianity has pictured the opposite: truth without power. Revelation 11 prods us to see that God intends for His truth to be proclaimed with power.¹ In these 19 verses, we will be reminded of four truths about God that will teach us how to live a life of truth and power.

Revelation 11 is a part of a parenthetical section that began in 10:1 and runs through 14:22. Chapter 11 does not advance the chronological sequence of the prophetic events, but parenthetically describes tribulation events and personalities. Not until chapter 15 will the chronological developments pick up again (cf. Rev 7:1-17). Now as we prepare to look into this passage, I want you to think back to your most difficult class in high school. Was it Geometry, Calculus, Chemistry, Physics, English, or PE? If you have this class registered in your mind, then you have an idea what Revelation 11 is like. Scholars call this the most difficult chapter in the book of Revelation. However, for the sake of time and simplicity, we will try not to bog down too much in all the minutia of details.

1. God controls our world (11:1-2). John writes, “**Then there was given² me a measuring rod like a staff;³ and someone⁴ said, ‘Get up and measure the temple⁵ of God and the altar,⁶ and those who worship in it.’**”⁷ This is a scene on earth. John is told to measure the temple, the altar,⁸ and its worshippers.⁹ There is no temple when John is writing, but he sees one in the future.¹⁰ This points to a temple that will stand in Jerusalem, built before or shortly after Jesus returns for His church. In 11:2, John is specifically told, “**“Leave out¹¹ the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.¹²”**” This stresses that God rejects the end-times religious system because it will be a product of the times of the nations and a False Messiah. It will, however, have another 42 months to operate and then God will establish the true temple. The whole point of these two verses is God is in control. Through John’s act of measuring, God is again staking His claim on His end-time scheme.

One of the problems many have with taking these verses literally is the absence of a temple in Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock presently sits on a portion of this temple site.¹³ This is a very important place of worship in the Arab world. Muslims believe this to be the place where Mohammed ascended to heaven. For the Jews to wrestle this site away from the Muslims and build their temple there is unfathomable in today’s political climate.¹⁴ But during the first half of the tribulation there will finally be peace in the Middle East. Under the protection of Antichrist, the Jews will be able to rebuild the temple. However, at the midpoint of the tribulation, the Antichrist will stop their sacrifices, place an image of himself in the holy place, take his seat in the temple, and demand to be worshipped as God. This is called “the abomination of desolation.”¹⁵

Now back to 11:1. The vision of Zechariah 2 may help us further understand why John is called to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshippers. While an angel in human form sets out to measure Jerusalem, another angel informs Zechariah that the city will one day be greatly expanded and protected by God (Zech 2:5). This will occur in the kingdom established by Jesus Christ at His return. But before this can take place, the nation must experience a spiritual cleansing (Zech 3:3-5). This is seen right here in Revelation. By commanding John to measure the inner court, the altar, and the people, God marked out the Jewish people as belonging to Him but in need of cleansing. He will allow wicked nations led by the Antichrist and his cohorts to take control of Jerusalem for 42 months, but through this judgment He will purify His people and their worship.

This is a reminder that man and his worship are always judged by the standards of God. Regardless of what man thinks, the only thing that counts is God's judgment and standard of both our lives and our worship. If Jesus showed up in bodily form today, would your worship change? What would you begin to do that you are not currently doing?

[God controls our world...we will now also see that...]

2. God uses our service (11:3-6). We are now introduced to two¹⁶ witnesses.¹⁷ The two witnesses are two persons,¹⁸ presently unknown, who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah, in the future tribulation period.¹⁹ The mention of these witnesses should comfort us. God never leaves Himself without a witness. Despite the tribulation in your school, workplace, or neighborhood, God has a witness in your proximity. Do you know who your fellow Christians are? Are you praying for other believers by name, in your school, work, or neighborhood? Stop for just a moment and write down the name of one believer in your school, workplace, or neighborhood. Commit to pray for that person on a daily basis.

Through God's empowerment these two witnesses "**will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth**" (11:3). In Scripture a prophetic year is 360 days or 1,230-day lunar months. Thus the 1,260 days equals three-and-a-half years—exactly half of the seven-year tribulation. The two witnesses will wear "**sackcloth,**" the dress that in biblical times, signified approaching judgment and needed repentance.²⁰ These witnesses are "**the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth**" (11:4). The two witnesses are thus the two light-bearers of God for the wicked city of Jerusalem. The seeming hopelessness and futility of their mission is no greater than that which was the calling of Joshua and Zerubbabel, who were to lead in the rebuilding of the temple in the days of Zechariah (Zech 4:2-3, 14).²¹ In both cases, it was not human power and strength that would accomplish the mountainous task at hand, but the power of the Spirit of God working through men (4:6).

Throughout the Bible, the witness of God's people is likened to a light or a lamp (cf. Matt 5:14-16). Israel was God's light to a darkened world in the days prior to the coming of Christ. Since then the church has been fulfilling this function of light bearing (cf. Rom 13:12; Eph 5:7-14). You are a light-bearer in your school, workplace, and neighborhood (11:4). How will you be salt and light? Do you have a plan to reach out to others? Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? If so, what charges would you be brought up on? What charges *should* you be brought up on?

In 11:5-6, John records that the ministry of these two witnesses is characterized by four miraculous powers. (1) They can kill their enemies with fire. These witnesses will be able to protect themselves by calling down fire on their enemies who try to harm them, as Elijah did (cf. 2 Kings 1:10-14).²² (2) They can withhold rain for three-and-a-half years.²³ (3) They can turn water into blood. (4) They can bring plagues upon the earth (Exod 7-11; 1 Kings 17:1f; 2 Kings 1:10-15).

Why these specific miracles? First, they are a means of defense and protection to the two witnesses until their ministry is over. But second, these specific miracles occur because of their significance to Israel. They will be used to turn the hearts of the Jews to the Lord (see 11:13).

This section should remind us that the Lord will always provide the resources necessary to accomplish whatever He sends you to do (11:5-6). Do you lack faith that God can use? How have you been limiting what God wants to do through you in ministry? What specific ministry have you said, “God, I could never do that.” Write that ministry down right now. Lay our weakness at the Lord’s feet and ask that He may empower you with His strength to do whatever He would have you do.

[Not only does God use our service...]

3. God guarantees our future (11:7-13). John continues his account of the two witnesses: **“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.”** Verse 7 begins with the phrase **“When they have finished their testimony.”** This entire phrase is worth highlighting in your Bible. These two witnesses will march in the belly of the Beast, the city of Jerusalem, under the reign of the Antichrist. Yet, they are immortal until the Lord permits. In the same way, you are immortal until you finish the work that God has set out for you to accomplish. This is a very important principle: As long as you are alive, God has a plan for you. You are invincible until that plan is done. You need not fear Satan or any man. The Devil can do nothing to us without divine permission (Job 1). Do you fear man? Today, will you write down Matthew 10:28: “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Will you commit to memorizing this verse by the time you go to bed this evening? As I prepare to leave for Siberia next month, I depart with no fear of what may happen to me. The Lord knows the number of my days. He knows the number of hairs on my head. My time will not end before His work in and through me is done.²⁴

At the Lord’s appointed time, **“the beast that comes up out of the abyss²⁵ will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.”** **“The Beast”** is the Antichrist—a man that is empowered by Satan.²⁶ Since chapter 13 describes and develops the Beast and his political-religious system in detail, we will wait until then to discuss the Beast. Here we are simply told that he is the one who makes war, overcomes, and kills the two witnesses. Their ministry has been diametrically opposed to his purposes, so the Beast goes all out to hush their testimony, which he is unable to do until the end.

After Beast kills the two witnesses, John tells us **“their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically²⁷ is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”²⁸** Jerusalem is likened to **“Sodom and Egypt.”** In Scripture, **“Sodom”** stands for the flesh²⁹ and **“Egypt”** for the world. The point is, the great city is dominated by the world system, by the flesh, and by Satan through the Beast. It is in this great city that the bodies of the two witnesses lie in the street (11:8-9).

In 11:9, **“Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.”** In biblical times, exposing an enemy’s dead body was the ultimate way of dishonoring and desecrating them (cf. Ps 79:2-3). God forbade the Israelites to engage in that practice (Deut 21:22-23).

What’s even worse is the people of the earth celebrate a kind of hellish Christmas, giving gifts not in celebration of the birth of Christ, but over the death of His two witnesses.

John explains, **“And those who dwell on the earth³⁰ will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.”** This serves as a powerful reminder that service for God always “pays” but it doesn’t necessarily pay now (11:8-10). Will you begin to pray, “Lord, grant me an eternal perspective? Help me to realize that payday will be on that day!” Remind me again and again that You have guaranteed my future. I am secure in You!

“And now for the rest of the story...” In 11:11, John writes, **“But 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.”** This is long enough for the bodies to have begun to decay. As the Lord did with Lazarus, God waits until there is no question about their death, and then suddenly God intervenes. They will be physically, visibly resurrected on Worldwide Satellite TV (something akin to CNN live coverage). Who says there’s nothing good on TV? This entire sequence of events would serve to remind Israel of the ministry of Jesus Christ—His death, resurrection, and ascension.

But it gets even better. John records, **“And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’³¹ Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour 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” (11:12-13).** The murder of God’s two witnesses will precipitate special judgments on Jerusalem.³² Interestingly, this is one of the few times in Revelation that people give glory to God. Elsewhere in Revelation, “giving glory to God” is the equivalent to conversion (4:9; 16:9; 19:7).³³ Therefore, it is my belief that these people have their eyes opened to the truth. Suddenly, now they begin to realize God was not dead or defeated; Satan would not be victorious and they were doomed.

God loves to intervene in convincing fashion. He often uses dramatic events to draw people to Himself. Will you be bold enough to pray, “Lord, whatever You want to do in my neighbor’s life, do it? I want you to draw him/her to Christ.” Will you step out in faith and believe God for great feats?

4. God expects our gratitude (11:14-19). In 11:14, John writes, **“The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”³⁴** John again resumes the sequential movement of the book. So the second woe, concluded in chapter 9, is now mentioned as an introduction to the third and final woe.³⁵ Thus John says, **“Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”** This is the seventh trumpet that will take us up to the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.

The picture in 11:15-19 is panoramic of the rest of the tribulation. In these five verses the victory of God’s enemies and the establishment of His kingdom are announced.³⁶ John records, **“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’” (11:15).** The record of this judgment appears in chapter 16. The millennial reign of Christ will last for only 1,000 years, but the reign of Christ will continue on throughout all eternity in the new heavens and the new earth. So here we have the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies that look forward to the eternal rule³⁷ of God when God’s purposes will be done on earth as it is in heaven.³⁸

In 11:16, **“the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God.”** The action of falling down on their faces demonstrates a clear understanding of God’s greatness and the believer’s humility before God. The worship they expressed was a giving of thanks. In Hebrews 13:15, we learn that God wants us to continually offer up a “sacrifice of praise.”

The Hebrew writer goes on to inform us that this sacrifice of praise is thanksgiving to God. We were created to give thanks to God. That is where we find our ultimate meaning and worth.

In 11:17-18, we see four specific reasons for thanksgiving.

- **God's power is being proclaimed (11:17b).** Thanks is due God especially for His sovereign rule and righteous judgment. Yet, we rarely thank God for these attributes. The word "**Almighty**" (*pantokrator*)³⁹ means possessing all power and rule (Rev 1:8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). It speaks of God's sovereignty and omnipotence as the supreme Ruler of the universe. Next God is praised for His eternity: "**who are and who were because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.**"⁴⁰
- **God's plan is being accomplished (11:18a).** John writes, "**And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged.**" Here is a reference to the rebellion of the nations during the tribulation period. This is a fulfillment of Pslm 2:1-6. God will one day judge all the wicked dead.⁴¹
- **God's promise is being fulfilled (11:18b).** John writes, "**and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great.**" The reward of God is a great reason to give thanks! We are given salvation as a gift of grace. You would think that would be more than enough, but God freely gives rewards on top of salvation (Rev 22:12).
- **God's punishment is being declared (11:18c).**⁴² John writes that God will "**destroy those who destroy the earth.**" The wicked do not escape the judgment of God. No one gets away with anything. God will punish unbelievers for what they have done (2 Thess 1:8-9).

God longs to be appreciated. Which of these expressions of gratitude to God will you pray this week? Will you begin today?

We should note that this chapter began with the apostate temple on earth, but closes triumphantly with the heavenly temple in view (11:19). John writes, "**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.**" Again, this stresses as in Isaiah 6, the awesome holiness of God, the basic cause of God's wrath (Heb 1:13). Remember, the Beast desecrates this earthly, apostate temple, but he cannot touch the heavenly temple that reflects God's perfect righteousness, perfect justice, and majesty.

In baseball, the home team bats in the bottom half of the inning. This allows the visiting team to bat first. It also gives the home team, the opportunity to either win or lose the game in the bottom of the ninth. Today, it is the top of the inning and people are at bat. However, there will be a day when that will cease and God will walk to the plate in the bottom of the ninth. Man's day will come to an end and God's day will begin. One day God's forecasting clock will strike suddenly and surely. Only God knows the timing. I need to ask you today: Are you ready?

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Notes

¹ The idea for this illustration came from Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation: HNTC* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 201.

² Again John became an active participant in his vision (cf. Revelation 1:12; 5:4; 7:14; 10:8-10; 19:10; 22:8).

³ John's "measuring rod" was probably a lightweight reed (cf. Ezekiel 29:6; 40:5; 42:16-19; Mark 6:8; 3 John 13) much like that used by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40:3, 5) in his vision of the measuring of the temple (Ezekiel 40-48).

⁴ The person giving the reed and the instructions was probably the strong angel (Revelation 10:9-11).

⁵ The word "temple" (*naos*) specifically refers to the Holy of Holies portion of the temple where only the priests could serve. Another Greek word for "temple" (*hieron*) refers to the entire temple at Jerusalem.

⁶ The "altar" (*thusiasterion*) probably refers to the brazen altar of sacrifice outside the sanctuary to which non-priests will have access.

⁷ John received instruction to perform a symbolic act, as many of his prophetic forerunners had done (cf. Isaiah 20:2-5; Ezekiel 12:1-17; 40; Zechariah 2).

⁸ The temple will have an altar of sacrifice that will begin operation after the church has departed the earth.

⁹ These temple worshipers evidently represent godly Jews who will worship God in this tribulation temple (cf. Ezekiel 14:22; Romans 11:4-5, 26).

¹⁰ Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; and 2 Thessalonians 2:4 indicate that a literal future temple will be present for the "abomination of desolation."

¹¹ "Leave out" (*ekballo*, lit. cast out) implies removal from divine favor (cf. Matthew 22:13; 25:30; 3 John 10).

¹² See Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Luke 21:24.

¹³ The Dome of the Rock Mosque was erected in 691.

¹⁴ The Jews would never build their temple on any other site.

¹⁵ When Jesus Christ returns at the second coming He will build a new temple that will replace this tribulation temple (Ezekiel 40). This temple will be in place during Christ's 1,000-year reign in Jerusalem.

¹⁶ There are two witnesses because the Bible requires the testimony of two people to confirm a fact or verify truth (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28). Both Jesus and the early church sent out messengers in pairs (e.g., Mark 6:7; Luke 10:2; Acts 13:2; 15:39-40).

¹⁷ There have been numerous suggestions as to the identity of the two witnesses. Three interpretive schools exist: symbolic, corporate, and literal. For our purposes, I will only list the literal interpretive options (1) Elijah and Moses, (2) Elijah and Enoch, (3) Elijah and John the Baptist, (4) Elijah and John the Apostle, (5) Elijah and an unidentified person, (6) Peter and James, (7) Peter and John, (8) Peter and Paul, (9) the two high priests, Ananus and Jesus, who nobly withstood the zealots in Jerusalem, and were massacred by them, and (10) two unknown persons who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future. See Daniel K. K. Wong, "The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11": *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:615 (July 1997), 345-354.

¹⁸ The overall context in which the activity of the two witnesses is described (Revelation 11:3-12) supports the literal view. In these verses witnesses, depicted as individuals, speak (11:3, 6); are given power to kill their enemies (11:5); are heard, handled, and hated (11:3, 7, 10); have mouths, ears, and feet (11:5, 11-12); wear "sackcloth," and after their martyrdom are seen as "dead" (11:8-9). Grammatically, it is also worth noting that John's use of the definite article *tois* indicates specific persons. Also, elsewhere in the New Testament "witnesses" (*martus*) is always personal (Matthew 18:16; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28; Revelation 1:5).

¹⁹ Many have suggested that these two witnesses are Elijah and Moses. The strengths of this view are as follows. (a) The miracles performed are those of Elijah and Moses—power to shut up the sky, plagues, and power to turn water to blood. (b) Moses and Elijah were seen at the transfiguration and are therefore apt to have the exalted positions of "olive trees and lampstands" before the Lord. (c) Elijah is predicted to return "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:4-6). (d) There is a satanic battle over the body of Moses (Jude 9). Satan knows Moses has a role yet to play and sought to thwart it. (e) The words at the transfiguration that "some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power" (Mark 9:1; cf. Matthew 16:28), then the three disciples saw Moses and Elijah. This may indicate Moses and Elijah's appearance is a foretaste of the coming kingdom. The weaknesses of this view are as follows. (a) There is no explicit statement that the two witnesses are Moses and Elijah. (b) Moses would be required to die twice (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). (c) Jesus stated that John the Baptist was Elijah so we don't have to expect another appearance (Matthew 17:10-13). Luke 1:17 states that John the Baptist, as a forerunner of Christ, would go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah (cf. Mark 1:2-3 with Malachi 3:1). John himself also said that he was not Elijah, only a voice of one crying in the wilderness to

prepare men for Messiah (John 1:21-22). John denied that he was a literal Elijah, though he saw his role as a virtual Elijah doing what the Malachi passage said Elijah would do (Malachi 3:1; 4:6). (d) Matthew 11:7-14 shows that John could have and would have fulfilled the Malachi passage if Israel as a nation had believed and accepted his message. But since they rejected both John and Messiah, another would have to come to fulfill the Malachi prophecy and this would need to occur prior to Christ's second coming. Since John could have and would have fulfilled the Malachi passage, it seems obvious the one who will come in the future, will be, like John, one who will come in the spirit and power of Elijah, a virtual Elijah, but not literally Elijah himself. He does not have to be a literal Elijah, or John could not have fulfilled the Malachi passage.

²⁰ Cf. Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 4:8; 6:26; Jonah 3:5, 6, 8; Matthew 11:21. Biblical characters like Job (Job 16:15), Jacob (Genesis 37:4), David (2 Samuel 3:31), Isaiah (Isaiah 20:2), and Daniel (Daniel 9:3) all wore sackcloth for the purpose of mourning.

²¹ The seven lampstands of Revelation and the seven lamps of Zechariah are related, but not synonymous.

²² See Leviticus 10:2; Numbers 11:1; 16:35; Psalm 106:17-18.

²³ The third trumpet judgment resulted in the poisoning of one-third of the earth's fresh water supply (Revelation 8:10-11). Now this drought will cause further widespread devastation of crops and loss of human and animal life through thirst and starvation.

²⁴ Of course, men can terminate their own lives or kill their own ministry by personal rebellion, carnality, and regression from the Lord (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:30-32; 1 John 5:16-17). But people bring this on themselves by turning away from God and staying out of His plan and grace.

²⁵ Cf. Revelation 9:1-3, 11; Luke 8:31.

²⁶ This is the first of 36 references to one called the Beast that will occur from this point on in the book of Revelation.

²⁷ Gk. *pneumatikos*, cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

²⁸ Cf. Jeremiah 22:8.

²⁹ The English word "sodomy" is derived from the sexual depravity exhibited by the males in Sodom (Genesis 19:5-6). Sodom became a symbol of living in sensual pleasure and the inevitable consequences of divine judgment (Deuteronomy 29:23; 32:32; Isaiah 1:9-10; 3:9; 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Lamentations 4:6; Ezekiel 16:45-46; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9). The New Testament, likewise, echoed the depravity of Sodom (Matthew 10:15; 11:23-24; Luke 10:12; 17:29; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7).

³⁰ In Revelation this is practically a technical term for unbelievers, for those totally at home on the earth and devoid of any heavenly hope, concerns, or desires (cf. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8).

³¹ Cf. Revelation 4:1 for the command, "Come up here."

³² The wrath of men praises God as well as man's true repentance (cf. Psalm 76:10).

³³ Giving glory to God is significant throughout the Scriptures (e.g., Joshua 7:19; 1 Samuel 6:5; Isaiah 42:2; Jeremiah 13:16; Luke 17:18; John 9:24; Acts 12:23; Romans 4:20; 1 Peter 2:12). See this perspective in Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 98-99.

³⁴ The word "quickly" (*tachu*) can mean (a) quickly in the sense of soon, i.e., the end of the age is near, or (b) "quickly" in the sense of "in rapid succession" (i.e., once the seventh trumpet is blown, its judgments will come like trip hammer blows in quick succession, the end will then be near). This last explanation best suits the conditions of the passage.

³⁵ In Revelation 9:13 John was informed that the last three trumpet judgments would be more intense because woe is pronounced upon the earth dwellers because of the remaining three blasts of the trumpets.

³⁶ This judgment becomes the greatest woe because it includes the seven bowl judgments though they are not mentioned here. Revelation 12-14 form the third parenthetical section filling in more details of other key events and personages (cf. 7:1-17; 10:1-11:19).

³⁷ The prophets spoke of the "kingdoms of this world being conquered by the coming kingdom of the Messiah" (Daniel 2:44; 7:14; Zechariah 14:9; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24).

³⁸ Cf. Psalm 2:2-9; Daniel 2:35, 44; 6:26; 7:14, 26-27; Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 6:10.

³⁹ Gk. *panokrator* is from *pas* "all" plus *krateo*, "to rule, be master, to be strong, mighty."

⁴⁰ The elders' statement has led some interpreters to conclude that it signals the beginning of Jesus Christ's reign. In view of the events that seem to follow this one and precede the beginning of His reign in Revelation 20, it seems better to regard the elders' statement as anticipatory of the inauguration of that reign. The event is so certain that throughout this section it is repeatedly spoken of as already having taken place.

⁴¹ Here we have the fulfillment of Psalm 2. Just before the return of Christ, as part of the sixth bowl, the armies of the world will be gathered together in the Plain of Esdraelon or the Valley of Decision (Revelation 16:16; Joel 3:14). At this point, as never before, the nations are enraged against one another and against God (Revelation 19:19). But their wrath is impotent against the omnipotence and the holy wrath of God. So John adds “and Your wrath came.” In this context especially, this refers to the final phase of the Tribulation, the seventh trumpet and the seven bowl judgments that are concluded by the personal return of the Lord.

⁴² David Hocking, *The Coming World Leader* (Portland: Multnomah, 1988), 188.