

INTRODUCTION to REVELATION chapter 11

1 THE THEME

2 THE STRUCTURE

- a. The relationship between Revelation chapter 10 and Revelation chapter 11 in section 3
- b. Revelation chapter 11 describes the whole New Testament period
- c. The relationship between section 2 and section 3: it is a parallel and progressive revelation

3 THE CONTENTS

- a. The long and the short period
- b. The message of Revelation chapter 11

4 THE BACKGROUND

- a. Allusions in Revelation 11 to Daniel chapter 7 to 12
- b. Measuring the temple in Ezekiel (Revelation 11:1)
- c. Measuring Jerusalem in Zechariah (Revelation 11:1)
- d. The symbolic actions (Revelation 11:1)
- e. The Old Testament number 3½ serves as a symbol of the New Testament period of affliction (11:2-3; 12:6:14)
- f. The two olive trees and the two lampstands (Revelation 11:4)
- g. The correct explanation concerning Elijah and John the Baptist (Revelation 11:6)
- h. The breath of life from God that enters dead bodies (Revelation 11:11)
- i. The ark (Revelation 11:19)

1 THE THEME

THE FINAL APPEAL OF CHRIST TO REPENT

The task of the Church to proclaim the good news to the penitent and to proclaim God's warning to the impenitent comes to a climax towards the end-time.

Because the book of Revelation is *a progressive revelation* of the apocalyptic events in the end-time, *the emphasis* in Revelation chapter 11 is especially on the witnessing of the Militant Church during the end-time just before Christ's second coming.

2 THE STRUCTURE

[a. The relationship between Revelation chapter 10 and Revelation chapter 11 in section 3](#)

Revelation chapter 10 deals with the sweetness and bitterness of accepting and proclaiming the gospel.

Revelation chapter 11 deals especially with the climax this proclamation leads to. Throughout the whole New Testament period the Church as an institute that proclaims the gospel is protected and has authority. But just before the end-time (during the great tribulation) the final antichrist and his allies will destroy the Church as an institute that proclaims the gospel.

[b. Revelation chapter 11 describes the whole New Testament period](#)

The New Testament period is divided into four parts: a definite beginning at Christ's first coming, a long period of proclaiming the gospel, a short period of severe persecution and a definite ending at Christ's second coming.

The beginning of the New Testament period (11:1-2a)

The measuring of the temple: the Church (true temple) and the true Christians (worshippers) are set apart (measured) from people who are nominal Christians (the outer court) and non-Christians (Jerusalem) for a symbolic period of 42 months.

The long main period

The Church is protected throughout the New Testament period while the nominal Christians and the non-Christians trample the Christian faith underfoot for a symbolic period of 42 months (11:1-2).

The Church is represented by the two witnesses. The Church is an institute that proclaims God's message. It proclaims the gospel of salvation and the warning of judgement with authority for a symbolic period of 1260 days (11:3-6).

The short period.

The beast (the final antichrist) makes war against the Church, overpowers and destroys the Church as an institute that proclaims the gospel for a very short symbolic period of 3½ days (11:7-11).

The end of the New Testament period.

At Christ's second coming the physical resurrection of the dead takes place (11:11-14).

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet the final judgement day is introduced and the kingdom of God in its final phase becomes a reality (11:15-19).

Conclusion. Revelation chapter 11 spans the entire New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The long period of proclaiming the gospel is followed by a short period of severe persecution just before Christ's second coming. Revelation chapter 11 also gives some insight into the eternal state after Christ's second coming (11:15-17).

c. The relationship between section 2 and section 3: it is a parallel and progressive revelation

Parallelism in revelation.

As with the opening of the sixth seal, the sounding of the seventh trumpet brings the history of the world once more in its description in the book of Revelation to its conclusion (10:7). Thus, Revelation chapters 8 to 11 are *parallel* to Revelation chapters 4 to 7. The seven trumpets in section 3 of the book of Revelation are *parallel* to the seven seals in section 2 of the book.

Progress in revelation.

But there is also *progress* in revelation. Throughout world history, the seals of persecution in section 2 ever give rise to the trumpets of judgement in section 3. *A fourth* of the earth is killed under the fourth seal in section 2 (6:8). But *a third* of the earth, sea, rivers and fountains are destroyed under the first four trumpet judgements in section 3 (8:7-11). Thus God's judgements of the godless and wicked people are more serious than the general trials he allows in sovereign way to fall on both believers and unbelievers alike.

Because the book of Revelation is also a progressive revelation of the apocalyptic events in the end-time, *the emphasis* in Revelation chapter 11 is especially on the proclamation or witnessing of the Militant Church during the end-time just before Christ's second coming.

3 THE CONTENTS

a. The long and the short period

Revelation 11:1-6 deals with the long period of sweetness and bitterness for the Church as it proclaims the gospel (cf. chapters 2, 3 and 10).

Revelation 11:7-10 deals with the very short period of severe persecution of the Church under the reign of the final antichrist and his allies (cf. 13:7-10,13-18; 16:12-16; 17:10b-18; 20:7-10).

Revelation 11:11-19 deals with the second coming of Christ when Christians will be physically resurrected and caught up in the clouds to meet and welcome Christ in the sky. On that same final day in the history of this world the present earth will collapse with a mighty earthquake and the non-Christians will be terrified (cf. 6:12-17; 14:14-20; 16:17-21; 20:11-15). The blowing of the seventh trumpet signals the actual final judgement day in which Christians will be rewarded and the wicked destroyers of the world will be finally destroyed (11:18)!

b. The message of Revelation chapter 11

The message of this chapter is that the true Church is an institute of worship (11:1) and an institute of proclamation of God's Word amidst the godless and wicked world throughout the whole New Testament period. The world consists of nominal Christians (the outer court) and antichristian politics and religions (figuratively Jerusalem). The Church proclaims the good news to those who repent and proclaims God's warning to those who harden themselves (11:3). During this period the Church is given authority in her proclamation of God's message (11:5-6). The Church is set aside to be holy and is protected by God (measured) throughout the whole New Testament period until just before the end (11:1). The task of the Church will be fully accomplished, but also God's permissive will for the final end of the Church as an institute for proclaiming God's message will be fully accomplished (10:7)!

Throughout the whole New Testament period the world is ripening for the final judgement day. More and more the world becomes what it really is and always has been in its deepest essence (cf. Genesis 15:16): godless, wicked and anti-Christian. Only at the end-time will the real identity of the world become completely manifest when the Church as an institute for proclaiming God's message is destroyed by the final antichrist and his allies (11:7-10).

The oppression and persecution in the end-time will be of short duration (11:9; cf. Matthew 24:21-22). At Christ's second coming all true Christians will be resurrected, snatched up to heaven (to meet and welcome Christ)(11:11-12) and will be rewarded (11:18a). The destroyers of the earth will be destroyed (11:18b) and the kingdom of Christ will go into its final, perfect and everlasting stage (11:15), namely the new heaven and new earth.

4 THE BACKGROUND

a. Allusions in Revelation 11 to Daniel chapter 7 to 12

The saints or true worshippers (11:1; Daniel 7:21)

The beast (11:7; Daniel 7:19-21,23-25)

The waging of war against the saints and defeating them (11:7; Daniel 7:21,25; 12:1)

The power of the holy people broken (11:7; Daniel 12:7)

The 'how long' is symbolically 3½ days (11:9) or 3½ times (12:7)(Daniel 7:25; 12:7)

The resurrection of the dead (11:11-12; Daniel 12:2,13)

The final judgement (11:18; Daniel 7:9-10,22,26; 12:13)

And the final manifestation of the kingdom of God (11:15,17; Daniel 2:44; 7:14,22,27)

The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are both *apocalyptic literature*. 'An apocalypse' means *a book of revelations of God and his grand (and violent) acts in symbolic language*. Both books use similar apocalyptic language and terminology. Both books use a similar parallel progressive structure. BUT THE MESSAGE of the book of Daniel is different than the message of the book of Revelation!¹ See the introduction to the book of Daniel in supplement 7.

The book of Daniel presents a theology of the history of the kingdoms of the world as the background of the kingdom of God. The book of Revelation presents the history of God's salvation and judgement within the history of the world.

b. Measuring the temple in Ezekiel (Revelation 11:1)²

The prophet Ezekiel (593-571 B.C.) prophesied the final glorious time in which the kingdom of God will find its fulfilment in *the new Israel* after the exile to Babylon. The display of God's glory (Ezekiel 39:21) and the outpouring of God's Spirit (Ezekiel 39:29) must find expression in *the new life* in the new land! God's glory is not only exalted above the earth, but descends in the forms of life on earth. God wants to share his completeness to his new creation! In the prophetic picture of Ezekiel, *the new forms of life* find

¹ John E. Goldingay, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 30, Daniel

² A. Noordzij, Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift, Ezechiël

expression in the new temple, the new temple service and the new land and city (cf. Isaiah 11:1-9; Revelation chapters 21 to 22).

Ezekiel does not speak of *the creation of new forms* of life in Israel, but rather of *a reformation of the old forms* of life in Israel! The forms, which Moses received in the Law concerning the temple, the temple service, the city and the land, remain the foundation for the new forms of life in the new Israel. But these new forms of life are permeated by a new Spirit and will therefore change the old forms of life in several ways. *Ezekiel not only prophesied the inner renewal through a new heart and new spirit* (Ezekiel 36:25-27) *but also the necessity that this inner renewal will have an outer visible form in their worship of God and in their daily living*: “He measured the area ...to separate the holy from the common” (Ezekiel 42:20)! There must be agreement between the inner renewal and the outer forms!

Ezekiel’s vision concerning what he saw of the Lord himself in Ezekiel chapter 1 (invisible for human eyes) results in his vision concerning what the new temple, the new city and the new land in Ezekiel chapter 40 to 48 will look like (visible for human eyes). Ezekiel shows that *when God imparts his life in the inner man, then it will find expression in outer forms, which are in agreement with the inner reality!* He shows that *God’s method is not from outer conformity to inner conformity, but rather from inner renewal to outer renewal!* The new life and power present in the new people will always press for similar new forms in their outward life. Thus, the result will be a clear distinction between holy and unholy!

When the literal temple (of Solomon) still stood, Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon against what was happening in it (593-586 B.C.). But when that temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in 586 B.C. he prophesied how ‘the new temple’ would look like. While in the literal temple in Jerusalem no distinction was made between the holy and the common, no difference was made between clean and unclean (Leviticus 10:10; Ezekiel 22:26), ‘the new temple’ would be ‘measured’ (Ezekiel 40:2-5; 42:20).

The message of Ezekiel was that the new temple would be separated or set apart from that which is profane (not sacred) and a distinction would be made between what is holy and what is not. The future people of God after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-28) is described in terms of the Old Testament language of the new temple that is being measured.

c. Measuring Jerusalem in Zechariah (Revelation 11:1)³

After the exile to Babylon many exiles returned in company of Zerubbabel, Jeshua and Nehemiah in 538 B.C. (Ezra 1:1; 2:1-2). When the literal city of Jerusalem was rebuilt after the exile by its people, a certain man stretched a literal measuring line out over Jerusalem in order to divide it into building plots (Zechariah 1:12-17). However, ‘the New Jerusalem’ which God is building cannot and need not be measured with a measuring line. It will form a great open area due to the great number of people and livestock in it. God himself will be a wall of fire protecting it from all sides. And God will be living in it and be its glory (Zechariah 2:1-5).

The message of the prophet Zechariah (520 B.C.) is that the New Jerusalem with God as its Protector and Glory in its midst would expand among the nations. Its spiritually measured boundaries would be nothing less than the protection and glorious presence of God himself. The future people of God are described in terms of the Old Testament language of the New Jerusalem that cannot be measured, because it will expand continually.

d. The symbolic actions (Revelation 11:1)

In apocalyptic literature God gives revelations by means of *symbolic language* and terminology. But God sometimes also gives his servants *symbolic actions* to perform in order to reveal what God was going to do.

Thus, in Isaiah 20:1-6 the prophet Isaiah had to take off the sackcloth from his body and the sandals from his feet and go around stripped and bare feet for three years as *a sign* that the king of Assyria was going to lead the Egyptian and Cushite captives stripped and bare feet into exile.

³ J. Ridderbos, Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift, De Kleine Profeten

In Ezekiel 4:1-8 the prophet Ezekiel had to construct a clay model of Jerusalem, lay siege against it and lie on his left side for 390 days *symbolically* bearing the sin of Israel and then lie on his right side for 40 days *symbolically* bearing the sin of Judah.

In Ezekiel 42:20 the prophet Ezekiel had to measure the temple and its area as *a symbolic action* symbolising the separation of the holy from the common.

e. The Old Testament number 3½ serves as a symbol of the New Testament period of affliction (11:2-3; 12:6,14)

The number in the book of Kings (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17).

The book of 1 Kings was written before 586 B.C. During the Old Testament there was a period of 3½ years, which God's people never forgot! During that period of 3½ years there was a severe drought and famine in the land. It was *a period of affliction!* Yet at the same time it was a period during which the power of God's Word was exhibited through the prophet Elijah. During this difficult period, God's true Old Testament people (the believers) were persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 18:10). They were not destroyed, because God nourished them in a miraculous way (1 Kings 17:2-6; 18:4; 19:18)! Jesus also refers to this period of affliction in Revelation 11:6!

The number in the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7).

Daniel chapters 7 to 12 was written in the second century B.C. The number 'time, times and half a time' also signify *a period of affliction that seems to extend itself endlessly, yet abruptly and unexpectedly comes to an end!* The periods of affliction in history under the governments in the world all have a divinely limited time! Daniel gives a theology of the kingdoms of the world: God's perspective on the kingdoms of the world in their relationship to his everlasting kingdom.

In Daniel 2:31-44 'the large statue' represents the mighty Babylonian kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar that eventually crumbled and was eclipsed by the kingship of God that endures forever (Daniel 2:44)!

In Daniel 7:2-14 'the beasts' represent historical kingdoms or empires that culminates in one of the many historical antichristian political governments in the history of the world with one of the many historical antichrists (cf. 1 John 2:18). This tyrant king in history was judged in the heavenly court, slain and destroyed in hell. But other governments (beasts) were stripped of their authority (to harm the saints of God) and were allowed to live on for a period of time (Daniel 7:12). The kingship of the one like a son of man with the saints continued unabated (Daniel 7:14,17-18).

In Daniel 7:19-27 'the final beast' with its tyrant king is an allusion to king Antiochus IV who waged war against the saints (the believers in the LORD in Jerusalem) and oppressed them. He tried to extend his evil rule during the period of affliction, but was judged in the heavenly court and his evil rule was abruptly cut off. However, the kingship of God through his saints is an everlasting kingship (Daniel 7:22,25-27).

In Daniel 8:3-25 'the beasts' are the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great that split into four kingdoms at Alexander's death (Daniel 8:8,20-21). The tyrant king is again an allusion to Antiochus IV that desecrated the temple in 167 B.C. (Daniel 8:11-12), but eventually was destroyed not by human power (Daniel 8:25).

In Daniel 9:16-17,24-27 'the ruler who came to destroy the city and the sanctuary' (Daniel 9:26) is again an allusion to Antiochus IV. In 171 B.C. he made a covenant with the Reformist Jews, who adopted the heathen Greek culture and enforced it on Jerusalem. Three and a half years later, in 167 B.C., he desecrated the temple. But 'the end of the time' of his evil rule was decreed by God. The temple was re-dedicated in 164 B.C. and Antiochus died in 163 B.C.

In Daniel 11:21-45 'the king who will do what he pleases' (Daniel 11:36) is also an allusion to Antiochus IV. He took action against the believers in the Lord and showed favour to the unbelievers

(Daniel 11:30). He desecrated the temple (Daniel 11:31), but the believers resisted him (Daniel 11:32b-33). He magnified himself against every 'god' and blasphemed the God of gods (Daniel 11:36a). But 'the time of the end' of his evil rule has been determined (by God) and it must take place (Daniel 11:36b). He will come to his end, and no one will help him (Daniel 11:45).

The number in the book of Revelation (11:2-3,9,11; 12:6,14; 13:5).

The book Revelation was written about 97 A.D. These numbers also signify *the apocalyptic period of time* during which Satan and his antichristian political powers (beasts) persecute the Church while the Church proclaims the gospel. It is symbolic of *a period of affliction that seems to extend itself endlessly, yet abruptly and unexpectedly comes to an end!* In the book of Revelation these numbers refer to the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming (12:5-6) to Christ's second coming (11:2-3,11). The whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming (1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26) to Christ's second coming (Matthew 13:39; 24:3; Ephesians 1:10) is called 'the end of the ages'.

The whole New Testament period is expressed in terms of 'days' instead of 'months' (12:6), because like testifying (11:3), feeding is a daily activity (cf. Matthew 6:11). God takes care of his Church every single day!

The whole New Testament period is also expressed in terms of a period of 3½ times, a seemingly endless period (symbolically 7 times) that abruptly and unexpectedly comes to an end (12:14)!

f. The two olive trees and the two lampstands (Revelation 11:4)

In Zechariah 4:1-14, the one lampstand (with seven arms) had two olive tree containers ("sons of oil") standing next to it, feeding oil to the lampstand, so that it would continually burn.

The one lampstand in the Old Testament represented God's people during the Old Testament period (cf. 1:20; Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15-16).

The two olive tree containers represented in general heaven from where all abilities and blessings for God's people must come. But in this vision the two olive tree-containers specifically represented the governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua through whom God worked. They were the representatives of the government leaders and priests through whom the Lord in heaven led his people Israel on earth at that time.

The oil in the olive-tree containers represented the Holy Spirit. In Zechariah, the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit would enable God's civil and spiritual leaders to lead God's people to build the second temple (Zechariah 4:6).

g. The correct explanation concerning Elijah and John the Baptist (Revelation 11:6)

Malachi 3:1-2 says, "See, I (the LORD) will send *my messenger* who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord (the Messiah) you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger (Angel) of the covenant, whom you desire, will come. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap."

This is a prophecy about the sending of the forerunner, John the Baptist to prepare the way of the LORD (Christ)(Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:3). The Lord Jesus Christ would come to the temple to cleanse it, because it was his divinely ordained task. He would cleanse it in a physical way (Matthew 21:12-13) and in a spiritual way (Matthew 3:10-12).

Malachi 4:5-6 says, "See, I will send you *the prophet Elijah* before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

This is not a teaching in the Old Testament that explains the words of Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 11:13-14; 17:10-13). On the contrary, this is a prophecy in the Old Testament which has to be explained in the light of the New Testament revelation. Jesus Christ himself gives the one and only explanation in Matthew 11:13-14 and 17:10-13.

In the context (Malachi 3:1-2) the one that is sent is the forerunner of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist.

In the Old Testament the words “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” from the perspective of the Old Testament prophets refer to the great future events taken together. These great future events are: the first coming of the Lord (Malachi 3:1-2), the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:31), the last battle, the second coming of the Lord, the New Jerusalem on the new earth and the eternal kingdom (Zechariah 14:1-9,20; cf. Revelation 16:14).

Matthew 11:14. Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 prophesied the coming of the Messiah and his forerunner, Elijah. “The prophets prophesied until John the Baptist” means that John the Baptist tied the Old Testament and New Testament periods together and in him Old Testament prophecy would begin to be fulfilled. John literally fulfilled Malachi 3:1 (Luke 1:17; 3:10-14). Elijah and John resembled each other in the sudden character of their appearance, the incisiveness of their message and the preaching of repentance, and the simplicity of their life (Matthew 3:1-12). John was not literally Elijah (John 1:21), but inwardly he was, because he went before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17).

Therefore, in Matthew 11:14 Jesus says: “If you are willing to accept it, he (John the Baptist) is the Elijah who was to come.” Jesus says that John the Baptist was the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Elijah in Malachi 3:1. By these words Jesus means “If the Jews would be willing to accept *the truth that John was truly the prophet of the Most High God, the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah*, there would be hope for the Jews, hope that they would believe that Jesus was the Messiah! Jesus knew that accepting this truth was a matter, not solely of the mind, but also of the will. Therefore Jesus challenged the Jews to ‘hear’ (Matthew 11:15). By remaining unwilling to accept the words of Jesus that John the Baptist was the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Elijah the Jews rejected Jesus as being the Messiah! Jesus clearly teaches that John the Baptist is the forerunner of the Messiah and that he (Jesus) is the Messiah! Today the Jews and some other religions are still expecting some kind of a messiah in the future, because they have deliberately rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah!

Matthew 17:11-13. Jesus confirmed the expectation of the Jews, namely, that Elijah would come before the coming of the Messiah. Jesus confirmed that Elijah had been called to bring about a restoration of all things, which is a reference to his turning the hearts of fathers and children to one another, because their hearts would be turned towards the true biblical expectation of the Messiah. Jesus confirmed that Elijah’s coming was a divine ‘must’, ordered in God’s plan and predicted by God’s prophet, Malachi.

However, the Jews as well as the three disciples of Jesus made a mistake by expecting *the literal Elijah, the Tishbite*, in person. The name ‘Elijah’ means ‘the LORD is my God’. Jesus was speaking of a person who would have the LORD as his God. Jesus was speaking of *the person whom the prophet Malachi was actually referring to and who had already arrived!* Jesus was thinking of John the Baptist, who was his forerunner, who spoke in the spirit and power of the Old Testament prophet Elijah, and who restored many Jews to the biblical expectation of the Messiah and who prepared them for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. *Jesus says that Malachi’s prophecy had actually been fulfilled in John the Baptist.* Jesus Christ speaks the final word about whom the prophecy of Malachi was referring to! While the futurist view interprets the New Testament John in the light of the Old Testament Elijah, Jesus himself interprets the Old Testament Elijah in the light of the New Testament John! The word of Jesus is final (Hebrews 1:1-2)! The futurist view must be rejected.

[h. The breath of life from God that enters dead bodies \(Revelation 11:11\)](#)⁴

In Ezekiel 37:4-5 Israel in exile in Babylon is *symbolised* by a valley full of dry bones. At the prophecy of Ezekiel, breath (spirit) of the Lord entered the dead bones and made them completely alive. In Ezekiel 37:12-14 God gives the explanation. Ezekiel must prophesy to the exiles in Babylon that the Lord is going to bring them back to the land of Israel. Then God will put his Spirit in them and they will live. This is not a prophecy of a physical resurrection of all the dead Jews in history as the futurist view believes, but a prophecy about the return from exile in Babylon and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:24-28). The return from exile began in 538 B.C., but the Holy Spirit was only poured out 560 years later at Pentecost.

⁴ A. Noordzij, Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift, Ezechiël

i. The ark (Revelation 11:19)

According to Jewish tradition, at the time of the exile, Jeremiah hid the ark. But at the appearance of the (Jewish) Messiah, the ark would again be seen in the (Jewish) temple. But Jeremiah did not hide the ark. He prophesied that a time would come that the literal ark would have no more spiritual meaning (Jeremiah 3:16)! The fulfilment of this prophecy came when Jesus Christ died on the cross and thereby fulfilled all the Old Testament shadows including the physical temple and its physical contents (Matthew 27:51; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1).