



## **REVELATION 11-12 STUDY GUIDE**

### **OVERVIEW**

In the recent months, we've been noticing a profound focus in the book of Revelation on Jesus Christ and the comfort it provides to persecuted saints. It's not merely a source of intrigue for our curiosity; rather, it serves as a key for the present-day church. It reveals that Jesus Christ holds sovereignty over the entire globe, guiding the church, influencing worldly governments, and overseeing all affairs. His control is comprehensive.

However, as we widen our perspective globally, we can't overlook the harsh reality that on Christmas 2023, over 140 Nigerian Christians fell victim to violence by Muslim extremists in Africa. Unfortunately, such stories are not isolated incidents. For anyone attentive to the world's events over the past 2,000 years, this is a recurring struggle faced by Christians worldwide. The intensity of persecution varies, but it's a widespread challenge.

For those in Nigeria, grappling with such atrocities, how are the remaining congregants supposed to process this? How should families and friends reflect on events that now mark the pages of Christian history? As God's people cry out, questioning the duration of such bloodshed, God responds.

This is precisely why God provides us with the book of Revelation. It's a book meant to clarify who God is, what he's doing, and, most importantly, to empower us to stand firm in our faith amid persecution.

Whether facing persecution akin to our brothers and sisters in Africa or dealing with localized challenges, the questions persist:

- How do we maintain trust in Christ and cling to him?
- How can our faith be fortified as we continue proclaiming the Word of Christ, anticipating his return and the fulfillment of his promises?

- What are we meant to do, and how should the church think?

I believe Revelation chapter 11 delves into precisely these questions.

As we've journeyed through Revelation, God has been revealing himself and his actions to the seven churches, guiding them through various cycles from Christ's resurrection to his return. In Revelation 11, we find ourselves in the second cycle, marked by seven trumpets warning of imminent judgment, reminiscent of Jericho.

The church, symbolized as the bride of Christ, endures amidst persecution. Tertullian's words come to mind: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Despite numerous declarations of the church's demise, it continues to resurrect. Chapter 11 exemplifies this perseverance!

While many consider Revelation 11 the most challenging chapter due to its mysterious details, it remains clear in its message and application. A cautionary note reminds us not to get lost in the intricacies and miss the primary message. Revelation is not a picture book!

Here's my summary of Revelation 11: God will build his church through his Word and messengers, even in the face of persecution. This echoes the overarching message from Acts onward—that Jesus is constructing his church, and despite the challenges, it will prevail because God's Word, proclaimed by his messengers, will not return void (Isaiah 55!).

### **THREE VIEWPOINTS ON REVELATION 11:1-14**

Now, let's revisit these interpretations, highlighting the three I consider the most reasonable approaches to interpreting this section of Scripture.

**Firstly, there's the perspective that views the events described in Revelation 11 as having occurred in the past, specifically before 70 AD when Rome destroyed the temple.** According to this view, these are accounts of two prophets in Revelation 11 who spoke and performed miracles during that era.

**The second interpretation suggests a future scenario where a temple will be reconstructed in Jerusalem.** In this vision, the distinct prophets who emerge set the stage for events yet to unfold. Their uniqueness is particularly emphasized, adding complexity to the narrative.

**The third approach (of which I am taking) aligns with the overarching method we've applied throughout the Book of Revelation – interpreting it (mainly) symbolically.** In this viewpoint, the events and characters are seen as symbolic representations in apocalyptic literature. The book is perceived as a visual narrative, with John witnessing a vision where symbols convey overarching themes. This interpretation says that the described events are (mainly) figurative of the entire church age, spanning from the resurrection of Christ to his eventual return.

To be fair, I (Darin) have tried to write from the #2 and #3 perspectives on Revelation 11. Perhaps we can find some common ground to God's glory!

## **#2 – FUTURIST / DISPENSATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE ON REVELATION 11:1-14**

God's grand plan keeps moving forward, even when faced with challenges (11:1-2).

After John is given a new mission to "prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings" (10:11), he gets a measuring rod that's like a modern yardstick (11:1). His task: "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there."

This idea is rooted in the Old Testament, specifically Ezekiel 40-42 and maybe Zechariah 2:1-5, focusing on ownership and protection. But in verse 2, John is told not to measure the area outside the temple, given to the nations who will tread on the holy city for 42 months, echoing what Jesus said in Luke 21:24.

Answering key questions: 1) the temple of God, 2) the holy city, and 3) the 42 months:

- The 42 months are likely 3 ½ years, matching Daniel 9:24-27 and Matthew 24:22.
- The holy city is probably Jerusalem for John's audience, though opinions differ.
- Pinpointing the temple involves looking at both historical and spiritual aspects. Historically, there were two temples in Jerusalem; spiritually, it extends to Jesus, the church, and believers as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

In Revelation, the temple is shown as God's presence and even God Himself. While many see it symbolically as the church, this view suggests a future, real temple based on Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

The identity of the worshippers—believing or unbelieving Jews—is uncertain. Some believe in the preservation and salvation of the Jewish people, envisioning their eventual inclusion in spiritual Israel (Rom. 11:26).

Despite the details being unclear, one thing is sure: God's plan is unfolding. Human voices might sound loud for a while, but the Lord God Almighty's plan stands forever.

### **1. God's Promise of Protection to Fulfill Our Ministry (11:3-6)**

When faced with strong opposition, God, in his all-powerful control, permits the holy city to be trodden by nations for 42 months. Despite the challenges, God's place and people endure hostility. At the same time, God appoints two witnesses who embody the spirit of Moses and Elijah. These witnesses fearlessly declare God's word and showcase His power (11:3-6), remaining invincible until they finish their testimony (v. 7).

To understand these verses, let's tackle some basic questions of interpretation:

#### **1. Who are the two witnesses?**

Many ideas have been suggested, ranging from connections to figures in the Old and New Testaments, the witnessing Church, various pairs of witnesses, and symbolic representations like Law and Prophets, Israel and Church, and others. However, it appears most appropriate to see these witnesses as either individuals or a collective group, embodying the essence of Moses and Elijah. They are entrusted with a specific ministry directly from God.

## 2. What will they do?

They will prophesy for 1260 days (3 ½ years) in sackcloth, symbolizing grief, humility, mourning, and repentance.

## 3. How?

They will carry out their mission as two olive trees and two lampstands, serving as symbols of God's presence on earth. This imagery is drawn from the vision in Zechariah 4 involving Joshua and Zerubbabel. In this context, the olive trees supply oil for lamps, symbolizing divine light (Matt. 5:15-16). Their authority mirrors the ministries of Moses and Elijah, displaying supernatural abilities and actions similar to those witnessed in the past.

## 4. When do they come?

During the Great Tribulation or Daniel's 70th week, aligning with the expectation of Moses (Deut. 18:18) and Elijah (Mal. 4:5; cf. Matt. 11:14) appearing at the end of history. Positioned before the God of the earth, they preach His Word and reveal His power, remaining untouchable until their assigned work is finished.

## 2. Expecting Persecution and Death for Truth-Telling (11:7-10)

Anticipating their limited time, the two witnesses, after completing their testimony, face an attack and death at the hands of "the beast." This beast, rising from the abyss, symbolizes the demonic realm, extensively described in Revelation chapters 13 and 17. Identified as the Antichrist by John and "the man of sin" or "the lawless one" by Paul, this Satan-possessed figure will briefly rule as a counterfeit Christ, murdering God's prophets and denying them burial (11:7).

In a symbolic description of the location as "Sodom and Egypt, the place where our Lord was crucified" (v. 8), Sodom represents abomination and wickedness, while Egypt symbolizes idolatry and oppression. Although Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned, the phrase "where the Lord was crucified" suggests a literal identification. Shocking to a Jewish audience, it indicates that Jerusalem's wickedness during this period will rival its actions when crucifying the sinless Son of God. The two witnesses, like their Lord, will face disgrace.

The global response to their deaths is appalling:

- Their bodies are left in the street for 3 ½ days in shameful humiliation.
- People from various backgrounds rejoice, make merry, and even exchange gifts to celebrate their demise (v. 10). A morbid celebration emerges, revealing the depths of human depravity and wickedness.

This gruesome celebration stands as the sole instance of rejoicing in the book of Revelation. It underscores the intensity of humanity's hatred towards God, manifesting in the joy derived from killing His devoted servants—an ominous reminder of the predicted animosity foretold by Jesus (John 15:18).

## 4. Assurance of God's Honor for Faithful Service (11:11-14)

Quoting Deuteronomy 32:35 in Romans 12:19, Paul advises believers never to avenge themselves, leaving vengeance to the wrath of God. The fulfillment of this concept arrives for the earth dwellers in Revelation 11:10 when, after 3 ½ days, "a breath of life from God enters [the witnesses], and they stood on their feet." The 3 ½ days echo the entombment of Jesus, and the breath of life resonates with Ezekiel 37, symbolizing resurrection.

Upon witnessing this miraculous event, "great fear fell on those who saw them," particularly among the diverse "tribes and languages and nations" (11:11). Though understated, the impact is profound. The resurrected witnesses ascend into heaven, visible to all, dispelling notions of a secret rapture. Interpretations vary, with some viewing it as the resurrection of the church, and others as a reference to the conversion of Israel. Regardless, the key takeaway is clear: God honors His faithful saints.

In verse 13a, God's judgment falls on evil Jerusalem, resulting in the death of 7,000 individuals. Verse 13b describes the response of the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem, who become both afraid and glorify the God of heaven. This is seen as genuine conversion, signifying a multitude of Jews turning to God.

Giving glory to the God of heaven is a marker of genuine worship in Revelation and other biblical passages. This passage, then, reflects the salvation of Jews in Jerusalem as God fulfills his promises to Israel (Romans 11:4-5, 26).

God vindicates his faithful servants with grace and mercy while dealing with sinners who reject him through judgment and wrath. 11:14 summarizes the situation, indicating the passing of the second woe (the 6th trumpet) and the imminent arrival of the third woe (the 7th trumpet containing the 7 bowls in Rev. 16).

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### **#3 - IDEALIST PERSPECTIVE ON REVELATION 11:1-14**

#### **11:1-2**

In Revelation 11, John is instructed to measure the temple, altar, and worshippers with a rod (Revelation 11:1-2). This act mirrors Ezekiel's vision of a future temple, where the prophet is directed to measure it (Ezekiel 40-48). The temple in Ezekiel represents a glorious future temple where the Lord's glory will uniquely return (Ezekiel 43:1-5). Drawing a parallel between Ezekiel and John's visions, it's likely that John's measurement symbolizes a metaphorical, present depiction of the church rather than a literal future temple in Jerusalem.

The temple, mentioned 11 times in Revelation, is likely a symbol for the church, aligning with the New Testament's use of "temple" to describe the church (e.g., 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21, 1 Peter 2:5). Measuring symbolizes God's attention to the sacred space where His glory dwells, emphasizing protection and prosperity despite potential attacks.

God instructs John to measure the temple, symbolizing His commitment to preserving the church through tribulation and safeguarding true followers (Revelation 11:1). However, John is directed not to measure the outer court, seemingly representing nominal Christians lacking true spiritual commitment. This aligns with concerns expressed in Revelation and the letters to the seven churches.

The measuring stick serves as a symbolic tool to distinguish between true worshipers in the inner court and those on the fringe of the church. The central theme is discerning between genuine believers marked by faith and repentance and those with a superficial association with the church (compare with Hebrews 10:24-25).

The concept of the altar as the place of worship is introduced, with worshippers identified as Jews and Gentiles united in one body. This imagery symbolically represents the church as a place of unified worship. Revelation 11:2 further indicates that while the inner sanctuary is protected, the outer court is exposed and vulnerable to attack.

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### **11:3 – 1,260 days**

The duration of 42 months, equating to 1,260 days or three and a half years, is not meant for precise calculation but is linked to a period of tribulation prophesied in Daniel chapter 9 (Daniel 9:27). This tribulation spans from the resurrection of Christ to His return, signifying judgment on unbelievers and the sustaining of the faithful throughout Israel's history. The reference to 42 months also evokes the ministry of Elijah, emphasizing a connection to Old Testament themes (James 5:17).

This timeframe appears elsewhere as "1,260 days" or "time, times, and half a time." These figures symbolize the period of trial for God's people, drawing from Daniel's prophecies.

The connection with Daniel adds depth. In Daniel 12:7, similar language describes a time of fulfillment for prophetic visions. Revelation echoes this, emphasizing the metaphorical nature of the "42 months." It's not just about a literal duration; it represents the enduring theme of God's people facing trials.

In essence, Revelation employs symbolic language to convey profound truths. So, when we read about numbers or events, it's crucial to understand the literary style of apocalyptic writing. It's not denying truth but presenting it in a unique, vivid way.

### **Witnesses**

When we encounter seemingly extreme descriptions, like witnesses breathing fire, it's essential to grasp the metaphorical nature of these images. Similarly, the numbers in Revelation, including the famous "42 months," aren't meant to be taken literally.

The 42 months symbolize a period of tribulation where God's people are spiritually safeguarded. The connection to Moses and Elijah, considered as the two witnesses, adds depth to this symbolism. In Numbers 33, Moses led the Israelites through 42 stages in the wilderness— a metaphor for testing and tribulation.

Elijah, too, played a role in a period of trial lasting three and a half years, reflected in Luke 4:25. These instances emphasize that 42 signifies a metaphorical time of tribulation, not a strict, literal duration.

Returning to Revelation 12:6, we encounter the metaphor of the woman in the desert for 1,260 days. This parallels the earlier imagery of the temple and the holy city being trampled. In both cases, God's people experience safety and protection amid challenges.

The emphasis on spiritual safety might seem undervalued compared to physical protection, but enduring spiritually is no small feat. The church has persevered for over 2,000 years, a testament to God's preservation (Matthew 16:18-19). The gospel has endured, and the continuity of faith across generations highlights the Church's safety, even amid external challenges (Jude 3-4).

Moving back to verse 3, the focus remains on two pictures: the temple and city in verses 1 and 2, now mirrored with these two witnesses. These witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth for 1,260 days, symbolize the church. Witnessing isn't just about sharing the gospel; it encompasses living a testimony without compromise.

Comparing verses 11:7 and 13:7, it becomes clear that the "two witnesses" represent the broader body of believers. The metaphorical nature of these images adds depth to the understanding of God's people facing trials and triumphs throughout history.

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### ***So, who exactly are these messengers?***

One possibility is that they are two Christian prophets who passed away just before the temple's destruction in 70 AD. Another option is that they are two Christian prophets anticipated to appear before the second coming. Some speculate it could be Moses and Elijah returning for a second act, while others suggest Enoch and Elijah making a comeback. Alternatively, there's the view that these are unique prophets raised in the last days, performing extraordinary deeds. The third perspective, which I'm proposing, is that they symbolize a church acting as Christian witnesses from the resurrection to the return.

The mention of "two olive trees and two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (11:4) may sound familiar, drawing parallels with Old Testament characters.

--**Zechariah** is referenced in 11:4, associated with two olive trees and two candlesticks (Zechariah 4:2-3, 4:11-14).

--**Elijah** is alluded to in the ability to shut heaven and cause drought, similar to his actions in 1 Kings 17:1 and 1 Kings 18:1.

--**Moses** is mentioned in the power over waters and plagues (Exodus 7:17-21), and

--**Jeremiah** is also cited in verse five regarding the fire proceeding from their mouths (Jeremiah 5:14).

These four figures—Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah—are depicted as faithful evangelists, despite facing challenges. They served as witnesses in sackcloth, relying on the Holy Spirit, as illustrated in Zechariah's symbolism of the candlestick representing the church and the oil symbolizing the Holy Spirit. The

emphasis is on the church prevailing against the world through the Holy Spirit, not by human might or persuasion.

John encourages believers to follow the examples of these evangelists, being witnesses to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in their generation. The call is to be prayerful and burdened for evangelism, presenting the gospel with an urgency that includes repentance and a call to turn to God.

The choice of two witnesses also draws from the Old Testament practice of requiring two or three witnesses in an official court of law (Deut. 19:15). This echoes the great prophetic witnesses of Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets (Matt. 17:1-5). Just as God sent two angels to testify to the resurrection and return in Luke 24 (Luke 24:1-8) and Acts 1 (Acts 1:9-11), respectively, these two witnesses symbolically represent the church.

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### **11:4-6**

These witnesses, you see, are adorned in sackcloth, a distinctive attire signifying mourning over sin, reminiscent of Elijah and his fulfillment, John the Baptist. As representatives of the church, these witnesses embody a call to repentance and a recognition of impending judgment.

Clothed in sackcloth, these prophets deliver a stern message: judgment is coming. Their authority is unmistakable, serving as ambassadors of God, echoing the truth of 2 Corinthians 5. The church, as portrayed by these witnesses, speaks on behalf of God, holding the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:18) and faithfully proclaiming the received message to the glory of God and the good of the nations.

The authority vested in these witnesses is intricately tied to the gospel message, validated through the resurrection of Jesus. Their role is not self-serving; instead, they act as vessels for God's authoritative declaration. They also fulfill the role of prophets, as indicated in 11:3 & 10. This prophetic aspect finds its roots in Joel 2, where the Holy Spirit empowers God's people to prophesy in the last days (Joel 2:28). This prophecy is fulfilled in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, showing the church's responsibility to authentically declare the gospel.

The **fire-breathing aspect of these witnesses** finds its counterpart in Jeremiah 5, where God tells the prophet Jeremiah that his words in his mouth are like fire. Just as Jeremiah proclaimed impending judgment, these witnesses mirror his role, heralding words of judgment for those who reject Christ.

**Miracle-working is another facet of these witnesses.** While miracles occur in contemporary times, their significance here is rooted in Old Testament parallels. These miracles echo the ministries of Elijah, who withheld rain, and Moses, who called down plagues on Egypt. In this symbolic sense, the church aligns with these Old Testament figures, foreshadowing the anticipation of impending judgment.

Despite their mourning, authoritative proclamation, and miraculous acts, these witnesses face persecution. In 11:7, we learn that after finishing their testimony, they are attacked by the beast from the bottomless pit,



conquered, and killed. This persecution aligns with the broader biblical narrative, emphasizing that those who boldly proclaim the gospel may face opposition and even death for their testimony of Jesus.

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### **11:7-9**

After completing their testimony, the two witnesses are attacked and killed by a beast. This stark turn challenges the prevailing theme of victory in Revelation. The Greek word used for "overpower" is "nikaō," echoing the overarching theme of conquest and victory in Revelation. The church, though victorious in its mission, might face persecution and death.

Now, turning our attention to the beast, we'll explore more about it in chapters 13 and 17. The beast's primary objective is to tempt believers to deny Jesus, resorting to vengeance if they resist. This adversarial force, making war on the two witnesses, draws an allusion to Daniel 7:21, where Daniel foresees a horn (representing the beast) making war with the saints and prevailing over them.

Verse 7 might signify a period just before the end, where Satan gains unforeseen power and authority, leading to a time of great tribulation. This aligns with predictions in Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2. The church might face a moment where it appears to be overcome by external forces, challenging the notion of continuous triumph.

Verse 8 describes a somber scene – the bodies of the witnesses lying in the street for three and a half days, with people from every corner of the world witnessing the spectacle. This imagery suggests a time of intense contempt and ridicule towards the church, mirroring the humiliation experienced by Jesus in His crucifixion.

The metaphors of "Sodom and Egypt" winning indicate that, just as Jerusalem seemingly triumphed by crucifying Jesus, the church might face a moment of apparent defeat. This period of shame and scorn will be a prelude to the ultimate victory that follows.

Persecution, as prophesied in Daniel and echoed by John, may not be lethal for every Christian, but those who seek to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will face adversity, as Paul conveyed to Timothy. This opposition ranges from mockery and job loss to disownment by friends and family or, in extreme cases, martyrdom. Christian history bears witness to the countless individuals who have faced death for their faith, akin to Stephen in Acts chapter 8.

The image of their bodies lying in the street symbolizes shame and humiliation in the ancient world. It signifies that God's people, throughout history, have been slain without honor. Nero's atrocities against Christians, ISIS beheadings, and the North Korean oppression of Christians in concentration camps are modern parallels to this historical mistreatment of God's people in a world that rejects Jesus.

The opposition faced by these witnesses is likened to that of Sodom, a city forsaking God for evil, and Egypt, a place of oppression against God's people. The reference to their Lord being crucified in Jerusalem highlights a personal connection to the suffering of the church worldwide. As Jesus warned, a servant is not above his master, and if they hated the master, they will also hate his followers.

In verse 9, a disturbing scene unfolds as people from various nations gaze at the dead bodies of the witnesses for three and a half days, refusing them burial. The earth's inhabitants rejoice, exchange gifts, and make merry over the perceived victory. The defeated corpses of the prophets become a cause for celebration, marking a day of collective jubilation. The suppression of the truth and the silencing of these prophets bring joy to those who reject their message.

This portrayal serves as a poignant reminder for the churches enduring suffering, as Revelation is not merely a future prophecy but a source of encouragement for believers facing persecution throughout history. The defeated witnesses, seen globally, were once thought to be a live-streamed event, symbolizing the widespread impact of their suppression.

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### **FAITH LESSONS FOR REVELATION 11:1-14:**

#### **1. Accept the Church's Vulnerability:**

Being part of the church means facing opposition. If everyone loves the church, something might be off. Jesus warned us of challenging days, so when trials come, remember Revelation 11 - the two witnesses' death and the trampling of the holy city. Difficulties are part of the journey, and don't be surprised if being true to your faith brings challenges (2 Tim. 3:12). It's not all smooth sailing, and that's okay.

#### **2. Believe in the Church's Invincibility:**

Despite the challenges, trust that the best days for the church are still ahead. While the world may present difficulties, remember that the church has faced adversity throughout history and has prevailed. It's not about blindly hoping for an easy road; it's about having faith that, ultimately, the church will overcome.

#### **3. Genuine followers of Christ must expect challenges and suffering.**

The Christian journey involves sharing in Christ's experiences, from crucifixion to resurrection and ascension. Second, nominal believers, those just going through the motions, are urged to embrace true repentance, faith, and a personal relationship with Christ.

#### **4. Nominal believers, like Gentiles in Herod's temple, may outwardly associate with the church, but true participation and a living relationship with God are crucial.**

Mere attendance and rituals won't suffice. The call is for sincere repentance, faith, and a personal connection with Christ.

## **REVELATION 11:15-19 OVERVIEW**

For nearly two millennia, Christians have recited a prayer imparted to us by Jesus: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). In Revelation 11:15-19, the long-awaited day arrives. The immortal words echoed by George Frederick Handel in his "Messiah" (1741) declare, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Delving into the intricate details, it's crucial to recognize that the seventh seal encompasses the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet encapsulates the seven bowls. In a profound sense, the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh bowl collectively usher us towards the end. To articulate it succinctly: the seventh seal brings us to "the end," the seventh trumpet to "the very end," and the seventh bowl to "the very, very, end."

In verse 15, the tone of the seventh trumpet reverberates with loud voices in heaven, heralding the glorious proclamation that the kingdom of God has manifested on earth, and our God and His Christ will reign eternally. Psalm 2 now realizes its eschatological fulfillment. The subsequent verse (16) witnesses the redeemed, symbolized by the 24 elders, once again prostrating in an attitude of praise and worship, reminiscent of earlier passages (cf. 5:8, 14; 7:11, later 19:4).

Verses 17-18 unveil the song they sing. In prior passages (4:10-11, 5:8-14), they celebrated the Creator and the Lamb who redeems nations. Now, their gratitude extends to the God who concludes history climactically, initiating His cosmic and eternal reign. The song commences by magnifying the person of our God— the "Lord God Almighty" (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). He is unmatched in power and omnipotence. The phrase "and who is to come" is omitted, signifying His arrival and the inauguration of His reign.

Verse 18 mirrors Psalm 2, declaring God's righteous judgment and wrath upon a defiant world. The nations face His anger, and the spiritually separated (the dead) await judgment at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:15), evaluated based on their deeds. In contrast, rewards await those who love and follow the Lord and the Lamb, identified in five categories: servants, prophets, saints, those who fear His name, and the small and great. The song concludes by asserting that the "Lord God Almighty" will obliterate "the destroyers of the earth," not environmental polluters but those who corrupt the earth with sin.

Verse 19 concludes the chapter with heaven's response to the preceding song. The heavenly temple, distinct from the earthly counterpart, opens with the Ark of the Covenant visible. Through the Lamb's redemptive work, access to the Ark is no longer restricted to the high priest. As a kingdom of priests redeemed by the Lamb, all believers enjoy the fullness of God's presence and covenant promises. This glorious vision is accompanied by ominous signs of judgment: flashes of lightning, rumblings of thunder, an earthquake, and severe hail. God, faithful in grace and mercy, is also faithful in sending judgment and wrath. Knowing and

loving Jesus results in grace, while rejecting the Savior leads to wrath. A pivotal question emerges: are you God's friend or God's enemy? Few questions hold greater significance.

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### **REVELATION 11 QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION**

1. Think about the chapter as a whole. What images here must be symbolic? Which are possibly literal?
  
2. Consider verses 1 and 2. What is John told to measure? What is he told not to measure? In verse 2, what is the explanation given for his not measuring? What does this tell you about the concept behind the measurement? Ezekiel 40-48 records the measuring of a temple (I don't suggest you read all that!); see also 2 Corinthians 6:16 and Zechariah chapter 2 for measuring the temple. Daniel 9:25- 27 and 12:7-12 mention similar periods of time to the 42 months referred to here.
  
3. List the characteristics of the witnesses, as described in verses 3-6. Are you reminded of any Old Testament characters? (No, I'm not going to give it away by listing verse references!) Why are they described as olive trees and lampstands? What useful substance do olive trees yield? Think about this, then look at Zechariah 4.
  
4. How can you tell in verse 7 that God remains in control, even though His witnesses are killed? Look back to chapter 9 for the abyss.
  5. What was characteristic of Sodom and Egypt? Why does God use these terms for (literal or figurative) Jerusalem? How would you describe the reaction of the residents of this city to the death of the witnesses? To their resurrection?
  
6. Look at the end of chapter 6 and the end of chapter 9; compare those sections to verse 13. When the people give "glory to the God of heaven," are they repenting and turning to God?

### **REVELATION 12 OVERVIEW**

After explaining the seven trumpet judgments but before talking about the seven bowls, John takes a break with three extra chapters (Revelation 12-14). Chapter 12 dives into the spiritual clash between the world and the church. The main point is that while Satan causes trouble for God's people, Christ has already beaten him decisively. This victory is something we're part of, even when we face tough times and persecution.

If you ever wondered about the real fight between Satan and God's people, Revelation 12 makes it crystal clear. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:12 said our struggle isn't just against people but also against powerful dark forces. Revelation 12 shows this battle using symbols and vivid images typical of apocalyptic writing.

In a nutshell, Revelation 12 says that even though Satan is a big troublemaker for God's people, Christ has already won against him. And we get to share in that victory, even when things get tough with suffering and death.

### ***The Woman and the Dragon (vv. 1-6)***

The woman described in Revelation 12:1-6 has been subject to numerous interpretations. Some suggest she represents the first woman, Eve, while others argue she symbolizes Mary, the mother of Jesus (Gen. 3:15). Various cults propose their own figures, like Christian Scientists who identify her as Mary Baker Eddy. Another viewpoint sees her as a representation of either Old Testament Israel or the New Testament Church.

The interpretation presented here suggests that the woman symbolizes the believing messianic community, encompassing both Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church. The 12 stars in her crown are thought to represent the 12 tribes of Israel and the continuity of true Israel in the 12 apostles of the Church.

The woman, pregnant and enduring birth pangs, signifies the anticipation of the Messiah's birth in the Old Testament and the symbolic reference to the persecution of God's people during that period (Luke 2:25-38). The suffering mentioned in verse 2 indicates a broader view of persecution (Matt. 8:6,29; 14:24; Mark 5:7; 6:48; Luke 8:28; 2 Peter 2:8).

Revelation 12:3 introduces a great red dragon, typically symbolizing Satan, with seven heads, seven diadems, and ten horns. The numbers emphasize the fullness of his oppressive power. The stars thrown to the earth in verse 4 are likely a representation of Satan's persecution of God's people, possibly martyrdom, rather than a pre-creation angelic rebellion.

The second half of verse 4 describes Satan's attempt to kill Jesus upon His birth, likely referring to King Herod's massacre of infants in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16-18). Verse 5 provides a brief overview of Christ's life, emphasizing His resurrection and ascension, ruling the nations with a rod of iron (John 3:13; 8:14; 13:3; 16:5,28; Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:5,17-18; 2:8).

Verse 6 depicts the covenant community of believers post-resurrection, enduring persecution symbolically represented by the woman's flight into the wilderness for 1,260 days, a proverbial reference to the present church age's time of oppression and battle with the forces of evil. This period extends from the first coming of Christ to His second coming at the end of history (Rev. 11; 13).

### ***War in Heaven and Victory on Earth (vv. 7-11)***

John introduces Revelation 12:7-11 to elucidate the reason behind the Woman (representing the Church) fleeing into the wilderness (verses 1-6). The unleashed fury of Satan against the Church stems from his loss of heavenly position and power reduction (Revelation 12:7-9).

John contemplates the nature of the "war" and the possible "weapons" employed, questioning if spiritual beings engaged in a form of contact leading to injury or death. He explores whether the term "war" is metaphorical, aiming to convey a theological concept and, if so, what that concept might be.

Regarding the expulsion of Satan and his demons from heaven, three evangelical perspectives emerge:

--(1) Dispensationalists link it to a future event during the seven-year "great tribulation" (Revelation 12:7-9).

--(2) Some view it as timeless, lacking a specific historical moment, portraying Satan's downfall symbolically.

--(3) I say that that the defeat occurred in the first century through Jesus' incarnation, life, death, and resurrection (Revelation 12:10). Michael and his angels expel Satan post-Jesus' victory, an idea hinted at in Luke 10:18. Christians perpetuate this victory by standing on the achievements of the cross and proclaiming Jesus' authority.

The war was triggered by Jesus Christ's triumph over sin and death, with Michael and his angels enforcing the results of this victory against Satan and his demons. Satan's accusations lose legal and moral force after the cross, symbolized by his being "thrown down" from heaven (Revelation 12:10). This signifies not a literal change in dwelling place but the breaking of Satan's power through Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. Satan can no longer accuse God's people, as their sins have been fully expiated. Any accusations are countered by Jesus' intercessory ministry (Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2).

The term "devil" in verse 9, used 35 times, means "slanderer" or "accuser." Satan aims to defame by spreading false and malicious reports to God, about believers, and even to believers about themselves. The title "Satan" (used 52 times) means "adversary" or one who opposes. The victory over Satan signifies the inauguration of God's kingdom and Christ's authority (Revelation 12:10).

Verse 11 reassures God's people that suffering or martyrdom at the hands of the devil is not their defeat but his ironic defeat. It highlights a victory, affirming the presence of God's kingdom here and now.

### ***What does it mean to "conquer" the Devil?***

It doesn't imply we annihilate him, at least not until Revelation 20. It's crucial to recognize that the triumph of these believers only amplifies Satan's fury directed at the earth (verse 12)! It doesn't mean we permanently halt his assault on us (consider Jesus after his temptation). It doesn't mean Satan is incapable of causing harm, whether through persecution (refer to Revelation 2:10; 6:9-11). So, what does it mean?

Overcoming the Devil happens when you steadfastly stand in your faith in Christ, gaining strength to reject sin. How is this achieved? In Ephesians 6:16, Paul mentions the "shield of faith," guarding against the "flaming darts of the evil one." What are these projectiles that Satan hurls at us?

They encompass sudden eruptions in our minds, vile images and thoughts that shock and defy our deepest desires. Paul may also refer to words and images that disgust us, violating our God-given sense of morality. They may include blasphemous thoughts about Jesus, disturbing sexual images, suicidal urges, violent fantasies involving family or friends, rebellious impulses against God, family, or church, subtle insinuations against God's character, and false guilt feelings.

Often, these occurrences are reported while reading the Bible, praying, or praising God, intensifying feelings of guilt and worthlessness. How does faith act as a shield against these "flaming darts"?

### **Consider these points:**

**--First, placing faith in God's superior pleasures extinguishes Satan's attacks.** Moses, in Hebrews 11:24-26, resisted Egypt's temptations through faith in the coming Christ and the rewards of obedience.

**--Second, faith in God's steadfast promises shields against Satan's lies.** When Satan suggests God no longer cares, faith asserts God's immutability and eternal concern.

**--Third, when Satan questions God's love due to failures, faith asserts God's unchanging love demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice.** The shield of faith functions when we say, "I'll believe God, finding great gain in godliness, resisting your temptations."

The shield of faith operates as we uphold the truth of Scriptures against Satan's lies. Satan gains advantage by sowing doubt about our relationship with God. Ephesians 6:17 instructs us to wear the "helmet of salvation," living in the assurance expressed in Romans 8:1,31-38 and Hebrews 13:5-6.

Satan cannot alter our salvation, as nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38-39). However, he aims to erode our assurance, convincing us that our standing with God fluctuates with our spiritual battles' success or failure.

***By what means did they (we) overcome him?***

John addresses this question by highlighting three key factors.

**Firstly, they conquered Satan "by the blood of the Lamb" (v. 11a).** This is achieved by standing on the truth of Romans 8:1, acknowledging no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. It involves proclaiming the truth of Colossians 2:13-15, emphasizing Christ's triumph over Satan through the cross, and trusting in the securing of the Holy Spirit's presence and power by Jesus' cross and resurrection. The term "the blood of the Lamb" signifies Jesus as Lord and Savior, triumphant over sin and death.

Essentially, Satan's only chance for victory in your life is the presence of unforgiven sin. Yet, Christ's blood cleanses us from guilt, removing any legal basis for Satan's attacks (1 John 1:7).

**Secondly, they conquered Satan "by the word of their testimony."** This starts with confidently proclaiming our identity in Christ. Satan's primary weapon is deceit, convincing you of what you are not and what you cannot achieve. Respond to this slander by firmly standing on the truth of 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 2:1-7, 5:8, 1 John 3:1-3, etc. The "word" of our "testimony" is expressed through heartfelt worship and prayer. Satan pays no heed to physical elements like volume or rhythm but submits to the proclamation of truth, the presence of the Spirit, and the authenticity of heart devotion to Jesus.

**Thirdly, they conquered Satan by not loving their lives "even unto death."** This involves a value judgment, prioritizing Jesus over earthly welfare, pleasures, convenience, and more. It signifies the willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of Christ, loving Jesus more than life itself. Satan has no chance against hearts devoted to Jesus, hearts willing to die rather than yield to worldly influences.

In summary, Satan only prevails when we love our lives more than we love God. Prioritizing Jesus above all deprives Satan of any legal right to our hearts and minds, undermining his power to influence our souls. When Jesus is the ultimate priority, there's nothing in our lives for Satan to latch onto or use as a power base.

***The Church, the Dragon, and Divine Protection (vv. 12-17)***

Verses 12-13 continue the narrative from verse 6, where, after failing to destroy the "child" (Jesus), Satan redirects his anger and destructive focus toward the "woman," representing the people of God or the Church (Revelation 12:6).



In verse 14, there is a vivid and clearly symbolic depiction of how God intervenes to safeguard His people against Satan's assaults in the present church age. Notably, some, like Hal Lindsey and other dispensationalists, believe this event is yet to unfold and is associated with the Great Tribulation. Lindsey suggests a massive airlift of fleeing Jews, speculating that U.S. Sixth Fleet aircraft may facilitate it, linking it to the national symbol of the eagle (Revelation 12:14).

The devil's persecution of the church is described through the imagery of water pouring from the serpent's mouth in an attempt to drown the woman. This metaphor of an overflowing flood is a recurring motif in the Old Testament, signifying persecution of God's people by their adversaries and divine judgment against those who resist God (2 Samuel 22:5; Psalms 18:4, 16; 46:3; 66:12; 69:1-2, 14-15; 124:4-5; 144:7-8, 11; Isaiah 43:2; Isaiah 8:7-8; 17:12-13; Jeremiah 46:8; 47:2; 51:55; Hosea 5:10).

It's possible that the water pouring from the serpent's "mouth" symbolizes Satan's efforts to destroy the church through deception and false teachings, as seen in various historical instances and supported by biblical references (Revelation 2:14-16, 20-22; 3:15-17; Romans 16:17-20; 1 Timothy 4:1; 5:15; 2 Timothy 2:23-26). Throughout church history, heresies have emerged, posing threats to the purity and existence of the church, ranging from Gnosticism to Darwinian evolution.

Drawing a parallel with the biblical accounts, such as God's defeat of Pharaoh's armies at the Red Sea and the swallowing of dissenting individuals by the earth (Exodus 15:12; Numbers 16:12-14; Deuteronomy 11:5-6; Psalms 106:17), emphasizes divine intervention against opposition to God's purposes.

Now, the devil's fury and wrath are directed at the "rest of her offspring," which includes believers. Satan harbors intense animosity toward the Church and despises those who "keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17).

### ***Conclusion***

For over 2,000 years, the church, representing the people of God, has been embroiled in a relentless war with Satan. The fact that "he knows that his time is short" (Revelation 12:12b) serves as a staggering testament to the wickedness of our Enemy. Despite the awareness of his impending defeat, Satan persists in assaulting, accusing, and employing every tactic to undermine our faith in Jesus. Our assurance of victory is not rooted in our righteousness or spirituality but in the triumph secured for us by Jesus, whose cleansing blood washes away all sin. Praise be to God!

## REVELATION 12 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about the chapter as a whole. What images here must be symbolic? Are there any that are possibly literal?
  
2. Who does the child represent? How do you know (see Psalm 2:7-10)? Who does the dragon represent? How do you know? Consider also Ezekiel 29:1-7 and 32:1-10, noting that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (used in the 1st century), the word translated "monster" in 29:3 and 32:2 is the same as the word translated "dragon" in Revelation 12.
  
3. The woman is harder to interpret. Who or what might the woman represent? List her characteristics as described in this chapter. Don't forget verse 17. See Genesis 37:9-11, Romans 9:1-8, Galatians 4:26-28. Given these Scriptures and the characteristics of the woman, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the different possible interpretations?
  
4. How would you describe the wilderness or desert described in verses 6 and 14? Try to put yourself in the position of someone hearing this in 95AD, who is familiar with the Old Testament. See, for example, Exodus 16:10-12 and 1 Kings 19:1-8.
  
5. Consider the battle between Michael and Satan. Note that this may, but need not, follow the events of 12:1-6 chronologically. For other references to Michael, see Daniel 10:13, 10:21, 12:1, and Jude 1:9. What does Satan's being thrown down represent? These verses may or may not help: Job 1 & 2, Zechariah 3:1-2, Matthew

28:18, John 12:31, 16:11, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:8. Is this the same event or something different from what Jesus describes in Luke 10:18?

6. In verse 11, who has conquered? By what means? What are the implications for us today? Note that the word translated "conquered" is the same as the word translated "overcome" in each of the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3. 7. Consider verses 13-16. Look at Exodus 19:3-6, Deuteronomy 32:9-13, Isaiah 40:27-31. Recall the images used in Ezekiel 29 and 32, which we looked at in question 2. How does this section speak to us today? What is Satan able to do to the woman and her "other offspring" (verse 17)? What is he not able to do? Recall our discussion of the witnesses in chapter 11.