

An Angel and the Little Scroll, The Two Witnesses

Revelation 10-11

MPS Jesus stands sovereign over all creation to judge, but God guards His people for a faithful witness to all nations.
OBJ Every person should trust Jesus because of Four Realities of the final judgement that prepare Christians to remain faithful.

INTRO Interludes in music are “an intervening or interruptive period or event made to allow listeners to recalibrate and create a thematically related bridge between songs”. They are typically used to add depth and connectivity to a song or album. Sometimes, the interlude is more memorable than the full-length songs, and it’s worth examining why. In literature they often give reprieve to the main storyline by introducing secondary themes that offer greater detail or further information for understanding and emphasizing the main message. **Why do I mention interludes here?**

Revelation 10-11:14 is an interlude prior to the Seventh Trumpet, like the interlude prior to the Seventh Seal. “After the parenthesis of chapters 10 and 11, which treats the church in the last days, John will turn again to prophesy against society in its hostility toward God.”¹ But in this interlude we learn important details regarding those who are still alive in the last days, both Christians and non-Christians, and what the end will look like. “As with the other interludes in Revelation, 10:1–11:13 clarifies the role of God’s people and offers perspective and encouragement to help them endure faithfully.”²

Christian, are you ready to learn your role when the events of the end of the age occur, to know how to live your life now?

Jesus stands sovereign over all creation to judge, but God guards His people for a faithful witness to all nations.

10:1-7

*Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ²He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. ⁴And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.” ⁵And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ⁷but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. **Revelation 10:1-7***

John is now back on earth. A mighty angel comes down from heaven with an appearance that reminds us of God’s promise and mighty power. He is wrapped in a cloud with a rainbow over his head, his face like the sun and his legs like pillars of fire. The cloud and fire were how God led the Children of Israel after Egyptian captivity, and the rainbow God’s promise given to Noah when after the flood. The angel holds a scroll characterized by “little” and sets his right foot on the sea and his left on land. His voice is like a lion’s roar and when he calls out seven thunders sound off. John immediately begins to record what he heard, what the thunders sounded, but the angel told him to seal it up instead. Then he raises his hand, a movement signifying authority, and swore that there would be no more delay, that when the seventh trumpet sounds God’s mystery would be fulfilled. **The only swearing of an oath in Revelation is God’s promise to no longer delay.**³

¹ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 211.

² J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 142.

³ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 144. Duvall notes, “This is the only place in Revelation where anyone swears an oath, and the background is Daniel 12, where the prophet asks a question about the end of time: “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?” (Dan. 12:6; cf. the martyrs’ question in Rev. 6:10).”



One image could scarcely hold more of God's promise and mighty power to reveal more of His plan. This angel is the representative of Jesus who holds an open scroll which "reveals how God plans to defeat evil, rescue his people, and transform his creation, and what all this means for John and the rest of God's people on earth."⁴ When the seven thunders roar, representing perfection of judgment, they are not to be recorded, but only the promise of no more delay and God's mystery revealed. This mystery is not unknown, but only not yet fully revealed as it "refers to the purpose of God as revealed in the consummation of human history."⁵ God's wisdom concealed is God's timing during which His promise proves sufficient for us, while God's patience ends and the time for final judgment is upon all.⁶ **God has revealed that He will judge, and through that judgment save those who trust in Him.**

One great challenge of our faith is trusting God completely by His promise, even when things that are not yet for us remain a mystery to us. (Deut 29:29) But we are not without, for we have His promise here that there will be no more delay. God is gracious even in His mystery, that what we do not know we do not need to know but can trust His promise that we have all we need to know to trust and rest in Him.

OBJ Four Realities of the final judgement that prepare Christians to remain faithful and reveal why all should trust in Jesus.

#1: God's promise is sufficient to source faith for obedience, even as we await the timing of His mystery.

Have you learned to rest in God's promise, so you do not question His mystery, but trust to obey what He has revealed to us?

TRANS The voice speaks again to John.
10:8-11

⁸Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."⁹So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."¹⁰And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

John is told to take the scroll and eat it. The angel tells John that the scroll will make his stomach bitter but will be sweet as honey in his mouth. And when John eats it, it was as the angel said, sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. Then he was told he must prophecy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings. The scroll was a message for John to prophecy of "God's plan to judge evil, redeem his people, and transform his creation, a plan that will soon come to completion."⁷ This serves as John's commissioning to prophecy. And John found the message was as the angel said, bittersweet. God's people "are not delivered 'from martyrdom and death, but through martyrdom and death to a glorious resurrection.' The prospect of no further delay in the fulfillment of God's eternal purposes is sweet indeed. That it will involve a bitter prelude is hard to swallow."⁸ God is sovereign and will complete His plan soon, but His people will endure suffering to finalize His purposes in the world.⁹

OBJ The Second Reality of the final judgement is...

⁴ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 143.

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 207.

⁶ John MacArthur, [Because the Time Is Near](#), (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 176. MacArthur states, "The time of God's patience is seen as having ended. The time for the final acts of judgment is seen as being at hand. The time anticipated in the disciples' questions recorded in Matthew 24:3 and Acts 1:6 has come."

⁷ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 144.

⁸ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 210.

⁹ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 145. Duvall writes, "The sweetness represents God's sovereign control over history and the promise to complete his plan very soon. He will conquer evil once and for all, vindicate his people, and bring forth a new heaven and new earth. That good news is about as sweet as it gets. The bitterness afterward, however, represents the suffering and persecution that God's people will endure as necessary aspects of finalizing God's purposes for this world (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:14)."



#2: God is sovereign both in His judgment of sin and to demonstrate His resurrection power through the endurance of His people.

Christian, you need not fear persecution and suffering. We know it is God's plan but cannot threaten His power. The apostles rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 5:41) Paul exhorts the Philippians (1:29) that *"for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also to suffer for his sake."* Later he states his desire to share in Christ's sufferings that he might also experience His resurrection power. (Phil 3:10) He counsels a Timothy, *"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,"* (2 Tim 3:12). God is working in all our suffering to produce His likeness and hope in us that will not disappoint. (Rom 5:3-5) And we must remember that Jesus told the church at Smyrna, *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Rev 2:10) **Christians live prepared by faith to endure any persecution and suffering that comes in following Jesus.**

Christian, is your faith being strengthened to trust God even to endure persecution?

TRANS Revelation 11 reveals for us what we have just learned.
11:3-14

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, ²but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. ³And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. ⁶They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. ⁷And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, ⁸and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. ⁹For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, ¹⁰and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹²Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. ¹³And at 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.

¹⁴The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

John is given a rod to measure the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there. A rod was a stiff reed that served as a common tool for measurement in that day. But he is directed not to measure the outer court because that is given over to the nations who will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

Jesus is the one directing John, and the purpose of the measuring is not to calculate size but to define the parameters and signify ownership.¹⁰ There is debate over who is in the inner court, whether it is Israel or all of God's people on the earth. I believe that represents the latter, and not an actual building, because those who are sealed by Holy Spirit become the

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *Because the Time Is Near*, 176. MacArthur writes, "John's measuring is better understood as signifying ownership, defining the parameters of God's possessions (21:25; Zechariah 2:1-5)." Though I do not agree with this aspect as MacArthur continues, "It is best to see it as God's measuring off Israel for salvation and His special protection, preservation, and favor. The prophecies yet to be given to John will distinguish between God's favor toward Israel and His wrath on the world."



Temple of the living God.¹¹ Jesus commands John to measure the inner court to establish God's special protection during judgment, to signify that He knows His people and where they are located.¹²

The reality that God knows His church is comforting because he says the nations will trample the holy city for forty-two months. This trampling is how the wicked will rule the world, which means there will be great persecution. The outer court represents the church in the world, that while Christians are not subject to judgment they will suffer persecution.¹³ Understanding that the temple and the outer court represent the church means that "during the difficult period lying immediately ahead the people of God will be kept safe from demonic assault although they will suffer at the hands of the unbelieving world."¹⁴ A limit is placed on the pagan hostility that God will allow Christians to suffer.¹⁵ [God acts to preserve His people by identifying them for protection. And this is great comfort for all Christians.](#)

[.3-6] Two witnesses appear next who are granted authority from Jesus to prophecy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.(.3) These witnesses are described as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord.(.4) Fire from their mouth that consumes their foes protects them so they can fulfill their witness.(.5) Their power resembles Elijah and Moses(.6): *"the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire."*

While not everyone agrees on the identity of these two witnesses, it is most likely "that they are not two individuals but a symbol of the witnessing church in the last tumultuous days before the end of the age."¹⁶ They prophesy for a period of time that is equal to three and a half years. Three designations are used to represent the same amount in Revelation that we need to understand: 42 months (11:2; 13:5), 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), and "a time, time and half a time" (12:14) all refer to the same amount of time. Scholar Robert Mounce identifies them as "the conventional period of apocalyptic literature", and explains that these various designations "point out that the periods of final witness, divine protection, and pagan antagonism are simultaneous."¹⁷ They "symbolize a limited period of time in which evil is allowed to triumph over God's people (cf. Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11–12)."¹⁸ These two witnesses are identified as two olive trees and two lampstands, which represents the church and the Spirit that will empower the church for her witness.¹⁹ [What one must understand is that God equips His church with all that is needed to serve His purpose as a faithful witness in the world.](#)

[.7-14] When the ministry of the two witnesses has been fulfilled, they are no longer protected from physical harm. The beast rises from the bottomless pit and kills them. This is the first time we meet a figure who represents the major antagonist of the church, the Antichrist, while the detailed presentations will not come until later. Here John only reveals that

¹¹ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 233. I am persuaded by Hamilton's conclusion where he states, "Many believers think that the temple measured here is a future temple—a literal building—that will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. I am more persuaded by those who argue that this temple is a figurative way to describe the people of God. Notice in 11:1 that "those who worship there" are to be measured. The Bible's theology of the temple is not about a building so much as it is about God being with his people."

¹² James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 235. Hamilton writes, "The measuring of God's people that we see in 11:1 is a symbolic depiction of God's knowing exactly where all his people are."

¹³ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 148. Duvall states, "John is commanded not to measure the outer court, which represents the church in the world where it is vulnerable to persecution and martyrdom."

¹⁴ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 212–213.

¹⁵ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 214–215. Mounce writes, "The distinction between the sanctuary and the outer court is a way of pointing out the limitations placed upon pagan hostility. It may physically decimate the witnessing church (in 11:7 the two witnesses are killed), but it cannot touch its real source of life (the witnesses are raised and ascend to heaven; 11:11–12)."

¹⁶ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 217.

¹⁷ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 215.

¹⁸ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 149.

¹⁹ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 238. Hamilton states, "Therefore, I understand the identification of the two witnesses as two olive trees and two lampstands to mean that the church, which is what the lampstands symbolize, has a prophetic witness that meets the Old Testament requirement that everything be confirmed by two witnesses, and the church's prophetic witness is empowered by the Spirit, which is what the olive trees symbolize."



the witnesses are killed by the beast.²⁰ Their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city for three and a half days, where people of the world will gaze at and rejoice over them. This represents the suffering of the church physically at the hands of her persecutors. One scholar notes, “Ironically, this is the only mention in Revelation of rejoicing. Sinners will be happy because those who declared God’s judgment are dead. This emotional response graphically reflects the finality of their rejection.”²¹ We should also note the time of three and a half days, which corresponds to the 1,260 days of their prophetic activity, which in comparison means the time of suffering is very brief. Then, after three and a half days a breath of life from God enters them, they stood up and great fear fell on all who saw them. Then a loud voice from Heaven says, “*Come up here!*” *And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.*” This is followed by a great earthquake so that a tenth of the city was killed, 7,000 people, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to God of heaven. But before you celebrate this as a great revival, it is most likely not. More than likely, this is simply a general statement that recognizes reacts to the sight of what they just beheld. Here we learn that the period of suffering under God’s judgment for the wicked corresponds to the time of their reign, but it does not compare.

TRANS And with that the second woe passes, and the third is soon to come.

OBJ **The Third Reality of the final judgement is...**

#3: Persecution will be real during the final witness, but God protects those who are His and empowers us for faithful witness while He truncates Satan’s pleasure.

This is why Paul declares that knowing Christ is of greater worth than anything and everything in this life and surpasses all! (Phil 3:7-11) God’s power working through a faithful witness is so much greater to accomplish His purpose, and any suffering for His Name is inconsiderable in comparison.

TRANS Finally, we reach the midpoint of Revelation, but what one scholar calls the culmination and highpoint of the whole book.²²

READ 11:15-19

¹⁵Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, 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 shall reign forever and ever.” ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying,

*“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.*

*¹⁸The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”*

*¹⁹Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. **Revelation 11:15-19***

²⁰ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 219–220. Mounce states, “Here for the first time we meet a figure who represents the major antagonist of the church in the last days. In contrast to the Lamb, who bears the marks of slaughter, he is the beast. His demonic origin and character are portrayed by the fact that he “comes up from the Abyss,” the haunt of demons (cf. Luke 8:31). The definite article indicates that he is a well-known figure. It may be a reference to the beast of Dan 7:7ff., who had become a “familiar representation of Antichrist,” or it may anticipate the detailed presentation in chapters 13 and 17. At the moment all that John wishes to do is to set forth the death of the witnesses at the hand of the beast.”

²¹ John MacArthur, [Because the Time Is Near](#), 186.

²² James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 232–233. Hamilton writes, ““So I think the whole book of Revelation is structured as a chiasm, with the celebration of the kingdom of Christ in 11:15–19 right in the middle of the whole thing.””



When the seventh trumpet blasts loud voices in heaven declare that the Kingdom of God has won! The prayer our Lord taught us to pray now becomes the reality our Lord fought and won for us, as it is in Heaven so now it is on earth. The end has come and the eternal rule of King Jesus begins. “But we are only halfway through the book”, you may say, and that is correct. But here the theme for the remainder of the book is set and there is no question about the end. “This is the moment when the trumpet is blown, the voices are raised, and the rebellion against the world’s rightful Lord comes to an end. The true King is enthroned, and his reign will never end.”²³ The song of the elders is a hymn of great thanksgiving that recounts the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ and how He will reign. Then God’s temple in heaven was opened and the ark was seen within, followed by flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. In response to the hymn of praise, verse 19 gives evidence that God rewards the faithful and judges the wicked.²⁴ In the end, “The entire interlude demonstrates the bittersweet contents of the little scroll: victory through faithful suffering.”²⁵ **God has given us a picture of the end; He is worthy because He wins!**

OBJ **The Fourth Reality** of the final judgement is...

#4: Jesus is the King who is worthy of faithful witness because He has conquered, and He rewards His saints because He is Faithful and True.

Jesus stands sovereign over all creation to judge, but God guards His people for a faithful witness to all nations.

CLOSE **What is our right response to these chapters on judgment?** Security in our walk with Christ and strength for our witness for Christ. We must never study these chapters and allow fear to scare nor silence us. Rather, we take comfort in God’s promise of protection from judgment and courage to face persecution to live as a bold witness. We are witnesses to the glory of God in the power of Jesus Christ for eternal life. When fear threatens, testify to His glory! When attack looms, tell of His mighty deeds! When persecution occurs, when they come to cancel you, glorify the One in whom we have already been crucified and by faith in Him already have our resurrection unto eternal life! **A faithful testimony to Jesus Christ brings comfort and courage to the heart.** Someone in your life needs to hear this as well!

When God stretches the measuring rod over the inner court, will you be counted among the people of God, or found in the outer court of judgment? Who are you telling about the good news of our eternal hope in Jesus Christ?

²³ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 242.

²⁴ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 228. Mounce notes, “Verse 19 is a response to the hymn of praise in vv. 17 and 18. The ark of the covenant corresponds to the rewarding of the faithful, and the cosmic disturbances to the outpouring of God’s wrath.”

²⁵ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 148.

