

Who are the Two Witnesses?

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Measure the temple

Revelation 11:1

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

Measuring the temple with a reed alludes to Ezekiel 40-47, where the prophet Ezekiel describes his vision, in which he is set upon a very high mountain, and he then describes the measuring of the temple of God, by an angel. During the process of measuring the temple, the glory of God filled the house of the Lord.¹

The high mountain represents a revelation of God or a prophecy; the temple here described is figurative rather than literal, just as the mountain was not a literal one. Ezekiel saw his vision of the measurement of the temple while he was an exile, in a period when no literal temple existed at Jerusalem. In the New Testament, both Stephen and Paul are quoted as saying that God does not dwell in temples made with hands.²

This implies that Ezekiel's temple, where the glory of God is to remain forever, must be a temple that is not made with hands. This spiritual temple, in the New Testament, is the church, founded on the prophets and apostles.³

In Ezekiel 11:23, the prophet described the glory of the Lord *departing* from the city, and the temple, and resting over the Mount of Olives. In chapter 43, he described the glory of God *returning* to the temple, which is explained as God residing in the midst of his people forever in verse 7. The latter prophecy shows that the Spirit of God will reside in the spiritual temple, the church. This is the background for John's prophecy of the two witnesses.

Also included in Ezekiel's prophecy about measuring the temple is his description of the wonder-

ful river, that flows forth from the door of the temple, and heals the places where it flows. When it empties into the Dead Sea, the salty waters become healed.⁴

In *The Image of Both Churches* by John Bale, which was the first commentary on the Apocalypse written in English, the verse is paraphrased:⁵

For unto John it was said for this age: Arise, from vain study, from cares of the body, from consideration of earthly causes. And measure the holy temple of God, which is his congregation or church: prove all believers whether they be right or no.

Examine their works, whether they spring of God's commandments or of men's traditions. And in so doing try by the scriptures the corn from the chaff. Mark out the people of God from the synagogue of Satan, and delay not to nourish them with the sweet fruits of the spirit.

Measure the altar also, which is Jesus Christ, upon whom the full sacrifice of redemption was offered. For many false Christs are abroad in the world, to seduce the people. ... For God dwelleth in nothing that is made with hands. In the faithful heart is Christ only found. There remaineth he. That is his dwelling place.

Therefore now last of all, measure them also that worship in the temple. Consider them only to be his people, which seek him in spirit and in truth, and that worship not in outward shadows, not in the elements of this world, not yet with observation of days and

¹Ezekiel 43:3-5

²Acts 7:48; 17:24

³Ephesians 2:19-22

⁴Ezekiel 47:1-12

⁵John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches*. 1547. (Spelling modified)

times. They are not his sons, that for the leaven of the Pharisees which is the doctrine of hypocrites, forsaketh the bread of children which is his living word. They are not his lambs but billy goats, that rather attendeth to the voice of strangers, than to the true shepherd Christ.

42 months

Revelation 11:2

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Compare the above verse with the following saying of Jesus:

Luke 21:24

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The forty two months in Revelation 11:2 corresponds to the "times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:24. Jesus was speaking of the holy city of the saints, rather than the earthly Jerusalem. Similarly by the holy city, John meant the heavenly Jerusalem, the saints.⁶ Jesus referred to the "times" mentioned in Daniel's prophecies, and to Daniel's 70th week. The 70 weeks prophecy specifies an end to "the times of the Gentiles," the *time, times and a half* of Daniel 7:25, in which the saints are dominated by the little horn of the fourth beast which has eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. The *eyes like the eyes of a man*, I suggest, picture a human point of view. This human point of view dominates the saints during the "time, times, and a half," which corresponds to the last part of the 70th week, in the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27, and the 1,260 days and 42 months of Revelation 11, 12, and 13.

Charles D. Alexander, in his commentary on Revelation, supported the idea that the time periods mentioned in Revelation 11:2-3 are symbolic, and refer to the entire history of the church. He wrote:⁷

⁶E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St John: expounded for those who search the Scriptures*, Volume 1. 1852. pp. 497-519. <http://books.google.ca/books?id=b5UXAAAAYAAJ>

⁷<http://www.allbygrace.com/alexrev047-12.html>

FORTY AND TWO MONTHS

All the numbers in Revelation are symbolic. They cannot be fitted into the framework of world history, though there are many startling coincidences which embolden the unwary and create an enthusiasm for chronological interpretation. The spiritual interpretation of this great book must be maintained at all costs, for the past history of chronological investigation is strewn with the carcasses of confident predictions which now have no relevance to contemporary events. Historicism has run out of time and has almost disappeared in the vagaries of post-millennialism presently revived by the contemporary situation in Palestine while ignoring the contemporary state of the church and the revival of heathenism. Some day soon, perhaps, many of our friends may awake to the realities of the Latter Day apostasy, and the realisation that the Millennium is past!

If not a measurable period of time in the realm of historical chronology, what then does the figure of 42 months signify? We have already said in a previous chapter that the numbers in Daniel and Revelation of 1260 days, 42 months, 3 1/2 years and 'time, times, and half a time' all correspond with each other and are to be interpreted in terms of the most indefinite of them - 'time, times, and half a time'. Thus we are dealing with an indefinite period of time, known only to God and not intended to be measured by man. If it could be measured in advance what consolation would it be for those who were able to calculate that no deliverance was to be expected in their day or perhaps for centuries to come? Or what office would be left to faith, if it could be ascertained that in the period of one's own lifetime all would be consummated and the Lord would return? What becomes of the Saviour's warning that of the day and hour of His re-

turn no man knows, nor yet is it a part of the Son's commission from the Father to make it known?

THE BROKEN SEVEN

In place of these speculations we find it much more comforting to see all these strange figures in the Apocalypse as being signs of THE BROKEN SEVEN (the 3 1/2 years). Seven being the number of divine completeness, and being so used throughout the Apocalypse, the broken seven must relate to judgment and is a warning to the world and an assurance to the people of God of the steadfastness of the divine purposes in commanding a limited period only for the power of this world. The enemy will not endure one day beyond the divine decree.

The 42 months we regard therefore as the whole period of time from Patmos to the Second Advent of our Lord. It began with John's imprisonment, and the Book of Revelation is concerned with that event and the interpretation of it in terms of the prolonged sufferings and probation of the church typified in the afflictions of "John our brother".

During that immense period of time, the church is comforted in the knowledge that the onset and the termination of the 1260 days (and its other numerical equivalents) are fixed by the Lord's sovereign determination. The arbiter of time is the Mighty Angel of chapter 10: the true Michael, the Angel of the Covenant, Christ, the Son of God, the Conqueror of sin, death and hell, the Woman's Seed, the Bruiser of the Serpent's head. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons which forever remain in the Father's own power (Acts 1:7); our part is to preach the Word of God and hold forth the testimony of Christ in a hostile world in which all power appears to be given to

the enemies of the kingdom of God.

Who is the one speaking?

Revelation 11:3

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

The one speaking here is the "angel" introduced in Revelation 10:1, from whom John received the little book, which he had eaten. Several things suggest the angel described here is Christ.

He is clothed with a cloud, which seems to allude to the Lord appearing in a pillar of cloud in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 31:15

And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

Once the Israelites entered the promised land, and took possession of it, the pillar of cloud was no longer seen, but instead, the book of the law contained in the ark was a witness,⁸ and the song that Moses taught the people was another witness.⁹

The angel of Revelation 10 had a rainbow upon his head, as in the description of Jesus given previously.¹⁰ His face was as it were the sun; again, like the description John gave of Jesus.¹¹ His feet were as pillars of fire, perhaps alluding to the pillar of fire, which was with the Israelites in the wilderness at night. His voice was like a lion; John previously referred to Christ as a lion.¹² He stood upon the earth and sea, perhaps indicating his authority over all.¹³

Several commentators note that the angel standing upon the earth and the sea seems to refer to Christ. I suggest the angel represents Jesus in the prophecy, and that the two witnesses are Jesus' witnesses; Jesus identified the Spirit, and the scriptures, as two things that would "testify" of him.¹⁴

⁸Deuteronomy 31:26

⁹Deuteronomy 32:21

¹⁰Revelation 4:3

¹¹Revelation 1:16; also see Matthew 17:2

¹²Revelation 5:5

¹³Psalms 24:1

¹⁴John 5:39; 15:26

They prophesy for 1,260 days

The 1,260 days of the ministry of the two witnesses alludes to Daniel's *time, times, and a half*, mentioned in Daniel 7:25, and in Daniel 12:7. It is connected with the prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24-27, which is about the duration of Jerusalem's desolation, and the restoration of true worship, and Israel's reconciliation to God, and other things mentioned in Daniel 9:24, that are not yet fulfilled.

Isaiah said that Jerusalem and Zion will be raised up above the hills,¹⁵ and in the New Testament, Jerusalem is put up in heaven, and identified with the church: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..."¹⁶ So Jerusalem and Zion are raised up far higher than the hills. But, the desolation has not ended.

In Revelation 11, 12, and 13, the saints are involved in warfare. This is a great struggle for possession of the church's spiritual inheritance. In 11:7, the beast from the pit makes war with God's two witnesses, and overcomes them. In 12:7, the war is in heaven; it is spiritual warfare, as shown by the fact that angels are involved in it. The great red dragon, Satan, is eventually cast out, and when this happens, he has only a short time left, to cause grief in the world. In 13:7, the beast with seven heads and ten horns makes war with the saints, and overcomes them. He continues for 42 months, the same period mentioned in 11:2, where the holy city is trampled by Gentiles. The holy city here is the church. This 42 months, 1,260 days, and "time, times and a half" of 12:14 are all related to the 70 weeks; they represent the last half-week.

The first two sections in the 70 weeks, 7 weeks and 62 weeks, point to the coming of the Messiah, and in the last week, he "confirms the covenant with many."¹⁷ The ministry of Jesus was part of that last week. He confirmed the covenant. Paul said,

Romans 15:8

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

His crucifixion began the last half-week, which can't be a literal three years and a half, or else the apostles would have certainly noticed that Daniel's

prophecy had been fulfilled, and reported it in the writings of the New Testament, but nowhere do they tell us that. Jesus continues to fulfill his covenant with the saints today, so the last half-week is not finished yet.

There are no gaps in the 70 weeks, as that would imply there a temporary reconciliation, and a lapse of the curse, that Daniel refers to in 9:11. The curse alludes to the four periods of seven times in Leviticus 26. The first of these periods was the exile; the last three correspond to the three sections of the 70 weeks. In the final one, God is reconciled to his people and remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that Paul calls the gospel. He also "remembers the land," which is symbolic of spiritual things promised to the saints. Understanding Daniel's prophecy is included in those things; and Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy is key to understanding the time periods mentioned in Revelation 11, 12, and 13, which all refer to the same thing, the time, times and a half, the last half-week in the 70 weeks, when Jesus continues to confirm his covenant with his saints.

At the end of the 70 weeks, the time comes when "that determined will be poured upon the desolator." What is it that is determined? It is stated in chapter 7.

Daniel 7:25-26

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

The influence of the "little horn," with eyes like the eyes of a man, representing the human outlook, must be consumed and destroyed. This *human* viewpoint dominates the saints for a *time, times, and a half*, but needs to be replaced by the *divine* viewpoint, that is pictured by the woman in Revelation 12:14, who represents the saints, being given two wings of a great eagle. When she is given these powerful wings she obtains a different point of view, and is able to see things from above, representing

¹⁵Isaiah 2:2

¹⁶Hebrews 12:22

¹⁷Daniel 9:24-27

¹⁸See *The woman in the wilderness* <http://viny12.sentex.net/~tcc/dload/ww.pdf>

¹⁹Revelation 2:17

the divine perspective provided by a spiritual interpretation of prophecy.¹⁸ This is the “hidden manna” Jesus mentioned in his message to the church of Pergamos.¹⁹ The literal view is not a “hidden” one.

Daniel 12:7

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

At the end of the period of a time, times, and an half, the power of the saints has become scattered, which fits the prophecy of the two witnesses, who have become impotent, like corpses lying in the street. Today, the church has become scattered among tens of thousands of sects, cults, and denominations. This is when the one who causes the desolation is destroyed.²⁰

Clothed in sackcloth

The sackcloth worn by the witnesses alludes to various saints and prophets, such as Job,²¹ David,²² Isaiah,²³ and Daniel,²⁴ who all wore sackcloth on occasion, as well as John the Baptist, whose camel hair garments were probably some kind of sackcloth.²⁵

In 1611 John Napier, who identified the two witnesses with the Old and New Testaments, interpreted the sackcloth clothing of the witnesses as: “disguised with the obscurity of men’s traditions.”²⁶ The sun becoming black as sackcloth is another figure with this meaning;²⁷ the woman in heaven, who represents the church, is clothed with the sun,²⁸ which here represents the gospel; the glorious light of the gospel that is to enlighten all men has been turned into *darkness* because of man’s traditions, and flawed interpretations.

²⁰See *The 1,260 Days and the Time of the Church* <http://vinyl2.sentex.net/~tcc/dload/1260Days.pdf>

²¹Job 16:15

²²Psalms 69:11

²³Isaiah 20:2

²⁴Daniel 9:3

²⁵Mark 1:6

²⁶John Napier, *A plaine discovery of the whole Revelation of S. John* (1611)

²⁷Revelation 6:12

²⁸Revelation 12:1

²⁹Jeremiah 11:16; Hosea 14:6; Romans 11:17

³⁰Genesis 1:28

³¹Romans 3:20

Two olive trees

Revelation 11:4

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

This alludes to the two trees which were in the garden of Eden. The two olive trees are also seen in Zechariah 4:11. Israel is called an olive tree.²⁹

One of the two trees in the garden of Eden was forbidden to Adam and Eve. Adam represents man, the “lord of the earth.” Adam and Eve and their progeny were given “dominion” over all the earth.³⁰

The other tree represents the word of God, which to us, means the scriptures, but to Adam meant the instruction he received from God regarding the forbidden tree. From the scriptures, we obtain the knowledge about good and evil, right and wrong. “For by the law is the knowledge of sin.”³¹

Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, and in doing so, they disobeyed, and felt shame and guilt. They learned about sin, and they realized they were naked.

Then, God provided clothes for them, and they were banished from the garden. This was done to deny them access to the tree of life, the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 3:22-24

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

“Fire” and a “sword” are metaphors also used for the scriptures. The word of God is represented by a sword, that goes forth out of the mouth of Christ.

Revelation 1:16

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

In the Old Testament, the promised land replaces the Garden of Eden, but on a national scale. A garden was suitable for two people to dwell in, but a much larger area would be needed for a nation. This is the promised land. It was where the two trees would continue to exist.

Two candlesticks

The two trees also have the role of lamps, or candlesticks, in the world, as they provide light, in the spiritual darkness. The Psalmist wrote:

Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

An interpretation of the two witnesses being called two candlesticks, by James Brocard in the sixteenth century, is paraphrased below.³²

As it has been said that Spirits stand before the throne; as it has been said that Christ standeth on the right hand of the Father; as it has been said in Zechariah chap. 4, that the two olive branches stand before the ruler of the whole earth; so here I understand the Holy Ghost and the son of God. And because Christ cometh into his members, and the Holy Ghost is poured into them, and worketh in them, the ministers of the Gospel, and of the word of Prophecy are called olive trees and candlesticks and they are called two olive trees and two candlesticks, because Prophecy is enjoined in them

with the Gospel, and the Gospel with Prophecy, as it was in the Apostles, and because that which is Christ in them, is the Holy Ghost, and that which is the Holy Ghost, is Christ. These two offices were in the Apostles, and to these two Peter in the beginning of the third chapter of his second epistle willeth the faithful to look; they have been hitherto in the Church, and shall be hereafter, most of all; and now in the greater light we all are willed to receive them. Which also is signified to us in fulfilling the Prophecy of these two witnesses, which are here set forth. Forasmuch as we in this time shall all be Witnesses of the truth of the Gospel, and of the truth of God's word of Prophecy.

Boaz and Jachin

A feature of the temple's design, that could correspond to two *trees*, and two *candlesticks* in John's prophecy, was the presence two bronze pillars, standing on either side of the porch of Solomon's temple. They were called *Boaz* and *Jachin*. These two pillars were 8.2 m high, and 1.8 m wide, with capitals 2.4 m high; they were decorated with rows of 200 bronze pomegranates, and each was topped with lilies of bronze.³³

The ornamentation at the top of the pillars is thought to have given them the appearance of enormous lampstands. In the time of Hezekiah, they were overlaid with gold.³⁴

The purpose of pillars in ancient times, and their role as witnesses, is indicated by two incidents in the life of Jacob, each of which involved setting up pillars. When Jacob fled from his brother Esau, he came to a place where he spent the night, and dreamed of a ladder reaching from the earth to heaven, and angels ascended and descended on it. God stood at the top, and he promised Jacob that he would give him the land, and also that in his seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed.³⁵

Jacob called the place Bethel, meaning *house of God*, and he set up the stone which he had used

³²*The Reuelation of S. Ihon reueled or a paraphrase opening by conference of time and place such things as are both necessary, and profitable for the tyme present: writen in Latine by James Brocard, and Englished by James Sanford Gent., Imprinted at London: In Fleetestreate neare vnto S. Dunstones Church by Thomas Marshe, 1582.*

³³1 Kings 7:13-22, 41-42; 2 Chronicles 4:13

³⁴2 Kings 18:16

³⁵Genesis 28:11-14

³⁶Genesis 28:16-22

as a pillow stone as a *pillar*.³⁶ Later, Jacob dug a well near this place.

The role of a pillar as a *witness* is explicit in another incident, when Jacob and his uncle Laban set up a heap of stones, and a pillar, as *witnesses* to a covenant between them both, which said that neither Jacob, nor Laban, would pass by that place to do any harm to the other.³⁷

During his ministry Jesus visited Jacob's well, where he met a woman of Samaria. In their conversation, Jesus told the woman that those who worship God would no longer go to Gerizim, or to Jerusalem, but must worship God in spirit and in truth.

John 4:19-24

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

In John's prophecy, which is about measuring the temple, the presence of the two pillars *Boaz* and *Jachin* at the porch of Solomon's temple may be what the *two witnesses* in his prophecy allude to. They seem to represent the scriptures, and the spirit of God. The two things Jesus mentioned, *spirit* and *truth*, are like two pillars, or witnesses, set up at the entrance to the spiritual temple of God. For Jesus, the word of God in the scriptures is truth.³⁸ Entrance to the spiritual temple, and true worship, involves both of these.

³⁷Genesis 31:51-52

³⁸John 17:17

³⁹2 Kings 1:10, 12

⁴⁰Luke 3:16; 12:49

⁴¹John Bale, *Op. Cit.*

Fire from their mouth

Revelation 11:5

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

This alludes to Elijah,³⁹ and Jesus.⁴⁰

The fire from their mouth is a metaphor, representing the words of scripture, which warn of the judgment in store for the enemies of the gospel.

Jeremiah 5:14

I will make the words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

The fire from the mouth of the two witnesses describes the judgment of their enemies by God's word. Jesus especially warned people against speaking evil of the Holy Spirit. He said to the Pharisees who suggested he was casting out demons by the power of Satan:

Matthew 12:31-32

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

The fire represents the metaphorical fire of future judgment, when offenders will be judged by the *fire* of God's word. Jesus said of this judgment that is to come:

Matthew 13:41-42

The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

John Bale's paraphrase has:⁴¹

And if any man will hurt them, this wise must he be killed. Either must he be mortified from the old Adam, and changed into a new man in Christ, or else by the said word must he both be judged and condemned for the utter adversary of God, with Satan his ancient captain. So must he be killed. And no death will be found like unto that death come these ones to the testing of it, though they account it now very light.

They shut heaven

Revelation 11:6
These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

They shut heaven, so there is no rain for three years and six months. The rain is a figure that was used by Moses, when he compared his words to rain.

Deuteronomy 32:2
My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.

Their power to shut heaven, so there is no rain, alludes to events in the days of Elijah.⁴²

The power of the two witnesses to shut heaven has led some to conclude that one of them must be Elijah, whose coming was foretold in Malachi 4. Elijah “shut heaven,” when he prayed that it would not rain, until he gave the word for it. The drought continued in Israel for three years and six months, after which, there was a great rain.

Malachi 4:5-6
*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:
And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of*

the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Jews in the time of Jesus were expecting Elijah (who they called Elias) to come before the Messiah, but Jesus explained he had come already, alluding to John the Baptist. The spirit of prophecy, which was in John, and in Jesus too, fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy.

Amos foretold a famine of hearing the word of God.⁴³

The “rain” in the prophecy of the two witnesses is not literal rain, but it refers to the word of God; the prophet Isaiah also compared the word of God to rain.⁴⁴

This spiritual kind of rain ceased, and no scripture has been added since the time of the apostles. John Bale expounded:⁴⁵

In those days that it not rain upon the wicked, they shall have no grace to receive the truth. In parables and figures that shall be hidden from them, that shall be evident now unto the faithful. With ears that they hear and not understand, with eyes shall they see and not discern. So blind will their hearts be. For such speak the prophets in figures, Christ in parables, and the Apostles in mysteries. Then open truth of this revelation shall not the wicked perceive, till they taste the plagues thereof. Such is the nature of God’s wisdom, that though it be not in glorious words, sin painted terms, nor in the persuasive reasons of man’s wit, but in plain simple speaking, yet can it not be known of the worldly wise. The sweet dew thereof will not be received of them, in the aforesaid days of prophecy, but he that is blind shall be blind still.

They turn waters to blood

This alludes to Moses,⁴⁶ and Elisha.⁴⁷

The power of the two witnesses to turn the water to blood appears to be a dramatic sign, as that was one of the plagues sent when Moses stood before

⁴²Luke 4:25; James 5:17

⁴³Amos 8:11

⁴⁴Isaiah 55:9-11

⁴⁵John Bale, *Op. Cit.*

⁴⁶Exodus 7:17; Psalm 105:29

⁴⁷2 Kings 3:23

Pharaoh; the waters of the rivers in Egypt became blood. But nothing comparable has occurred in the history of the church. There is another account in the Old Testament of waters appearing like blood, to the enemies of Israel, in the days of Elisha.

In 2 Kings 3 there is an account of a battle in which the outcome hinged on people mistaking water for blood. The kings of Israel, Judah and Edom went out into the wilderness with their armies in order to punish the king of Moab, who had stopped paying tribute to the Israelite king. But they ran short of water. So they called for the prophet Elisha.

Elisha advised them to make ditches in the valley. During the night, the ditches filled up with water. In the morning the Moabite army looked over the valley, and the reflection of the red sky on the water appeared to them like pools of blood.

2 Kings 3:21-23

And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood:

And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

Assuming there had been a battle, the Moabites approached the camp of the Israelites, expecting to find them wasted, but instead were slaughtered themselves.

In scripture, many of the great truths of the gospel are hidden. They are couched in the symbols of prophecy, and a superficial approach, and failing to interpret these symbols leads to absurd conclusions.

Proverbs 25:2

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

Applying this to the scriptures tends to discredit the superficial, literal approach to interpretation.

Why would Jesus say to “*search* the scriptures,”⁴⁸ if the message provided there was obvious to anyone? It would hardly be necessary to *search*. And how could people have recognized Jesus as the Christ from the Old Testament, unless they not only *searched*, but *interpreted* the prophecies that applied to him, such as those identified in Matthew’s Gospel?

Literalists promote a view of scripture that atheists and skeptics see as blood, unfit for human consumption! And so they reject the gospel. They resemble the unfortunate Moabites who mistook water for blood, who attacked the Israelites and were slaughtered themselves.

The truths of the gospel are as cool, clean, fresh living water to believers, but are as distasteful as blood to others.

Several facts tend to make the scriptures unpalatable for people in the modern age, such as the stories of bloody battles of conquest by the Israelite armies, when they took possession of the promised land, the flawed cosmology in Genesis, and the flood of Noah, for which geologic support seems scarce.

I suggest that the flawed cosmology evident in Genesis 1 and elsewhere in the Old Testament likely resulted from changes introduced into the manuscripts of the Old Testament, that were initiated by the hellenistic king Antiochus IV, in the 2nd century BC, as foretold by the prophet Daniel. The revisions were supported by hellenized Jews who admired the Greek cosmology. The intent underlying these changes was to make the scriptures conform to the geocentric cosmology of the Greeks.

Another stumblingblock for many are the miracles and prophecies reported in scripture, which are denied by the modern scientific, materialistic world view.

The literal approach to passages in the Bible that are poetic, and symbolic, contributes to this perception of the gospel as unpalatable, like blood. The apostle Peter spoke of false teachers, whose doctrine and behavior would bring dishonour to the message of the gospel.⁴⁹

The prophecies of scripture were given by *stammering lips*, and in *another tongue*, as Isaiah said.⁵⁰

Jesus advised his disciples not to cast pearls before swine, or give things that are holy to dogs.⁵¹ No doubt this is one of the reasons many pearls of truth in scripture are hidden in the language of

⁴⁸John 5:39

⁴⁹2 Peter 2:2

⁵⁰Isaiah 28:11

⁵¹Matthew 7:6

metaphor, and parable.

Thus, many view the Bible, and the message of the gospel, not as refreshing, life-giving water, but as *blood* that they cannot bring themselves to drink! Jesus referred to the gospel as “living water.”⁵² This is the water that has seemed more like blood to many. Like the Moabites, Israel’s enemies, they “see blood,” but it is an illusion, as what is really there is the water of life.

They smite the earth with plagues

Their power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they wish, alludes to all the prophecies of scripture, where the plan of God is outlined; e.g, those of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Joel, Zechariah, Jesus, John, etc. No humans have this power, which is a strong argument against the identification of the two witnesses with two human individuals or churches as some have proposed.

The beast ascends from the pit

The beast that ascends from the bottomless pit, who overcomes the two witnesses in Revelation 11:7, is the same as the dragon in heaven in Revelation 12:7, who makes war with Michael and his angels.

Satan is described as having several ups and downs in scripture. In Isaiah 14:13, Lucifer says in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.” The stars represent saints; he hopes to deceive them, and seeks to seduce them. In Revelation 12:4, a third of the stars are drawn by his tail and cast to the earth.

Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”⁵³ Jesus had previously overcome Satan, when he was tempted.⁵⁴

In Revelation 20:1-3, Satan is bound with a great chain, and shut up for a thousand years. Some have connected this with the parable Jesus told, of binding the “strong man” before taking away his possessions.⁵⁵

Some time after the apostolic era, Satan was released from his prison, and began his ascent from the bottomless pit, and resumed his deception of

the nations, to bring them against the holy city. The thousand years, when Satan was bound, no doubt represents the era of the apostles, and certainly includes that period.

The apostolic age was a time when the adversary was restrained. Paul said to the Thessalonians, “now you know what restrains him.”⁵⁶ But he warned that in the future, the same adversary’s bonds would be loosed, and his influence would be evident in the temple of God, which for Paul, meant the church.

After the era of the apostles, false teachers arose, as foretold by Paul, and Peter. Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus,

Acts 20:28-30

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Peter wrote:

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

The apostles understood that the purity of the gospel would become corrupted by false doctrines, and that the church would be overcome by worldly

⁵²John 4:10

⁵³Luke 10:18

⁵⁴Luke 4:1-13

⁵⁵Mark 3:23-27

⁵⁶2 Thessalonians 2:6

men, but they also understood that eventually, Christ would be victorious over his enemies. Their prophecies have been fulfilled, as the saints have become scattered among tens of thousands of denominations, cults, and sects. Human reason is exulted above God and his word, in the world today, and in the churches. It characterized the “little horn” in the prophecy of Daniel 7, which overcomes the saints, and has “eyes like the eyes of a man.”

Satan is pictured as falling from heaven like lightning, in the time of Jesus; he was bound a thousand years in the bottomless pit; then, he ascends from out of the pit, and makes war against and overcomes the two witnesses, and kills them. Then he appears in heaven, and he threatens the woman with a great flood, no doubt representing false interpretations, from out of his mouth.⁵⁷ His ascent from the bottomless pit is a metaphor, that depicts his growing influence in the church.

In Revelation 12:8, no place for the dragon or his angels is found in heaven, and they are all cast out into the earth. This is depicted as a rather sudden and dramatic event, and it is announced by a great voice in heaven.⁵⁸ Then, the saints are commanded to rejoice, as accuser of the brethren is cast down.⁵⁹ The saints are said to overcome him by the word of their testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb. But then, the dragon knows he has but a short time remaining, and “woe” comes upon those who dwell in the earth and the sea, as the dragon has come down to them. He persecutes the woman, who is given the two wings of an eagle, which I think, means she is given a new and fresh perspective, one that is divine rather than human, as it is from above. This is the perspective provided by a right interpretation of prophecy.

They are overcome by the beast

Revelation 11:7
And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

The two witnesses are at war with the beast from the pit, which alludes to various enemies of Israel, and of the church. Paul said, the enemies of the saints are spiritual in nature.

⁵⁷Revelation 12:15

⁵⁸Revelation 12:10

⁵⁹Revelation 12:12

⁶⁰John Napier, *Op. Cit.*

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

John Napier interpreted this as picturing the Antichrist who, “rising from the devil, shall strive against them, and shall overcome them and shall deprive them of their spiritual meaning and lively sense.”⁶⁰

If the two witnesses represent the word of God, and the Spirit of God, how are they killed? Some insist that the two witnesses being overcome by the beast from the bottomless pit, and killed, means they must be two humans, but they do not believe that the “beast” which overcomes them is a literal beast. In Revelation 20:3, Satan is bound, and cast into a bottomless pit. These are spiritual concepts.

In Revelation 11:7, the scriptures, and the Spirit, are killed by the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit. This must be connected with Revelation 20, which says Satan is loosed from his prison for a little season, and deceives the nations, and they come against the camp of the saints.

In the last several centuries, many people have been deceived into thinking that Bible prophecy does not apply to the church. The beast from the pit deceives people, saying the prophecies of the Bible were written in a prescientific age. Scholars of the enlightenment viewed the Old Testament prophets as ignorant, and uninformed about things that are common knowledge today, as they lived in the prescientific age. Roman Catholic scholars, wishing to remove the sting of the interpretations by the Reformers, claimed prophecy does not apply to us, it was written for Jews, and it specifically relates to the land of Israel, and the earthly Jerusalem. Others claimed prophecy was intended for Jews in the first century. Jesus said all would be fulfilled in his generation, so how could it apply today? They overlooked the fact that Jesus rose up from the grave, and remains alive, so *his generation still exists!*

Another opinion says prophecy applies to Jews in a future seven year tribulation, after the church has been raptured to heaven. This position also claims prophecy does not apply to the church, which is nowhere mentioned in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Instead, it applies to the Jewish state,

and relates to political events at the end of the age, that will result in a world government.

The argument of some is, since there are so many different views, how can we tell which is right? Why should any of them be right? Some dismiss Bible prophecy as a money-making scheme by publishers.

Another way that the spirit of prophecy is killed, is by literalism. Paul's statement, the letter *killeth*, but the spirit *giveth life*,⁶¹ can be applied to the prophecy of the two witnesses, as while literalism tends to obscure or *kill* the spiritual meaning of prophecy and its applications to the saints, it is "the spirit of life from God" that revives the two witnesses, so they stand upon their feet.⁶²

Paul said, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings."⁶³

Their dead bodies lie in the street

Revelation 11:8
And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Their dead bodies left unburied, was paraphrased by John Napier as "their dead letter shall lie as dead carcasses." This prophecy may allude to Isaiah 51:23, where Jerusalem is described as a human body left lying in the street to be trampled by her enemies.

Isaiah 51:23
But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

Sodom and Egypt

If John meant to refer to the *holy city* of verse 2, why would he have used such contrasting terms to describe it? The "great city" is the opposite of the holy city, which is trampled by the Gentiles.

The city where the corpses of the two witnesses lie is worldly society, or mystical Babylon; Jesus was

crucified *outside* Jerusalem.⁶⁴ Both *Sodom* and *Egypt* were places from which God's saints were delivered, and so escaped the *judgment* of God that came upon those who remained.

John Bale wrote:

And their bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city. In this world shall their carcasses remain, where they have rule and dominion. Here shall they be judged and condemned. At their pleasure shall it be to hang them, head them, or burn them. And though they lay no hands upon them for soiling their consecrate fingers, yet must it be done by their ghostly counsel, and ordered also after their spiritual appointment. None other is it to lie in the streets of their great city, than after such laws as they have practiced to be brought unto death.

For spiritually is their city called a glorious name, usurpe they, as though they were none of the world. They would be called the holy church, good ghostly fathers, godly divines, and spiritual men, not considering of what spirit they are spiritual. They are those unto whom the unclean spirit hath entered with seven other spirits worse than himself. With the spirit of falsehood, the spirit of filthiness, the spirit of lies, the spirit of witchcraft, the spirit of error, the spirit of blindness, and the spirit of cruelty.

And of these only with such like are they spiritual, and of no godly spirit as their fruits declare. And therefore the spirit of God does judge here this great city not to be called Jerusalem, but stinking Sodom, and most miserable Egypt, the prophecies and other scriptures agreeing to the same. For look what filthiness and abomination was in Sodom, what idolatry and devilishness was in Egypt, the same is now reigning in this painted spirituality, and is accounted there great holiness.

Among this consecrate multitude, ... is Christ yet crucified, as he was among

⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 3:6

⁶² Revelation 11:11

⁶³ 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20

⁶⁴ Hebrews 13:12

the Jews which knew him not, and yet boasted themselves outwardly for the peculiar chosen people of God. Not only is Christ among them persecuted, scourged, punished, and put to death in his members, but also is proved of them an insufficient Saviour without their daily doings. Their masses must be satisfactory sacrifices, profiting both the quick and the dead. And that must men believe under pain of death and damnation. Thus crucify they Christ again, and make a mock of him as witnessed Paul, and yet do they call him their Lord, not unlike to the tormentors, which crowned him with thorns, and saluted him with "Hail King of the Jews."⁶⁵

Their bodies are not put in graves

Revelation 11:9

And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

About the time of the enlightenment of the eighteenth century, critical scholars began to study the Bible as simply a relic from antiquity, ruling out the idea of its divine origin. Most of the critics rejected spiritual or allegorical interpretations, which applied prophecies of the Old Testament about Israel to the church, and insisted on literalism; they denied that prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus.

Three days and a half alludes to Daniel's time, times, and a half, and probably signifies a period of time near the end of the age.

Their enemies make merry

Revelation 11:10

And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

⁶⁵John Bale, *Op. Cit.*

⁶⁶John Napier, *Ibid.*

⁶⁷Ezekiel 37:1-14

Many people today consider themselves "liberated" from the teachings of scripture which are viewed as outdated. Many have devoted themselves to just having a good time, and making merry, since they are no longer worried about what the Bible says, or God's purpose for their lives. Reports which depict the Bible as untrue, and the church as corrupt or inept, are circulated in the world today with glee. The decline in the influence and authority of the Bible is a cause for rejoicing, because "these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."

The enemies of the two witnesses making merry alludes to the story of Samson; the Philistines rejoiced, and made merry when Samson was captured and when his strength had gone.

They tormented them that dwelt on the earth

John Napier paraphrased this with:⁶⁶

For these two testaments would have preached against sins and prophesy their destruction and have troubled the glad state of these that dwell in earthly pleasures.

The two witnesses tormenting them that dwelt on the earth may also allude to the story of Samson, who troubled the Philistines, when he set fire to their corn, and vineyards, and olives, and slew 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

They stand on their feet

Revelation 11:11

And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

The revival of the two witnesses, when they stand on their feet, may allude to events in the lives of Samson, and Elijah, and Jonah, and Jesus. It also parallels Ezekiel's prophecy about the valley of dry bones coming to life, the dry bones representing the church's spiritual condition.⁶⁷

Their revival indicates the vindication of scripture, and the saints renewing their faith. Perhaps this involves adopting spiritual interpretations of prophecy, and abandoning literal ones. John Napier paraphrased this as: “the lively spirit of interpretation from God shall quicken them up, and they shall be authorized and set up in estimation, and the fear of God shall come upon the hearts of all men that shall then rightly see & consider them.”

The story of Samson tells about the Spirit empowering one of God’s servants, at the very time when he was being ridiculed, and mocked by his enemies.

The allusion in the prophecy of the two witnesses to the story of Elijah when the heavens were shut, and there was no rain for three years and six months, is all about the Spirit coming into the church. Jesus referred to the famine in Elijah’s time, and James too. The point, in the application of the story of the two witnesses, is that the spiritual drought ends, and when they have accomplished their ministry. After that, the heaven is no longer shut, so there is rain. This is implied, because unless there was rain, the drought would continue. And the prophecy specifies that their ministry is accomplished, when they are killed. So after they are killed, the heavens are no longer shut, and the rain is given. In the ministry of Elijah, the coming of the rain, after a drought of three years and six months, was accompanied by a dramatic demonstration of God’s power, and Elijah was vindicated. There was a powerful rain; Elijah’s sacrifice was accepted; the 450 prophets of Baal and Jezebel were put to shame, and then slaughtered.

Ezekiel foretold the glory coming into the house of God,⁶⁸ and a river going forth from the temple, and healing the places where it flowed. When the river flowed into the Dead Sea, its waters were healed.⁶⁹

The story of Jonah tells of one of God’s servants who prayed to God from the belly of a fish, and was delivered, so he could accomplish his mission to Nineveh, a Gentile city. Those people repented, when they heard Jonah’s message.

Jesus was raised to life again on the third day after he was crucified.

⁶⁸Ezekiel 43:4

⁶⁹Ezekiel 47:8

⁷⁰2 Kings 2:11

⁷¹Isaiah 60:8

⁷²Daniel 7:13

⁷³Joel 2:2

They ascend to heaven in a cloud

Revelation 11:12

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

The ascent of the two witnesses to heaven probably alludes to the account of Elijah being taken up to heaven.⁷⁰

The community of the saints is spoken of metaphorically as clouds. Isaiah spoke of those who “fly as a cloud,” and like doves.⁷¹

Daniel in vision saw “one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven.”⁷²

In Joel’s prophecy, the day of the Lord is called “a day of clouds and of thick darkness” and the same verse speaks of “a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.”⁷³ While on the one hand, the people who are under delusions, and confused, and ignorant of spiritual things, and don’t understand the gospel, are represented in Joel by thick, dark clouds, on the other hand the prophet Zechariah referred to bright clouds, which give showers of rain.

Zechariah 10:1

Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

Bright clouds bringing rain picture those who bring the gospel, and rain represents the word of God. Isaiah said:

Isaiah 55:10-11

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I

please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

In the New Testament, on the one hand the heroes of faith whose names are listed in Hebrews 11 are called a great “cloud of witnesses,”⁷⁴ while on the other hand, false teachers amongst the believers are called “clouds without water,”⁷⁵ or “clouds that are carried with a tempest.” A “mist of darkness” is reserved for them.⁷⁶

Perhaps the ascent of the two witnesses to heaven *in a cloud* relates to the clouds in which Jesus will be revealed.

Revelation 1:7
Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

A unique earthquake

Revelation 11:13
And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

What city is meant? Is it the holy city of verse 2, which is trampled by Gentiles for 42 months? Or the “great city,” which is mystical Babylon?

In the prophecy, the holy city is the heavenly city, and the temple also.⁷⁷ These stand in contrast to the world.

E. W. Hengstenberg wrote:⁷⁸

No one viewing Judaism as our author did, could possibly think of it as having such noble powers of life slumbering in it, as that so comparatively mild a judgment should have sufficed to set them free—that the fall of the tenth part of the city and the death of the tenth part of the inhabitants should have had the effect of “terrifying the rest, and leading them to give glory to the God of

heaven.” Such powers of life, according to the view taken in the Apocalypse, grow only out of Christ’s blood and redemption. For Satan’s synagogue tribulation is as fruitless as for the heathen, and even more so. It can only produce rage in such characters, the dark zealot-spirit.

In this prophecy the fall of a tenth part of the city, and the number 7,000 who are slain, which corresponds to the 7,000 Israelites who had not bowed the knee to Baal in the days of Elijah, seem to point to the effects of the revival of the two witnesses upon a part of the church.⁷⁹ The remainder, who will give glory to God, are evidently the rest of humanity.

This remarkable earthquake occurs when the two corpses come back to life, and ascend to heaven in a cloud. In the earthquake, 7,000 are slain. Young’s version reads: “killed in the earthquake were names of men—seven thousands.”

The phrase “names of men” occurs in Acts 1:15, where it refers to the number of the disciples; “the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.” It also occurs in the message to the church at Sardis, in Revelation:

Revelation 3:4
Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

The use of the phrase “names of men” elsewhere in the New Testament suggests those affected by this earthquake are saints! And that is also true of the number, 7,000. Paul wrote:

Romans 11:1-4
I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and

⁷⁴Hebrews 12:1

⁷⁵Jude 1:12

⁷⁶2 Peter 2:17

⁷⁷Revelation 11:19

⁷⁸E. W. Hengstenberg, *Op. cit.*

⁷⁹1 Kings 19:18

digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

The number 7,000 is associated with the number of the faithful remnant, in the time of Elijah. And there are other things in the prophecy of the two witnesses that allude to the story of Elijah; the heaven's being shut, and the duration of their ministry, which is 1,260 days.

All this seems very strange, unless the "earthquake" of verse 13 is something other than a literal one. Why would John record the number of deaths in a literal earthquake? That does not make much sense. Other earthquakes have taken many more lives, often tens of thousands. And what is it about this earthquake, that causes men to give glory to God? Other earthquakes, such as the great Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755, which killed tens of thousands, had an opposite effect, especially on the Enlightenment philosophers.

In prophecy, the *earth* or *land* is often symbolic; the "earth opens her mouth" in Revelation 12:16, and swallows up a "flood" that the serpent spews out of his mouth to carry away the woman, who represents the church. *Earth* in this chapter is obviously symbolic, as is *heaven*. It is one of the things in the prophecy that requires interpretation.

The word *earth* can be rendered *land*. And land here represents the promised land, and the spiritual inheritance of the saints.

If the "flood from the mouth of the serpent" is a flood of flawed interpretations, and false teachings; all these would be "swallowed up" when the saints discover the truth; this is one of the things that Jesus promised.⁸⁰ Only the *truth* can swallow up the serpent's *flood*.

The earthquake of Revelation 11:13 may be similar. The "land" represents the revelations of God, and so an "earthquake" may represent a shake-up in our understanding of the scriptures, especially of prophecy. In that case, the number who are "slain" may indeed refer to the faithful remnant. But they are not "slain" in a literal sense, but in a spiritual or metaphorical way. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."⁸¹ He seems to refer

to a spiritual kind of death; that is, the death of our old human nature. Jesus also said, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."⁸² The word "die" is meant in another sense. Obviously Christians still grow old and die in the flesh. Paul explained it:

Romans 8:13

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Paul taught that we need to "mortify," or put to death, the deeds of the flesh.

Colossians 3:5

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

I suggest that in the great earthquake described in John's prophecy, the 7,000 who are "slain" are those who believe the message of the gospel, and the scriptures, and respond by yielding to Christ; they are the saints. This fits the description given of the church, the bride and wife of the Lamb, in Revelation 19.

Revelation 19:7-9

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

She is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," implying that the saints will understand the message of prophecy. The above interpretation, that those "slain" by the earthquake are the saints, shortly before the seventh trumpet and the resurrection, also seems to explain the dilemma that was pointed out by Hengstenberg.

⁸⁰John 16:13

⁸¹John 12:24

⁸²John 11:26

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