

## E.M. Zerr Commentary On Revelation Chapter Eleven

**Verse 1.** *The reed given unto John* was a measuring rule and is a **symbol of the word of God**. This is clear from the fact that the angel gave it to John who was one of the apostles. We know the word of God is the divine standard for it is required in **1 Peter 4:11** that, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." At the time predicted by this chapter the apostasy ("falling away") was an established fact. The Bible was virtually taken from the people and the religious lives of men and women were judged by the decrees of Rome instead of by the word of God. This verse is a symbol of the true standard of the measurement as the apostles were given the authority to execute (**Matthew 19:28**). The **temple of God** means the church (**1 Corinthians 3:16, 17**). The **altar** was the center of worship in the Mosaic system, and it is referred to here as a symbol of the worship under that of Christ. Them that worship therein means Christians, whose personal lives must be measured (regulated) by the word of God and not by the decrees of Rome.

**Verse 2.** The court in the old temple was the part that was open to the people generally. It is referred to in our passage by its enemies. Under the Mosaic system the temple was under the jurisdiction of the Jews, and that is why those on the outside were called Gentiles. But in the fulfillment of the symbol **the word refers to the enemies of the true church, namely, the**. It must be borne in mind that all through this part of the book of Revelation, when reference is made either to Roma, or Babylon, or church and state, the same institution is always meant (if no exception is stated). That is because it was by the union of church and state that such a complete control was obtained over all the lives of the people. That is what is meant by the prediction that they were to tread under foot these arrangements of God. It is important to note that they did not tread under foot the temple nor the altar. That is because all through the Dark Ages there was a true church in existence in spite of the corruptions of Rome, although it was obscured more or less from the full public view.

**Forty and two months.** This is the first time this unit of time has appeared in this book, but it will reappear many times under various figures. It refers to the period of the apostasy or Dark Ages as it is familiarly termed by the teachers in the brotherhood. In literal terms it means 1260 years and the

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various forms in which it is stated will all sum up to that figure by observing the rule in prophetic language that the month has 30 days. The exact number of years that requires the 60 is reached by the dates on which the full rule of Rome began and ended. Some of the details of that subject are not available to me at present, but we may be sure that the figure is correct from the fact that each of the various forms in which it is stated brings out the same **1260**. And as to the correctness of the calculation we have historical verification of the round number in the words of Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He was an infidel and would have no motive for verifying the word of God, but he was an authentic historian whose ability and accuracy were unquestioned and I shall quote from him as follows: "In the long period of twelve hundred years, which elapsed between the reign of Constantine and the reformation of Luther, the worship of saints and relics corrupted the pure and perfect simplicity of the Christian model; and some symptoms of degeneracy may be observed even in the first generation which adopted and cherished this pernicious innovation."-Volume 2, Chapter 28, Page 615. The forty and two months of our verse gives us the **1260** by multiplying **forty-two** by thirty.

**Verse 3.** The word **power** is not in the Greek and is not necessary for the thought, which is that God would see that His two witnesses could speak. The **two witnesses** are the **Old** and **New** Testaments, the documents that Rome took away from the people. **To prophesy** is from PnoPHE'rEUo and Thayer's general definition is, "Speak forth by divine inspiration." Hence it includes the making of predictions and any form of speech that will impart information that is in harmony with the will of God. The word in our passage means that the Old and New Testaments would continue to exist and offer their information through the period designated. In symbolic language a day stands for a year (**Ezekiel 4:6**), hence the number of days named with words corresponds with the **1260 years**. **Clothed in sackcloth** symbolizes a condition of mourning, and it is used in this verse to refer to the mistreatment the word of God would receive all through the Dark Ages.

**Verse 4.** **Olive oil** was the chief source of artificial light in Bible times (**Exodus 27:20; Leviticus 24:2**). Olive oil requires olive trees and hence since the word of God is the only source of spiritual light. directly available

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to man, it is symbolized by olive trees. The phraseology in the last part of the verse is drawn from **Zechariah 4:11-14**.

**Verse 5.** *If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth*, etc. Both sentences of this verse mean the same. We know that no one was ever literally injured by the Bible, hence we must understand this to be a symbol. Its meaning is that God is jealous for his word and will inflict vengeance upon all who oppose it. In times of "special providence" He caused various judgments to come upon men who mistreated the divine word. Otherwise the time will come when eternal punishment will be inflicted upon all who have not given the word of God the respect it deserves.

**Verse 6.** This verse is to be understood in the light of the preceding one. God is so jealous of his word that if He deems it called for he will inflict such judgments as these itpon those who mistreat His word.

**Verse 7.** *Finished their testimony* does not mean they quit testifying for they will not do that while the world stands. It means when their testimony has been made complete--when the New Testament is all written. When John was writing it had not all been composed yet, for the book he was writing was to be a part of that Volume. About the time the whole Bible was composed and confirmed, which was after all the apostles had passed from life, was the time that Rome became alarmed at the influence of the Bible. Also that was near the time that the union of church and state arrived at its great height, in which it obtained such power as to control all the people under its dominions. We understand the beast to be Satan operating through the power of Rome. ***Shall kill them*** is figurative because the Bible never was actually killed, but as far as its opportunity for control over the lives of men was concerned the Book was slain. Let the reader remember that it is the two witnesses of verse 3 that the present verse is dealing with.

**Verse 8.** *Dead bodies* must be understood in the light of the comments on the preceding verse. We know the literal truth is that. For that reason the symbols in this verse must be interpreted accordingly. The city is the domain of the apostate church, and the reference to Sodom and Egypt is made because of the wickedness that was in those places and their enmity

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against the Lord. The Lord's crucifixion also is laid to the same kind of elements that plotted the attack upon the Bible.

**Verse 9.** The Bible continued to be a prohibited book all through the **Dark Ages** or the **1260 years**. That is the period represented here by three days and a half. The term is obtained by reducing three and a half years to days (1260), then remembering that a day in symbolic language stands for a year. ***Not suffer . . . put in graves.*** A refusal to give burial to a body that has been slain would indicate much disrespect for the body. The figure is used to denote the low esteem the church of Rome had for the word of God.

**Verse 10.** The teaching of the Bible stands in the way of the evil desires of men who wish to profit by a misuse of the religion of Christ which they profess to follow. It torments them as the verse states it, and therefore it would be a cause for rejoicing among such people to have it put out of the way. Two prophets are other terms for the Old and New Testament. It was a custom to exchange gifts upon occasions of special rejoicing which was a form of mutual congratulations. (See Nehemiah 8:12 and **Esther 9:22.**)

**Verse 11.** ***After three days and a half*** means after the Dark Ages of 1260 (verse 9). Spirit of life is figurative on the same principle as being dead in verse 7. The apostate church took the Bible away from the people and "slew" it. Luther and his co-workers gave it back to the people which put "life" back into it.

**Verse 12.** This is another symbolical passage for in fact the Bible was already in heaven. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89). The passage gives a symbolical performance that was to notify the enemies of the word of God that the forces of Heaven were recognizing it and were ready to welcome its renewed power on the earth. We know that such is the purpose of the verse for the closing statement is and their enemies beheld them.

**Verse 13.** **Earthquakes** in symbolic language stand for revolutions in governments and the powers that be. When the work of the reformers got underway it caused many disturbances among the rulers of the world, who

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had been holding undisputed sway over the people through the past centuries. The numerical units that are mentioned--tenth part and seven thousand --are too exact to be taken literally. The meaning is that a great part of the former tyrannies was overthrown. **Remnant gave glory to God.** When the work of the reformers became an established fact, it convinced some of the leaders that they had been in the wrong and were thus led to acknowledge their mistake. **Were affrighted** means they were compelled to feel a greater respect for God and his Book than they had before.

**Verse 14. Second woe is past.** The first was the scourge of the Dark Ages, the second was the dissolving of the union of church and state which was connected with the giving of the Bible back to the people. **The third woe** (not to God's people but to the enemies) is the resumption of power by the several kings and rulers, who had been deprived of their royal rights by the dominating power in Rome, that forced all people to be subject to its dictates.

**Verse 15. Kingdoms of the world** are not asked to become part of the kingdom of Christ. That would be virtually another union of church and state. What happened was a change in the attitude of the earthly kingdoms. Before the Reformation the kings on those thrones could not reign as Christ would have wished them to and as they personally would have been inclined. They had to take their instructions from Rome and rule their subjects as that head dictated. After the delusion was lifted by the insight into the scriptures that was afforded them through the work of the reformers, they learned that they could permit their subjects to regulate their own religious life as they believed Christ wished them to. **It is in that sense that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord.** Such a revolution was a woe to the "man of sin" in Rome for it meant the end of his arrogant rule. It is the third woe already predicted and now announced by the sounding of the seventh angel. He shall reign for ever and ever. Christ never ceased to be a king from the time He ascended to his Father's right hand (**1 Peter 3:22**), and will continue to be king until the time of His second coming (**1 Corinthians 15:24, 25**). But He was not

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recognized as king by these earthly rulers while they were under the control of Rome.

**Verse 16.** These are the **four and twenty elders** of chapter 4:4. They rejoiced to see the triumph of Him who was and is the saving virtue of both of the organized systems of religion given into the world by the Lord.

**Verse 17.** *Taken to thee thy great power* refers to the triumph of righteousness over evil when the word God was given back to the people of the various kingdoms.

**Verse 18.** **Nations were angry.** That is that part of them that still wished to profit by the deception of the people. *Thy wrath is come* means that God's vengeance had come upon the apostate church for abusing His word. The time of the dead also hath come, meaning the dead whose souls John saw under the altar (**chapter 6:9**). They cried for vengeance or judgment and were told that "their time" would come. Now that time has come and God has judged the apostate church by separating her from the advantages of temporal power. At the same time He gave reward to his faithful servants by having His word placed again in their hands. **Destroy them which destroy the earth** refers to the same evil men described before who planned to destroy (corrupt in the margin) the earth.

**Verse 19.** This verse is a symbol that is very significant. The Bible had been denied the people for years but is now restored to them. That is like letting the servants of God "in" on a great intimacy with the Lord. The original law was laid up by the ark in the Most Holy Place (**Exodus 25:16; Deuteronomy 10:2**). The people were never permitted to see into that place where the book of God was deposited. Likewise the people under Rome were shut off from seeing the Book through the years of the apostasy. But the work of the Reformation broke through that and forced open the privacy and gave them another view of the law. As an illustration of such a privilege John was given a view into the place where the ark was which he calls the ark of his testament or holy law. The lightnings and other things named refer to the commotions that were caused by the Reformation.