





Becoming Closer

The Angel

Cloud

Rainbow

Land and Sea

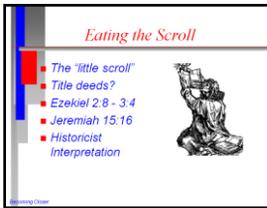
Legs like fiery pillars

Who is this angel?

Thus begins the “parenthesis” after the sixth trumpet. It is a long one, and chapters 10 and 11 should be considered together, if possible. We begin with the first image given.

Who is this angel? It is obvious that he is very powerful, and certain commentators have suggested that this is Christ Himself. Here is the symbolism, first:

- The cloud is well known; it is associated with the shekinah, the glory of God, which surrounded Him when He went as the cloud by day, fire by night with the Israelites. It represents the glory of God.
 - The rainbow represents the covenant made with Noah. As such, it is a sign of power also.
 - Standing on land and sea usually represents dominion over all things.
 - The legs like fiery pillars is often interpreted as being judgment. It at least (Daniel 10:3) represents an angel of great power, an archangel.
- The argument divides somewhat along line of interpretation. Those futurists who are also dispensationalists (generally, pre-Hal Lindsey) insist this must be Christ, based upon their interpretation of the scroll (upcoming). Others simply state that whoever this is, he is extremely powerful, for he holds up the angel of the seventh trumpet.



Becoming Closer

Eating the Scroll

The "little scroll"

Title deeds?

Ezekiel 2:8 - 3:4

Jeremiah 15:16

Historicist Interpretation

The "little scroll" of revelation causes a good deal of comment among the older futurists. Talbot, writing in 1937, holds to the dispensationalist view that this scroll is the same one that the Father gave to Christ earlier. Other views dissent; holding it to be quite distinct. This scroll is unsealed (and by now, so is the first one).

The dispensationalist view has gradually disappeared from futurist writings since Hal Lindsey began writing. Chuck Smith (a better theologian than Lindsey, who seems to have no particular strain) has it both ways. On one page it is the title deeds; turn the page and it's the word of God. Lindsey omits any mention of the title deeds.

The "title deeds" view seems justified only if you accept dispensationalism. Otherwise, the example of Ezekiel (and perhaps also Jeremiah, based on the one verse) seems definitive; this is the word of the Lord.

The Historicist is much more specific than that. They view it this way:

- The sixth trumpet ends at a specific time: 1453. Is there an event intimately associated with the "word of God" which happens shortly thereafter? Indeed there is: the Protestant Reformation. And what was the key to that Reformation? There is no doubt about that! It was the translation into the common tongues of the Scriptures.
- The example of Ezekiel is specific: he is to preach to an unhearing people, in his case Israel. Was the Gospel then preached with power?
- Note also that John is told that "he" must "prophesy again" to kings and such. John is almost 100 years old as he writes this. How can this be -- except when you remember that he is the last of the Apostles, the last of the Gospel writers. In his writing he can "prophesy again," and the Reformation is the time when he certainly did that. To this day, the first book of the Bible translated by the Wycliffe translators into any new language is the Gospel of John. John himself now becomes part of the symbolism - the carrier of the *logos*.
- Finally, there is one difference between John and Ezekiel. Ezekiel eats; John eats, but the result in his stomach is bitter, though the taste is sweet. Does this not describe the Reformation, a time of bitter struggle?



Becoming Closer

Seven Thunders

Divine Judgment

Deliverance of Jerusalem?

"The" Seven Thunders

NOT from the angel

why are they sealed?

The seven thunders should be, at the very least, a lesson in humility to any expositor of Revelation -- for they are unknown. John has been ordered to "seal them up." What could they mean?

- Thunder is associated with God's judgment -- see, for example, the plagues of Egypt.
- There is some association of thunder with God's deliverance of Jerusalem (Isaiah 29:6-7, where "Ariel" is a code name for Jerusalem).
- But generally, there is little to be said about these thunders. Two points may be made from the text:

1. They are referred to as "the" seven thunders -- the definite article exists in the Greek as well. It is as if we are supposed to know what these thunders are; they are "the" seven thunders.
2. We are not told *why* John was to seal them up. We might begin by assuming that they are sealed so that we might remain ignorant. But ask the question: if so, why were we told everything else? Either this is to prevent us from "knowing too much" -- or the thunders were sealed because *they were not from God*.

If the latter is true (and it is a speculation) then John would be told not to write them down as we would mistake them for God's words. What could these thunders be? They are nowhere referenced in Scripture, so they would have to be something known to the Christian at the time. The Christian of the Reformation would have had little trouble identifying them: they would be the Papal Bulls, thundered (the word used then) at those who would dare to publish the Scripture in the language of the people.



Becoming Closer

No More Delay

"Mystery" to be "accomplished." Verse 7: "announced" Time of the Antichrist? Limit to God's Patience.

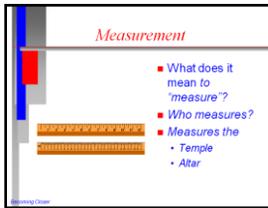
The angel announces that the "mystery" of God is about to be accomplished, with no more delay. Indeed, the word "announced" in verse 7 comes from the same root we use for our English word "evangelize." From this, many have concluded that a great wave of evangelism would sweep over the world (or did, as in the Reformation). Some have concluded that this commences the time of the Antichrist, but this seems to be distinctly a minority view, and particularly associated with the amillennialists. One thing is certain: it means that there is a limit to the time that God will have patience with evil men. And that time is running out.



Measure the Temple

(Rev 11:1-2 NIV) I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there."
(2) But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.





Becoming Closer

Measurement

What does it mean to “measure”?

Who measures?

Measures the

Temple

Altar

What does it mean to “measure”?

Measuring something is not usually an idle exercise of a yardstick. We do it for a purpose. Specifically, we do it to evaluate the fitness of something for a particular task; i.e., is that board long enough? Is it too long, and should I cut it? So this passage then implies the *evaluation* of something -- namely, the Temple.

Who measures?

Note carefully that John has now ceased to be a recording witness to the events described and become a *participant*. This is important, I believe. If the historicist view is correct, the fact that John is an Apostle is extremely significant. It implies two things:

- The measurement is done by the Apostle (i.e., by his writings, hence, by implication, the Scripture).
- The measure is a divine measure (God gave it to John via the angel)

Measures the Temple

What temple? A temple is measured, but it cannot be the one John was familiar with in Jerusalem. That one was destroyed 25 years earlier when the Romans sacked Jerusalem. Hence, it must be one of two things:

- The millennial Temple, foreseen by Ezekiel in Ezekiel Chapters 40-48. This is the view favored by the futurists, and is largely so on the basis of dispensationalism. It is also seen as such by some poetic interpreters. This would also correspond well with the interruption of sacrifice described in Daniel 9:27.
- The Temple could also be a symbol for the church. It is so used in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16. Interestingly, if this is the correct interpretation, then the “man of sin” described in 2 Thessalonians may be in the church -- for 2 Thessalonians 2:4 says that he sets himself up “in God’s Temple.”

Altar

Little is made of measuring the altar by most commentators. It is worth some mention, particularly in the symbolic sense. In the literal sense, the distinction is the “outer court” -- meaning, don’t measure, or evaluate, the unbelievers -- that’s God’s work, not John the Apostle.

But to measure the altar would mean to measure (i.e., evaluate) the worship. In the symbolic sense, this would mean that worship was now to be evaluated by the standards of God.



Becoming Closer

Who are these witnesses?

Literal View

Elijah and

Moses or

Enoch

Figurative View

Church

Old & New Testament

Literal View

Elijah and

Why Elijah? Many feel this is required by the prophecy recorded as this: (Mal 4:5-6 NIV) "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. {6} He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Some feel this was fulfilled in John the Baptist (see Matthew 11:13-14); others feel it is to be fulfilled twice. John the Baptist denied that he was Elijah (John 1:21)

One telling point for Elijah: he had the demonstrable power to call down fire from heaven; he also could command drought. Most important: he never died. It is appointed unto man once to die (as the KJV has it) -- and he never did. Virtually all literalists interpreters (futurist or poetic) name Elijah first.

Moses or

Moses? Moses also has a claim or two on this, and the majority of the literalists accept him as the second witness. The powers cited for the witnesses which were not covered by Elijah are indeed covered by Moses. When the Jews speak of the "Law and the Prophets" they most commonly represent them by Moses and Elijah. Most Orthodox Jews would recognize the phrase, and as such they would be the most powerful witnesses a Jew could imagine -- an important point to the dispensationalist, and one carried over by more recent futurists. More recent futurists would also add two other points:

- In a curious passage in Jude (verse 9; there is only one chapter) Michael is said to have disputed with Satan over the body of Moses. Why was Satan interested in Moses' body -- unless to prevent the fulfillment of this prophecy?
- Moses never entered the Promised Land; he has, if you will, unfinished business there. And Ezekiel prophesies that the land will be divided again.

Enoch

Enoch is little known; the main reason for his "candidacy is that he too never died.

This is a minority view.

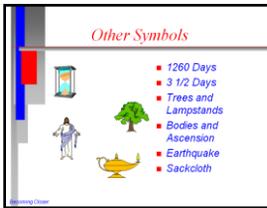
Figurative View

Church

In the opinion of some poetic writers, this represents the church. The rationale behind "two" is that everything must be confirmed in the mouth of two witnesses. This is very much a minority view.

Old & New Testament

For reasons which will be presented in detail later, the historicist view is that these two witnesses are the Old Testament and the New Testament.



Becoming Closer

Other Symbols

1260 Days

3 1/2 Days

Trees and Lampstands Bodies and Ascension Earthquake

Sackcloth

1260 Days

There are two basic views of the 1260 days: literal days (required by the futurist theory; there is no time for anything else) and one day = one year (based on Daniel 9:24-26, and the time it took for Messiah to come). If the days are literal, they are understood to be the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel (in which the days are years), and hence, in the futurist view, the first half of the Tribulation.

In the Historicist view, these are 1260 years, taken at various dates. The most common one is AD 533 - AD 1793, for reasons which will be detailed later.

3 1/2 Days

The 3 1/2 days are likewise understood either literally or prophetically. If literally, they are (by definition, almost) the second half of Daniel's 70th week, and thus constitute the second half of the Tribulation period, also known as the "Great Tribulation." This therefore ties this section back to the fifth seal of Revelation.

In the historicist view, these are three and half years -- in general, viewed as the three and a half years of "the Terror" in the French Revolution.

Trees and Lampstands

These figures are taken from Zechariah 4:2-14. In that passage, the lamps (there are seven on one lampstand there) are said to be the seven eyes of the Lord (signifying his omniscience). The two olive branches (trees here) are said to be the "anointed ones." If you recall the fact that "Anointed One" is the meaning of Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek), and comes from the one on whom the Spirit rests, you can see that these are those who

- give light, and therefore see all, and
- are anointed (inspired? led by?) the Holy Spirit.

Bodies and Ascension

The literal interpretation is fairly obvious, and has been alluded to before this. The figurative interpretation is also fairly obvious; it means that while "dead" they are ineffective; but they not only come back to life but ascend -- which would mean they would have even more power than before. We shall see how the historicist view depends on this.

Earthquake

This could be either a literal earthquake, or a shaking among the people of the earth (as before).

Sackcloth

Sackcloth, the symbol of mourning, is in fact intended to signify a time of trouble. Any interpretation fits this; the futurist holds that they prophesy during the Tribulation (no problem there); the historicist says during the Dark Ages.

<i>The Historicist Argument</i>	
■ Measuring the Temple	■ 1260 Days
• Apostolic	• Sackcloth
• Recall the Scroll	• Five Mentions
■ Character of the Two Witnesses	• Various Times
• The Lord's	• "Finished?"
• Trees and Lampstands	■ 3 1/2 Days
• Plagues	• French Revolution
	• Ensuing Triumph

Becoming Closer

The Historicist Argument

Measuring the Temple

Apostolic

Recall the Scroll

Character of the Two Witnesses

Two Witnesses

The Lord's

Trees and Lampstands

Plagues

1260 Days

Sackcloth

Five Mentions

Various Times

"Finished?"

3 1/2 Days

French Revolution

Ensuing Triumph

The historicist argument is best understood when presented "as a piece." It runs like this:

Measuring the Temple

The Temple (= the church) is measured by the Apostle; measured by a divine measuring rod; measured at a time when there is no physical temple. The interpretation (recalling that John has eaten the scroll, and recalling that Ezekiel was to preach to Israel after eating his scroll) means this: After the time of the sixth seal (which, by this scheme, ends in 1453) the church is to be measured (evaluated) by a divine standard from the hands of the Apostle. This was fulfilled -- stunningly -- in the changes to the church which came about by that "scroll" - the translation of the Scriptures into the language of the people. John preached again in his Gospel in the hands of his descendants.

The Two Witnesses

Why do we hear that the two witnesses are the Old and New Testaments? Consider the match up:

- There are two witnesses; there are two testaments.
- "Testament" comes from "testify" -- just what a witness does.
- They are the *Lord's* witnesses -- inspired by His Holy Spirit.
- Remember the lampstands? They give light -- and what is the "light unto my feet?"
- And the olive trees? They give oil -- the symbol of the Holy Spirit (recall "Anointed One?") -- which is used to produce that light. The Scriptures are inspired
- The plagues and fire are covered (sort of) by the admonitions on the power of the Scripture (see Rev. 19:11-15, 22:18-19)

1260 Days

The 1260 days are taken as years, in accordance with the general method given in Daniel. Sackcloth, the sign of mourning or trouble, is appropriate for the "captivity" of the Scriptures.

Five mentions of 1260 days are given in Scripture:

- The youngest horn of Daniel's beast from the sea (Daniel 7:25) - which is clearly associated with Rome.
- The outer court being given to the Gentiles, two references to the flight of the woman, and the period of the witnesses in Revelation.

These are taken as all being the same time. The time is that in which Rome (represented by the Papacy) persecutes the Word -- the Scripture. Two time schemes have been advanced:

- From the time Phocas was declared "Universal Bishop" AD 606 to 1866, when the Pope lost his temporal dominions in Italy.
- From the time when Justinian decreed the whole church subject to the bishop of Rome (AD 533) to the "death" of the witnesses - the atheism of the French Revolution (1793).

Their testimony is said to be "finished" - not in the sense it ends, but that it is complete.

The difficulty with this scheme comes in the interpolation of "the city." It is clear from the text that Jerusalem is implied. The only way to make this theory work is to state that the "city where their Lord was crucified" means Rome (based upon an interpretation of the Roman mass).

The next step is easier, for after the French Revolution the Gospel saw its greatest expansion since the days of the early church.

The Seventh Trumpet

(Rev 11:14-19 NIV) The second voice has passed, the third voice is coming soon. [14] The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." [15] And the four angels, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, [17] saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. [18] The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great-- and for destroying those who destroy the earth." [19] Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple were seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.



Becoming Closer

The Seventh Trumpet

“The time has come” Ark in the Temple

2nd woe is past

Rapture?

Millennium?

The time has come -- but not in Revelation. This is the announcement of the final act, and the very next thing John will give us is a flashback. This is unfortunate, for literal interpreters now have a serious problem, which will be taken up next week. There are some things we can learn here:

- The announcement is that the time of judgment has come; this does not preclude any more events -- it just means that the opening trumpet has sounded. The judgment will proceed with the seven bowls of wrath, following our flashback.
- It does mean that the second woe is finished; the seven bowls are the third woe, or seventh trumpet.
- Perhaps misled by chapter and verse markings, for this section might better be put together with chapter 12 (which would make it part of the flashback, and the hallelujah would be part of that), some amillennialists consider that the Rapture now occurs.
- Others, notably post-millennialists, insist that this is the beginning of the millennium.
- One thing for sure: the trouble isn't over yet.