

**Intro.** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is most-known for writing about Sherlock Holmes, the great British detective able to solve virtually any mystery through astute observations, numerous disguises & forensic science. Later stories of Holmes had him saying about the most obvious problems, "Elementary, my dear Watson." Even Sherlock Holmes couldn't solve the challenges of today's text from our "Battle Trumpets" series. Of all the books in the Bible, Revelation is the most difficult to understand. Of all the chapters in Revelation, chapter 11 is the most challenging for scholars. Many agree this is at least about "God's Witnesses during the Great Tribulation."

Theme: Final announcement of hope

Background: As John receives a vision of 7 trumpets sounding, the sounding of the 6<sup>th</sup> led to an interlude in chapters 10-11 before the final trumpet.

- You know how you may go to a restaurant & order more food than you can eat in one setting so you take some home with you? Well, today, I'm going to overfeed you (because there is so much here & there's not a good place to break it) but you can take notes & take home what you can't digest here, okay?

### **Explanation of the Text:**

#### **I. The measuring probably refers to protecting the people of God (11:1-2)**

- Scholars cannot agree on this reference to the temple—is it a literal temple rebuilt in the final days before Christ returns (a tribulation temple) or is it a reference to heaven & those already there or what?
- The word for temple here is one of two in the NT & this one (naos) refers to the holy of holies & the altar would be the altar of incense, which represented prayers to God
- The measuring seems to set the limits from what is holy from what is profane—measuring or counting is similar to sealing them for protection (cf. 7:1-8)
- The nations, pagans, people set against God will trample the holy city (Jerusalem—see Psalm 48; Isaiah 48:2; Daniel 9:24; Nehemiah 11:1, 18; Matthew 27:53) for 42 months

Illus: When you buy a piece of property, you should get information on the plot, the size of the land (measuring 80' by 120' or whatever)—it marks what belongs & what doesn't—in the same way, measuring certain portions of the temple showed who belonged to God & who didn't

#### **II. These events take place the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation (11:2-3)**

- References to 42 months (11:2; 13:5) & 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6) are the same—see also "time, times & half a time" (12:14)
- Because of the great darkness surrounding these last years, most scholars agree it is during the last half of the Tribulation, or what we call the Great Tribulation

#### **III. The 2 witnesses minister in the spirit of Moses & Elijah (11:3-6)**

- The last prophet in the OT, Malachi 4:4-5, refers to Moses & Elijah & the miracles performed by these witnesses are like those performed by Moses & Elijah (they also stood with Jesus at the Mt. of Transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-11, foreshadowing Christ coming in His glory)

Illus: I've been teaching the Women on Mission about Exodus & I've entitled the study "Gods at War" because of what Yahweh says in Exodus 12:12 about executing judgments on the gods of Egypt through the plagues—in many ways, God will be at war in the last days against all the false religions of this world

- The references to 2 olive trees & 2 lampstands come from Zechariah 4:1-14 concerning Joshua the high priest & Zerubbabel the governor—the olive trees produced the oil for the lamps to burn
- They wore sackcloth as a sign of calling people to repentance
- They could not be harmed until they finished their testimony & anyone trying to harm them received punishment (the fire from their mouths may be words of conviction, much like Peter to Ananias in Acts 5)

#### **IV. The beast from the abyss is the Antichrist (11:7)**

- Though this beast is introduced here, he is called the "beast rising out of the sea" in 13:1 & clearly does the work of Satan as the antichrist (more on him when we get to that section)

Illus: You teenagers have parents who give you a curfew for your safety, because they know very little good occurs by unmarried people after 11 pm or midnight—you'll just get in trouble. In the same way, nothing ever good comes up out of the abyss

**V. The witnesses will be killed & their death will be watched & celebrated by the world (11:8-10)**

- The Antichrist will kill them in Jerusalem, which will become so corrupt it is referenced spiritually as Sodom (immorality) & Egypt (oppressive)
- The whole world will watch (probably through television & Internet) & celebrate by even giving gifts (the anti-Christmas event)—underscores the wickedness of unbelievers
- They won't be buried, so others cannot visit their graves or to erase the memory of these witnesses without tomb-like inscriptions
- The world celebrates because they believed the witnesses tormented them—the twisted thinking of the world is to believe our message of hope & deliverance from their sin actually convicts them, but not enough so they repent, but they view it as torment—we see the same things happening today with the world calling Christians to accept their lifestyles & calling anything which speaks against immorality as hate-speech

**VI. The witnesses will be resurrected & ascend to heaven (11:11-12)**

- While some claim this represents the church's rapture, you have to believe these witnesses symbolize the church all along & the signs they perform makes that unlikely
- This appears to be another sign from God to the world about His character & abilities—He can do all things & calls people to repent

**VII. A great earthquake will kill 7,000 leaders & others will confess God (11:13)**

- This is part of the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet, just before the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet & a great shaking of Jerusalem
- That 7,000 were "names of men" may indicate they were known, as some type of leaders
- There are 2 ways to take "gave glory to God"—either as praise (with repentance) or simply admission of His greatness (like Achan confessed to his sin, Joshua 7:19-20)—the vast majority of uses in the Bible refer to repentance & salvation (Acts 12:23; Romans 4:20; Revelation 14:7; 16:9; 19:7)

**Application of the Text:**

**I. Trust in the protection of the Lord, for He watches over His own (11:1-7a)**

- Just as God protected His own in the 10 plagues on Egypt (protecting His people in the land of Goshen on most of the plagues), so He can protect His people from His wrath in the end

**II. Give witness to the hope you have in Jesus (11:3, 7a)**

- You may not have the power of these witnesses & you may never be a Billy Graham or Bill Bright, but God has uniquely placed you in your community & workplace & school & family to be a witness for Him

**III. Believe in the Lord who can work miracles (11:5-6)**

- Some people are so convinced by science & nature that they have no room for believing in miracles, but the God who created this world can intervene & do the supernatural

**IV. Give glory to God now before it's too late (11:13)**

- If this is a reference to genuine repentance & praise toward God, then it is the last chance people will have to trust Him, but why wait? Trust Him now!

**Conc.** One of my favorite shows as a teenager was *Unsolved Mysteries* (play 15 seconds of sound track), a documentary-based show on unsolved murders, missing persons & other mysterious events. In September 1997, a university student was murdered in my hometown of Vincennes & a little more than a year later, cameras & crew from *Unsolved Mysteries* showed up to interview people & asked to film at my parents' home (off-site). After airing in April 1999, they were able to solve the crime 3 months later. Not every mystery gets solved, but the mystery of how to be right with God was solved long ago as God revealed it to His apostles who have passed it on to us—repentance from sin & trusting in Jesus as Messiah & Lord to have your sins forgiven, peace with God & eternal life. But though this mystery is solved, many don't act on it by surrendering to the Lord. Listen to these witnesses & trust the Lord today.