

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 354 – December 20th – Revelation 11:1-19

Works frequently referenced in these notes on the book of Revelation

Morris, Leon	<i>The Revelation of St John</i> (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969
Mounce, Robert H	<i>The Book of Revelation</i> (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977
Peterson, Eugene H	<i>Reversed Thunder</i> , San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1991
Witherington, Ben	<i>Revelation</i> (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

Chapter 11

Mounce, and others, consider chapter 11 to correspond to the contents of the little book of chapter 10. This chapter is particularly difficult to interpret.

Witherington comments, "Koester suggests that in Rev 11 we have an overture to the last half of the book, introducing us in summary form to the conflict between God's people and the Beast that is recounted in Rev 12-19."

Verse 1

Καὶ ἐδόθη μοι κάλαμος ὅμοιος ῥάβδῳ, λέγων· Ἐγειρε καὶ μέτρησον τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν αὐτῷ.

ἐδόθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s διδωμι
καλαμος, ου m reed, measuring rod
ὅμοιος, α, ον like
ῥαβδος, ου f stick, rod, sceptre
ἐγειρω raise
μετρω measure
ναος, ου m temple, sanctuary

"The measuring of the temple is a symbolic way of declaring its preservation. The background is probably Ezekiel 40-42 where the prophet in a vision watches every part of the temple measured with painstaking care." Mounce. Mounce considers the temple to be a picture of the church and its measuring to be equivalent to the sealing of 7:1-8. "God will give spiritual sanctuary to the faithful believers against the demonic assault of the Antichrist." Witherington thinks that Joh's use of ναος, which means the inner sanctuary rather than the temple complex, also supports the idea of protection.

θυσιαστήριον, ου n altar
προσκυνεω worship

Verse 2

καὶ τὴν αὐλὴν τὴν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ναοῦ ἔκβαλε ἔξωθεν, καὶ μὴ αὐτὴν μετρήσης, ὅτι ἐδόθη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν πατήσουσιν μῆνας τεσσαράκοντα δύο.

αὐλη, ης f court, courtyard
ἔξωθεν adv & prep outside
ἐκβαλε Verb, aor act imperat, 2s ἐκβαλλω
throw out, cast out
ἐδόθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s διδωμι
ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation; τα ἔ. Gentiles

"The distinction between the sanctuary and the outer court is a way of pointing up the limitations placed upon pagan hostility (cf. Morris...). It may physically decimate the witnessing church (in 11:7 the two witnesses are killed), but it cannot touch the real source of life (the witnesses are raised and ascend to heaven; 11:11-12)." Mounce.

πολις, εως f city, town
ἅγιος, α, ον holy

Another designation for the church.

πατεω trans trample
μην, μηνος m month
τεσσαρακοντα forty
δουο gen & acc δυο dat δυοισιν two

"The temporal designation of forty-two months (11:2; 13:5) is also given in Revelation as 1260 days (11:3; 12:6) and 'a time, and times, and half a time' (12:14). Its primary reference is to the period of Jewish suffering under the Syrian despot Antiochus Epiphanes in 167-164 BC. It became a conventional symbol for a limited period of time during which evil would be allowed free rein. In Luke 21:24 it is called 'the times of the Gentiles'." Mounce. Witherington comments, "The reference to forty-two months comes from Daniel and is just another way of rendering the period of three and a half years, that final penultimate period before the end of history."

Verse 3

καὶ δώσω τοῖς δυσιν μάρτυσίν μου, καὶ προφητεύσουσιν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα, περιβεβλημένοι σάκκου·.

δώσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s δίδωμι
δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two
μαρτυς, μαρτυρος dat pl μαρτυσιν m
witness

The two witnesses are modelled upon Moses and Elijah (cf. 2 Kings 1:10ff; 1 Kings 17:1; Ex 7:14-18; 8:12). They are a symbol of the witnessing church. Witherington thinks that the reference may be to two specific churches that are undergoing persecution and even martyrdoms – for instance, Smyrna and Philadelphia.

χιλιάς Noun, nom s or Adjective, f acc pl
χιλιας, αδος f a thousand
διακοσιοι, αι, α two hundred
ἑξήκοντα sixty
περιβεβλημένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
περιβαλλω put on, clothe, dress
σακκος, ου m sackcloth, mourning dress

Cf. Zech 13:4. Their message is a call to repentance and is reflected in their dress.

Verse 4

Οὗτοι εἰσιν αἱ δύο ἐλαῖαι καὶ αἱ δύο λυχνίαι αἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῆς γῆς ἐστῶτες.

ἐλαια, ας f olive tree
λυχνια, ας f lampstand

A symbol of the church in chapter 1. Witherington adds, "The witnesses are called olive trees for they carry in them the fuel by which the candlestick could be lit."

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before
ἐστῶτες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl ἵστημι

Cf. Zech 4. "By these two metaphors John is emphasizing a truth concerning the church which has always been true but is especially appropriate in times of persecution – that the power and authority for effective witness lie in the Spirit of God." Mounce. Cf. Zech 4:6.

Verse 5

καὶ εἴ τις αὐτοὺς θέλει ἀδικῆσαι, πῦρ ἐκπορεύεται ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῶν καὶ κατεσθίει τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτῶν· καὶ εἴ τις θελήσῃ αὐτοὺς ἀδικῆσαι, οὕτως δεῖ αὐτὸν ἀποκτανθῆναι.

θέλω wish, will
ἀδικεω wrong, harm
πυρ, ος n fire
ἐκπορευομαι go or come out
στομα, τος n mouth
κατεσθιω eat up, devour

Cf. 2 Kings 1.

ἐχθρος, α, ον enemy
οὕτως adv. thus, in this way
δει impersonal verb it is necessary
ἀποκτείνω kill, put to death

Verse 6

οὗτοι ἔχουσιν τὴν ἐξουσίαν κλεῖσαι τὸν οὐρανόν, ἵνα μὴ ὑέτὸς βρέχῃ τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς προφητείας αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων στρέφειν αὐτὰ εἰς αἶμα καὶ πατάξαι τὴν γῆν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ ὅσακις ἐὰν θελήσωσιν.

ἐξουσια, ας f authority, power
κλειω shut, shut up, lock
ὑετος, ου m rain
βρεχω rain, send rain, wet

Cf 1 Kings 17:1; Jas 5:12-18.

στρεφω turn
αἶμα, ατος f blood

Cf. Ex 7:20.

πατασσω strike
πληγη, ης f plague, misfortune

Cf. Ex 8:12.

ὅσακις adv. as often as; ὅσακις ἐὰν
whenever

"God's servants in the new dispensation have just as great resources as did Moses and Elijah in the old." Morris.

Verse 7

Καὶ ὅταν τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν, τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου ποιήσει μετ' αὐτῶν πόλεμον καὶ νικήσει αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀποκτενεῖ αὐτούς.

ὅταν when
τελεω complete, finish
μαρτυρια, ας f testimony, witness
θηριον, ου n animal, beast
ἀναβαινω come up, ascend

Mounce says this is "the major antagonist of the church in the last days ... the Antichrist."

πολεμος, ου m war, battle

Supports the view that the witnesses are not individuals but a picture of a large group.

νικαω conquer, overcome
ἀποκτενεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἀποκτείνω
kill, put to death

Verse 8

καὶ τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, ἣτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σόδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος, ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη.

πτωμα, τος n body, corpse
πλατεια, ας f wide street
πολις, εως f city, town

ὅστις, ἡτίς, ὅ τι who, which
 πνευματικῶς spiritually, symbolically
 Σοδομα, ὠν n Sodom
 ὅπου adv. where
 σταυροῦ crucify

Mounce says that the reference is to Rome. "The witnesses meet their death at the hands of the Antichrist, whose universal dominion was in John's day epitomised by the power of Rome. The inclusion of a reference to the crucifixion is not to identify a geographical location but to illustrate the response of paganism to righteousness." Witherington, however, writes, "We must see the reference to Sodom and Egypt as a statement about the spiritual status of Jerusalem. It was a city occupied and, in fact, trampled underfoot in AD 95 by Gentiles. 'Sodom' was a prophetic title for Jerusalem that implied its judgment (Is 1:9-10; Jer 23:14; Lam 4:6). In other words it is a place of oppression, slavery and gross immorality." Morris thinks that the great city is "every city and no city. It is civilized man in organized community."

Verse 9

καὶ βλέπουσιν ἐκ τῶν λαῶν καὶ φυλῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ἔθνῶν τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν ἡμέρας τρεῖς καὶ ἡμισυ, καὶ τὰ πτώματα αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀφίουσιν τεθῆναι εἰς μνήμα.

βλεπῶ see, look
 λαος, ου m people
 φυλη, ης f tribe, nation
 γλωσσα, ης f tongue, language
 ἔθνος, ους n nation
 τρεις, τρια gen τριων dat τρισιν three
 ἡμισυς, εια, υ gen ἡμισους half

The three and a half days of their public exposure corresponds to the three and a half years of their ministry.

πτῶμα, τος n body, corpse
 ἀφίουσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl ἀφιημι allow
 τεθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin τιθημι place
 μνημα, τος f tomb, grave

Witherington comments, "That the bodies of the witnesses were not allowed to be buried was considered in the ancient near east the ultimate way to disgrace or shame someone (see Isa 5:25; Ps Sol 2:30 ff.)."

Verse 10

καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς χαίρουσιν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς καὶ εὐφραίνονται, καὶ δῶρα πέμψουσιν ἀλλήλοις, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ δύο προφητῆται ἔβασάνισαν τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

κατοικεω live

The unbelieving world.

χαίρω rejoice, be glad
 εὐφραίνονται Verb, pres mid/pass indic, 3 pl
 εὐφραίνω make glad; pass be glad
 δῶρον, ου n gift
 πέμπω send
 ἀλλήλων, οἰς, ους reciprocal pronoun one another

Cf. Esth 9:19,22.

βασανίζω torment, disturb

"The world has always shown its hostility to the message of God – a truth which ought to give some concern to the contemporary church existing for the most part rather comfortably in a world of increasing wickedness." Mounce

Verse 11

Καὶ μετὰ τὰς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ ἡμισυ πνεῦμα ζωῆς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσηλθεν ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔστησαν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν, καὶ φόβος μέγας ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τοὺς θεωροῦντας αὐτούς·

ζωη, ης f life
 εἰσηλθεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s εἰσερχομαι enter

Cf. Ezek 37.

ἔστησαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl ἵστημι stand
 πόδας Noun, acc pl πους, ποδος m foot
 φόβος, ου m fear
 ἐπέπεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἐπιπιπτο fall upon, come upon
 θεωρεω see, watch, observe

"Since murder is the last resort of man, what can be done about those who rise from the dead! The resurrection of the church is a sure indication that God possesses the ultimate authority over life and death." Mounce.

Verse 12

καὶ ἤκουσαν φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης αὐτοῖς· Ἀνάβατε ὧδε, καὶ ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, καὶ ἔθεώρησαν αὐτοὺς οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτῶν.

ἀνάβατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl
 ἀναβαίνω come up, ascend
 ὧδε adv here
 νεφέλη, ης f cloud

Echoes of what is said of Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11. A sign of God's vindication of his witnesses.

ἐχθρος, α, ον enemy

Verse 13

καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ᾠρᾳ ἐγένετο σεισμὸς μέγας, καὶ τὸ δέκατον τῆς πόλεως ἔπεσεν, καὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῷ σεισμῷ ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτὰ, καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἔμφοβοι ἐγένοντο καὶ ἔδωκαν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that
 ᾠρα, ας f hour, moment
 ἐγένετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s γινομαι
 σεισμος, ου m earthquake

Cf. Ezek 38:19-20; Zech 14:5.

δέκατος, η, ον tenth
 ἔπεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s πιπτω fall,
 fall down
 ἀπεκτάνθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl
 ἀποκτεινω see v.7
 ὄνομα, τος n name, person
 χιλιας, αδος f a thousand
 ἑπτα seven
 λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other
 ἔμφοβος, ον full of fear
 ἔδωκαν Verb, aor act indic, 3pl διδομι
 δόξα, ης f glory

Some think that this is repentance and even conversion. Mounce says, "Kiddle is correct in his view that in that day 'the great mass of mankind will have committed the unpardonable crime of deifying evil.' They give glory to God 'when they are compelled by overriding terror to recognize that the true Lord is Christ and not Antichrist'." On the other hand, Fiorenza writes, "It is crucial to recognize that Revelation's rhetoric of judgment expresses hope for the conversion of nine-tenths of the nations in response to Christian witness and preaching. Otherwise, one will not understand that the author advocates a theology of justice rather than a theology of hate and resentment." Similarly, Koester points out the contrast when one compares 1 Kings 19:18 to Rev 11:13. In the former, all but 7,000 embrace idolatry, in the latter all but 7,000 glorify God. "The conversion of the nations, rather than their destruction is God's will for the world."

Verse 14

Ἡ οὐαὶ ἡ δευτέρα ἀπῆλθεν· ἰδοὺ ἡ οὐαὶ ἡ τρίτη ἔρχεται ταχύ.

οὐαὶ woe!
 δευτερος, α, ον second
 τριτος, η, ον third
 ταχυ adv quickly, without delay, soon

Verses 15-19

The remainder of chapter 11 is a "summary of all that is still to come" Barclay.

Verse 15

Καὶ ὁ ἑβδομος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένοντο φωναὶ μεγάλαι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγοντες· Ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

ἑβδομος, η, ον seventh
 σαλπίζω sound a trumpet
 κοσμος, ου m world
 βασιλευω rule, reign

"Glasson refers to the common saying, 'It's all over bar the shouting,' and remarks that the only difference is that the shout of victory has already begun... During his earthly ministry Jesus had resisted the tempting offer of Satan to hand over the kingdoms of this world in exchange for worship (Mt 4:8-9). Now this sovereignty passes to him as a rightful possession in view of the successful completion of his messianic ministry." Mounce.

Verse 16

Καὶ οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι οἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενοι ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους αὐτῶν ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ,

εἴκοσι twenty
 τέσσαρες neut τέσσαρα gen τεσσαρων four
 ἐνώπιον prep with gen before
 καθημαι sit, sit down
 θρονος, ου m throne
 ἔπεσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl πιπτω fall,
 fall down
 προσωπον, ου n face
 προσκυνεω worship

Cf. 4:10; 5:8,14; 19:4.

Verse 17

λέγοντες· Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δυνάμιν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας.

εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks
 παντοκρατωρ, ορος m Almighty

Cf. 1:8; 4:8. "In the same two passages, as well as in 1:4, he is the one who is, who was, and who is to come. In the present verse (and in 16:5) the third member is omitted because his coming is no longer seen as future. Already he has come and entered upon his reign." Mounce.

εἴληφας Verb, perf act indic, 2 s λαμβανω

The perfect indicates a permanent taking of power.

δυναμις, εως f power
 βασιλευω see v.15.

Verse 18

καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὠργίσθησαν, καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργὴ σου καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθεῖροντας τὴν γῆν.

ἔθνη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔθνος, οὗς n
nation, people; τα ἑ. Gentiles

ὠργίσθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl

ὀργίζομαι be furious, be angry

ὀργη, ἡς f wrath, anger

Cf. Ps 2:2,5,12.

καιρὸς, οὗ m time, appointed time

νεκρὸς, α, ον dead

κριθῆναι Verb, pres pass infin κρινω judge

The triumph of God's wrath is proclaimed in 14:10-11; 16:15-21 and 20:8-9.

δοῦναι verb, aor act infin δίδωμι

μισθός, οὗ m pay, wages, reward

δούλος, οὗ m slave, servant

ἅγιος, α, ον holy

φοβέομαι fear, reverence

"A reasonable translation would be, 'To thy servants the prophets, and to the saints – those who fear thy name, both small and great.'

There are two groups (prophets and saints), who are further described as fearing the name of God. This arrangement holds intact the expression 'thy servants the prophets' (which occurs again at 10:7) and joins to it a second group (the saints) as in 16:6 ('the blood of the saints and prophets'), 18:24 (order reversed), and 22:9 ('the prophets and ... them that keep the words of this book' – that is, saints)."

Mounce.

μικρός, α, ον little, small, insignificant

διαφθεῖραι Verb, aor act infin διαφθειρω
destroy, ruin

Cf. 2 Thess 1:6-7. A reference here to the Roman empire of John's day. "The wrathful ones will receive wrath, and the destroyers will be destroyed." Witherington.

Verse 19

Καὶ ἠνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ὤφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμὸς καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη.

"Verse 19 is a response to the hymn of praise in verses 17 and 18. The ark of the covenant corresponds to the rewarding of the faithful, and the cosmic disturbances to the outpouring of God's wrath." Mounce. Witherington adds, "The ark was the locus of God's Word and his presence, and, in apocalyptic vision, it is quite proper to stress the heavenly nature of these things. It is accompanied by the usual signs of theophany and of God coming down, which is the ultimate event."

ἠνοίγη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s ἀνοίγω
open

ναός, οὗ m temple, sanctuary

ὤφθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s ὄραω trans

see; pass. appear

κιβωτός, οὗ f ark, box

διαθήκη, ἡς covenant

Both the blessing of his people and the judgement of rebels proceed from the covenant faithfulness of God (cf. 16:1). "This vision promises God will be faithful to his Word and maintain fellowship with his covenant people." Witherington.

ἀστραπή, ἡς f lightning, ray

βροντή, ἡς f thunder

σεισμός, οὗ m earthquake

χάλαζα, ἡς f hail

These events recall the giving of the law at Sinai.

Postscript

Witherington speaks of the book of Revelation, in common with all apocalyptic literature, as 'resistance literature.' He comments that it needs to be read as such. It is a call to active but nonviolent resistance to the oppressive powers that be, a resistance that involves witness to Jesus Christ as supreme Lord, witness which leads both to the extension of his kingdom but also to persecution, even to the point of death. Prayer also plays a vital part for it is a cry to God for justice, for him to vindicate his oppressed people.

Witherington comments, "Sometimes there has been an overreaction to this particular section of Revelation, and in some quarters judgment has been banished as a topic of Christian discourse or belief. In protest against the latter H. Richard Niebuhr once wrote that the essential message of liberal protestantism was, 'A God without wrath brought me without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without the cross.' ... It needs to be recognised that a God without judgment is also a God who does not care about justice, which is to say a God who is neither holy nor righteous nor fair. According to John and other NT writers, God's love is a holy love, and therefore it could not neglect the issues of justice and fairness. If one is a persecuted believer, one could easily say that for God to neglect justice or judgment would not be a loving thing to do. God must in the end vindicate not only his own people but the divine nature itself, or people will never recognise the full character of God, nor will God's plan for the rectification of a lost world come to fruition."