

• *Interlude continued...*

**1. Despite world-shaking troubles God has plans to build His church**

• *The temple represents the people of God*

• *Persecution will come upon the church, the temple of God*

• *It will be short but sharp*

**2. In the midst of persecutions the church will maintain a powerful witness**

(i) *The church will have the power of the Holy Spirit*

(ii) *The church has supernatural protection*

(iii) *The church has power as Elijah did*

(iv) *After a time of success will come a time of persecution*

The sixth seal has spoken of the immense conflicts that will face the church. But now the 'interlude' in 10:1–11:15 is telling the people of God of their security, their ultimate victory and their ultimate reward.

**1. Despite world-shaking troubles God has plans to build his church.** John says: <sup>1</sup>*Then I was given a stick like a measuring rod, and someone said, 'Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and count the people that worship there. <sup>2</sup>But leave aside the court which is outside the temple. Do not measure it, for it has been abandoned to the nations. They will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.'* The temple represents the people of God. The measuring rod is a sign that God has plans to do some building. When you plan a building-project the first thing you do is take measurements. The area outside the temple stands for the place where no fellowship with God is taking place. The courtyard outside the temple would generally have religious people in it, but it was the temple itself that was the dwelling place of God and therefore the symbol of fellowship with God. The point of the symbolism is that God will abandon any Christian 'religion' that has abandoned its genuineness and sincerity<sup>□1</sup>. 'Dead ex-Christianity' is part of the world, not part of the church.

Persecution will come upon the church, the temple of God. The world will want to tread down those who believe in Jesus, but God will still build his church. The persecutions will at times be intense. Symbolically it will be for three and a half years (the same length of time during which the prophets of Baal and Elijah were in conflict). It will be short but sharp, but the church will be built despite the sufferings of such a time. The 'holy city' is again a way of describing the church, all who believe in Jesus. The imagery changes from the temple to the whole city, but they are both ways of symbolizing God's people.

**2. In the midst of persecutions the church will maintain a powerful witness.** <sup>3</sup>*And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.'* The two witnesses are a piece of symbolism referring to the whole church as the witness to God's gospel. The 1,260 days are another way of referring to the three and a half years. Thirty is the rough number of days in a month:  $30 \times 12 \times 3\frac{1}{2} = 1,260$ . We do not have to interpret the two witnesses as literally two figures raised from the dead, such as Moses and Elijah. The two witnesses are a symbol of the church becoming **like** Moses and Elijah. Certainly we do not need to look for them to identify them as two of today's preachers! It is symbolism deriving from Deuteronomy 19:15. In the midst of a fierce latter-day persecution the church will stand strong. (i) The church will have the power of the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>*These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth.* In Zechariah 4:14 the work of God is said to go forward by the power of the Spirit. The olive trees are the source of the oil which supplies bright burning power to the lamps on the lampstand. (ii) The church has supernatural protection. What happened to Elijah's enemies in 2 Kings 1 (where fire devoured them) is a symbol of what ultimately happens to all the enemies of the church. <sup>5</sup>*And if anyone wants to injure them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to injure them, in this way their enemy must be killed.* (iii) The church has power as in the time when Elijah prayed it would not rain<sup>□1</sup> and as when Moses turned water into blood<sup>□2</sup>. In the same manner the church has this kind of prayer-power at its disposal. <sup>6</sup>*These witnesses have the power to stop the heavens from raining, during the days they are prophesying. And they have power to turn the waters into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they want.*

(iv) After a time of success will come a time of persecution. <sup>7</sup>*When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will wage war against them, and will overcome them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup>Their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which in spiritual interpretation is called Sodom and Egypt, the place where also their Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>For three and a half days men and women from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look upon their dead bodies, and will refuse to allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. <sup>10</sup>The people who live on the earth will rejoice over them, and celebrate, and will send each other gifts, because these two prophets had brought much suffering to the people who live on the earth.* This seems to be the first reference

□1 as suggested by Revelation 2:6, 14–16, 20–23; 3:1–3, 16

□1 in 1 Kings 17:1  
□2 see Exodus 7:19

• *It will be like the crucifixion all over again*

• *But the persecution will not succeed for very long*

**The ultimate end is the total victory of God**

• *Trumpet no 7*

*“You have begun to reign”*

• *The final ‘Woe’ for the world is the success of the gospel, where the nations of the world have been won to Jesus*

in Revelation to a latter-day persecution which will bring great distress to the church and also to the world itself. It will be like the crucifixion all over again. Just as Jerusalem got rid of Jesus by crucifying him, something similar will happen in the life of the church.

But the persecution will not succeed for very long, only for three and a half days (a week cut into half, a short period made even shorter). <sup>11</sup> *But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet. Great fear fell upon those who saw them.* <sup>12</sup> *Then they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up into heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them.* <sup>13</sup> *In that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth part of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and everyone else was terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.* God will honour his church. The witnessing people of God who seem to have been killed will be raised to life! Help from God will come to the church, like the earthquake that shook the Philippian jailor and helped him come to faith <sup>14</sup>. It will lead to submission to God. It will lead to an acknowledgement of God’s greatness.

Acts 16



**The ultimate end is the total victory of God.** At this point John records his vision of the seventh trumpet being blown.

<sup>14</sup> *The second ‘Woe’ is past. But look! The third one is coming quickly.* <sup>15</sup> *Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there came loud voices in heaven, and they 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.’* <sup>16</sup> *And the twenty-four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God.* <sup>17</sup> *They were singing*

*‘We give thanks to you, O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was. Because you have taken your great power, and have begun to reign.*

<sup>18</sup> *The nations were angry, but now your anger has come, and the time has come for the dead to be judged, and the time to give the reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those who fear your name, the small and the great. The time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth.’*

The final ‘Woe’ for the world is the success of the gospel, where the nations of the world have been won to Jesus and Matthew 28:18–20 has been fulfilled. Then after the success of the church will come the last judgement. John sees it all in one section of his vision.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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