

Illusion of Freedom

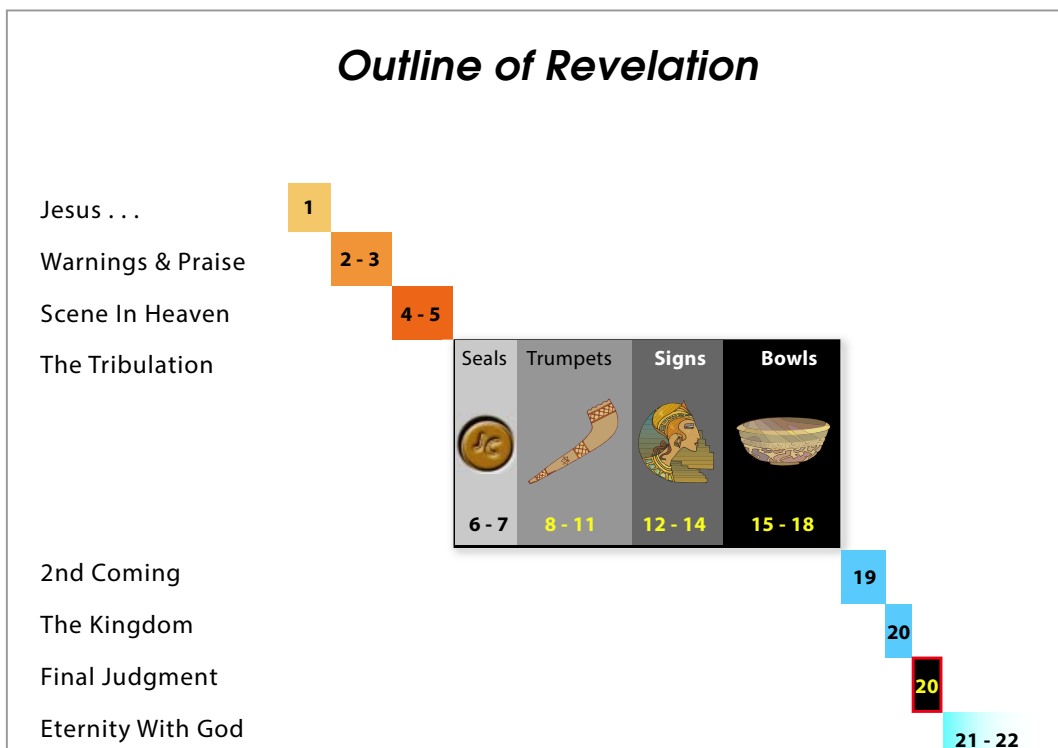
The plan for the final great war has already been made. How the world will end is known. It is not a mystery. God has planned it. It will be God against the world, and He will win! When I was in college, the wrestling coach asked me one day to join the wrestling team after he saw student after student attempt to take me down during practice exercises. I looked like a an average man. My upper body strength was the key. It was significantly stronger than my opponents and I found that I was able to control my “opponents” and defeat them. God controls His enemies too! He has placed limits on them. They do not have complete freedom. God’s enemies do not understand this truth. It is easy to believe that God has no “upper body strength” when He is such a “nice guy.” During the Tribulation the world finally discovers that God has “upper body strength” even before He wins!

GOD’S CONTROL. At the end of our last study the apostle John was told that he must prophesy again. That was a clue that he would be given a new set of visions about the future Tribulation period. This chapter, Revelation 11, starts revealing this new vision.

those who worship in it. And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.” (NASB) Rev. 11:1-2

And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and

The vision starts with John being told to measure the temple of God. The Greek word for temple is VAOS. It refers to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the temple.



The temple that existed during Jesus' life is now called Herod's Temple. The Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, the Brazen Altar, the Inner Court, and Outer Courts were enclosed or



Model of Herod's Temple

surrounded by a stone wall. The Outer Court was the area where devout Jews would worship God. The apostle was told to measure this area - the enclosed courtyard. Only Jews were allowed to enter this area. Gentiles were not allowed. Therefore, the Court of the Gentiles was not to be measured (see the blue area below).

The temple represented the nation of Israel and the Court of the Gentiles represented the rest of the world. The "measuring" and "not measuring" symbolizes God's control - upper body strength - over the world and its forces. God will give the world limited control over the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel during the last half of the tribulation which is 42 months or 3.5 years. During this period God will allow the Antichrist to rule the world (Dan. 7), and he

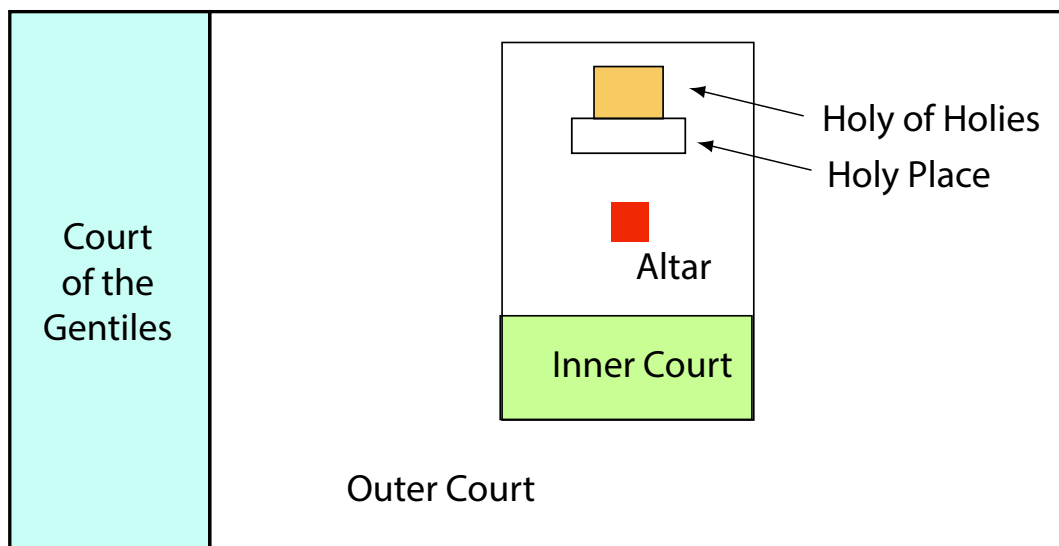
will believe that he has complete control. This period of time was predicted by Jesus in Luke 21:24,

... and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive

into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (NASB) Luke 21:24

The prophet Daniel also referred to this 3.5 year period as "time, times, and half a time" in Daniel 7:24-25 and again in Daniel 12:7.

And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. (NASB) Dan. 12:7



Layout of Herod's Temple

God will not only limit the Antichrist's area of control, but the period of time the Antichrist is able to make war against God and His holy ones - the saints - will be limited. The Antichrist's freedom will be an illusion.

TWO WITNESSES - THEIR POWER. While the Antichrist

believes that he is in control, God will empower two individuals whom the Antichrist will not be able to kill.

And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. (NASB) Rev. 11:3-5

Have you ever tried to make something happen and nothing worked? Just imagine how the Antichrist will feel. He wins peace in the Middle East, murders the leaders of three nations, becomes head of the greatest military force on the earth, the world worships him, and he creates a world force. But he cannot harm these two prophets. Well, at least for awhile.

We are told that they will prophesy for 1,260 days or 42 months (a prophetic month equals 30 days). This means that while the Antichrist and his allies are given great freedom, these two witnesses will be preaching to them and torment-



ing them day after day. What a scene!

These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

(NASB) Rev. 10:6

The Antichrist and many in the world will be very angry with these two witnesses. They will control the rain, turn water into blood, and cause world wide plagues. The world will want to kill them; and every time someone tries, he or she will die. I wonder how many different ways the Antichrist and the world will try to kill them? Will they try using guns, fire, tanks, aircraft, nuclear weapons, lasers, or biochemicals? Just imagine the rumors, newspaper reports, magazine articles, and television coverage! The media will probably be giving nightly coverage about the latest plague, wonder, and who the two witnesses killed. The world will see that all of their attempts to kill these men were unsuccessful. As a result, the world will fear them.

TWO WITNESSES - THEIR IDENTITY. Who are these two witnesses? The answer starts with the wonders these two perform. The miracles suggest that they are Moses and Elijah. It was through Moses that God turned water into blood and brought plagues upon the Egyptians. Some object to this view, saying that Moses died. This would mean that Moses must die again. They refer to Hebrews 9:27 where we

are told that man dies once and after that judgment comes. If that is true, why did Lazarus die twice? The Bible records a total of nine people who returned to life from the dead and then died again. They miss the point of the Hebrews passage which is that judgment is certain. We cannot escape it.

The miracle of stopping the rain suggests that the other witness is Elijah. Malachi 4:5 tells us that Elijah will return before the great and terrible day of the LORD. Jesus told us the same thing in Matthew 17:11. Therefore, Elijah must come in order for this prophecy to be fulfilled.

There is also another passage that suggests these two are the witnesses. Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of

Transfiguration together (Matt. 17:1-1-4). These two men were highly respected by the Jews and God greatly loves them. We cannot be sure that the witnesses are Moses and Elijah, but they are very good candidates. We cannot be sure about the identity of these two men because

God did not find it important enough to tell us.

THE MINISTRY ENDS. But notice what God does want us to know about these men. God tells us that after these men have completed their ministry for Him, He will allow them to be killed by the Antichrist.

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. (NASB) Rev. 10:7

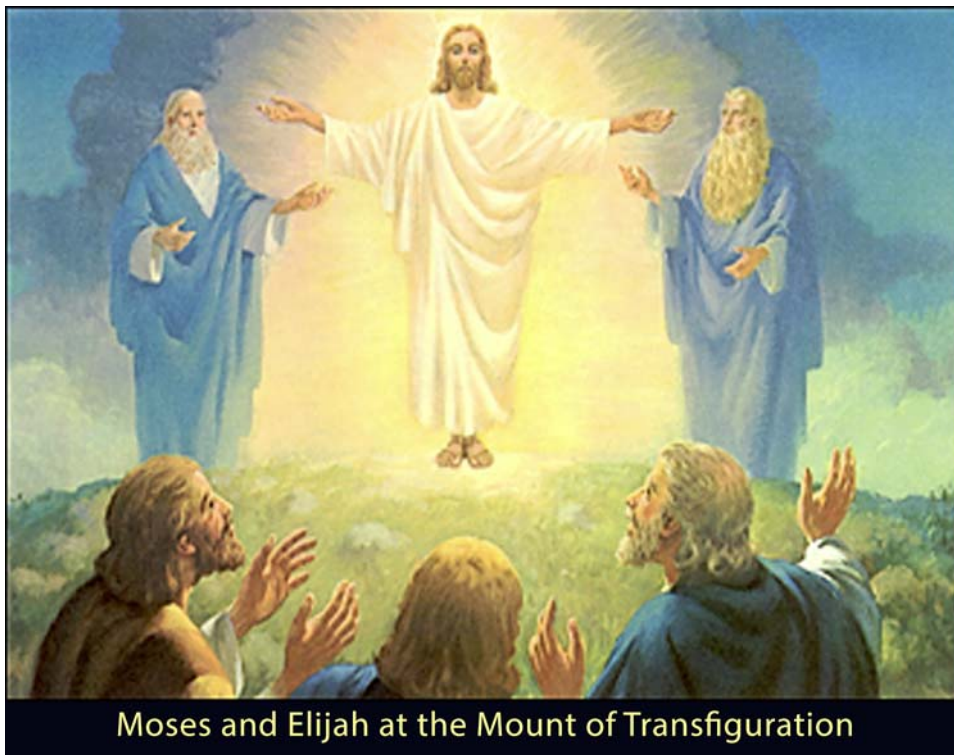
I would imagine these two men probably do not want to remain anyway. Who would want to live with the horrors that will be occurring? Yet their death will be a great lesson for the world and for us today.

WHEN YOUR MINISTRY IS OVER. God chased after each of us until we discovered Him, and believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. He helped us see our need of forgiveness, that God exists, and helped us understand Jesus. After that He calls us His friend (John 15:14) and expects us to submit to Him.

And why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?

(NASB) Luke

6:46



Moses and Elijah at the Mount of Transfiguration

This is the mark of our friendship with God. Friends want to please friends. During your life God gives you various opportunities to serve Him. It may be serving, leading, ministry in music, teaching, or witnessing, for example. But

there may come a time when God no longer wants you to do what He originally called you to do. For example, God wanted these two men to serve Him as prophets, but God did not want them to do it forever. He allowed them to be killed. God ended their ministry. If that happened to you, would you be disappointed?

Have you ever met someone who wants to serve God in the same capacity forever? No matter what happens, they are not willing to let go? Maybe you are "serving" God and you have sensed that God does not seem to be blessing your

ministry anymore. Is it possible that even though you have been faithfully serving God, He wants your ministry to stop because He wants you to do something else? If you are in this situation, ask God to give you direction, and look forward to a new opportunity. Ask yourself, "Do I really want to serve Him or myself?" Maybe you are in love with your ministry and not God. God may want you to do something else. It is also possible that your spiritual life is not what it should be and He has removed His blessing from you.

BACK TO LIFE? Just imagine, the television cameras are focused on their dead bodies, and the world is rejoicing that they finally succeeded in killing them. The world will not understand that God wanted their ministry to end and that He sovereignly allowed them to die.

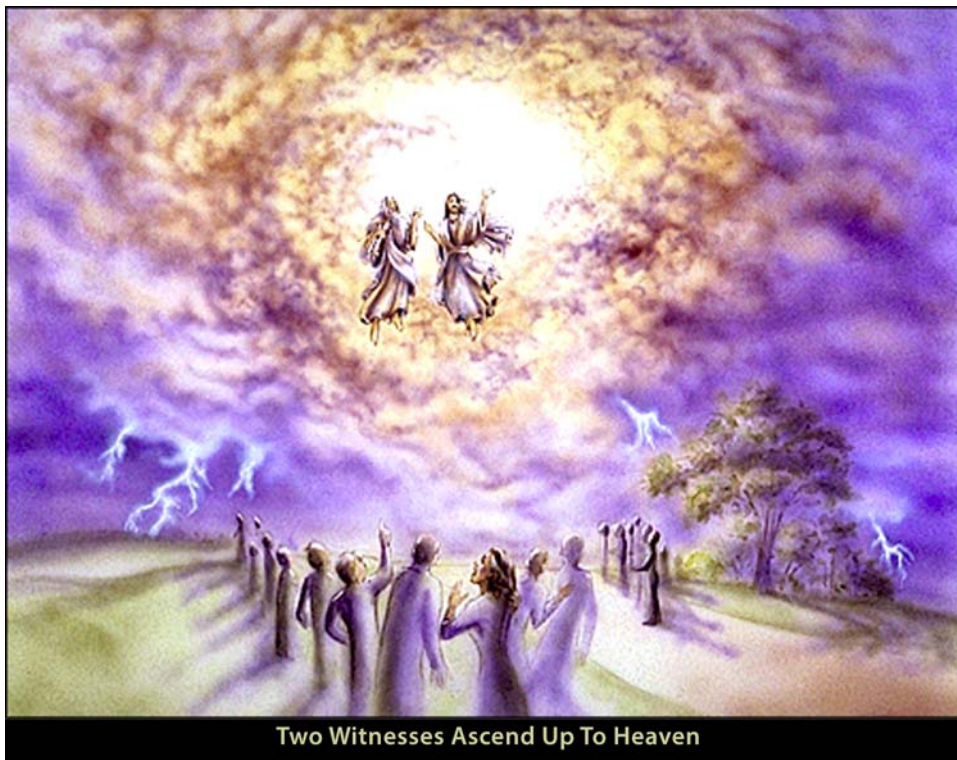
And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their

Lord was crucified. And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. (NASB) Rev. 11:8-10

The prophets will die in "the street" of Jerusalem which is the city "where also their Lord was crucified." It is interesting to notice that God calls Jerusalem Sodom and Egypt.

Both were symbols of godless wickedness in the Old Testament. Jerusalem was where Jesus was murdered. Egypt was a place of many gods. The world will have a five star party as they watch their bodies in the street. The world will celebrate just as the Romans did over those Christians who were murdered and tortured in the coliseums by lions and gladiators. The entire world, except for the saints, will be glad when they see their dead bodies. They will have a party.

However, they will not realize that God allowed them to kill the witnesses. The world will think it had finally succeeded. They did but then . . .



And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their

enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (NASB) Rev. 10:11-13

The world will discover they are not in control at all. The Antichrist is not all powerful. When Jesus died the leaders and the crowds thought He was dead, and the Jewish leaders rejoiced. During the Tribulation, the world will believe it had succeeded too. But it will be only an illusion. God will be in control. Jesus returned to life and dead people came

back to life to walk the streets of Jerusalem (Matt. 27:51-53). So these two men will return to life after 3.5 days.

When the world sees these witnesses return to life, the world will panic with terror and finally understand that God has done this. They will finally accept the fact that God is all powerful. They will finally give God glory.

THREE WOES. The first woe occurs after Satan is denied access to heaven in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 9:12). This will mark the middle of the Tribulation. The second woe then occurs.

The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. (NASB) Rev. 11:14

It marks the end of God's witness to the world during this horrible time. The next and last woe marks the end of man's limited freedom. The Tribulation is over.

J E S U S' KINGDOM. At the end of the Tribulation Jesus will begin to reign as King, and He will completely deny any freedom to the Antichrist and the world forces. He will remove what limited freedom; the illusion of their freedom will be gone. He will destroy anyone who comes to fight Him. Later in Revelation we will discover that Jesus' earthly kingdom eventually becomes the heavenly one.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the king-

dom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign. (NASB) Rev. 11:15-17

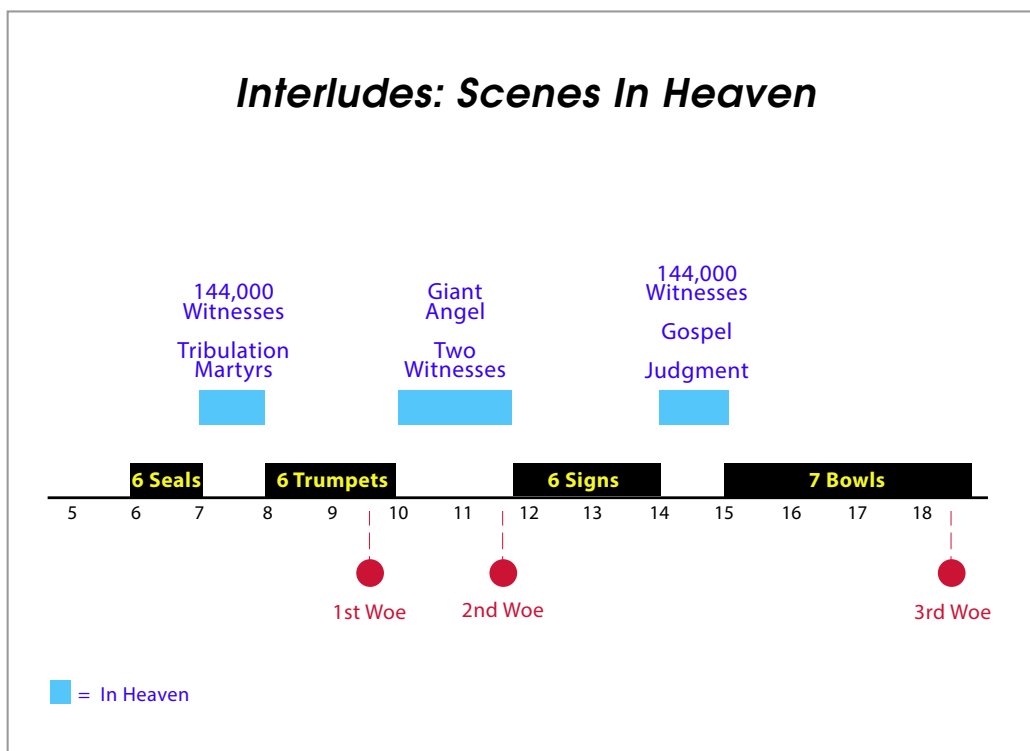
Jesus will begin to reign absolutely. He will be in complete control. How will the world respond to Him?

And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward

to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth. And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His cov-

enant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm. (NASB) Rev. 11:18-19

The world will be angry, but their anger will not help them. Jesus will defeat them and judge them. He will send the beast and the false prophet to the Lake of Fire and the righteous will enter His kingdom. He will bring peace and righteousness to the world. It is something the world hopes for and wants.



CONCLUSION. God reigns! He is King of kings and Lord of lords! This truth is not extremely obvious today because He is allowing men and women the freedom to live as they want. He wants their hearts. He wants their friendship, but the relationship begins by believing in Jesus Christ.

If you are depending on Jesus Christ to forgive your sins and serving Him in some way, there is a meaningful truth for you in this chapter. God does not necessarily call us to one ministry or one type of ministry for our entire life. God is more interested in a relationship with us as a Friend.

He may want to move you from one ministry to another, and sometimes you may “fight” Him. We may love the people we are ministering to or we may love the ministry

itself. God may have stopped blessing your ministry, but you may not want to let go. The ministry of these two witnesses was over in 3.5 years. They did spectacular things for God, but then it was over. The Spirit’s message to us is to not get comfortable in our ministry. The desire of every Christian should be to serve Him and the ministry, the location of the ministry, or the people involved in the ministry. Desire to please Him wherever He may want you to go. Long to walk with Him down the road of ministry. Desire to minister wherever He points you. Do not forget how greatly the Lord used these two faithful witnesses. Joy and the blessings of ministry are found in following your Friend.