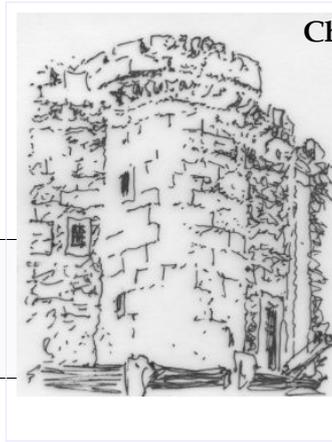


# Europe to the French Revolution 533-1793, 610-1870

Chapter

# 4



## Key Bible References

Revelation Chapter 11

## Overview of Revelation 11

Revelation 11 marks the events that changed the world, from being one dominated by kings and their courtiers, to being one where the voice of the common person, or democracy, could influence events. The events that surrounded the French revolution marked the change between the old world and the modern world. This chapter covers the persecution and protest and the events that lead to the revolution described as a 'great earthquake'. The dramatic descriptions and images in this chapter allowed many people to see clearly the pattern of the book of Revelation, arguably the most famous being EB Elliot who wrote *Horae Apocalypticae* in 1844.

## Years of Persecution

### Bible Reference:

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. (Rev 11:1-2)

### History and Commentary Rev. 11:1-2

The apostle John is given a measuring reed to measure the temple of God, but he is told to leave out the court.

Two different groups are indicated here. The "temple of God", also called the "Holy City", which figuratively refer to the faithful Christians, the ecclesia. The second group, "the court without the temple" are "Gentiles", who "tread underfoot" or oppress those of the "Holy City".

A time period of 42 months is given for this oppression. Using the lunar day of thirty days for a month, this represents a period of 1260 days (42x30). On a day for a year basis, a period of 1260 years is given for the oppression of the faithful ecclesia. This is a clear time period for the oppression on non-conformists by the Roman Catholic Church.

Roman Catholicism was granted power by the decrees of Justinian in 533, and by Phocas in the period 606-610, two Emperors of Constantinople. Using these two dates, 533+1260 gives us 1793 which was the time of the French Revolution. The other date of 610+1260 gives the date 1870. The period from 1793 to 1870 marks a critical time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

The French Revolution, followed by the rule of Napoleon reduced the power of the church. In 1870, following Garibaldi and the unification of the Italian states, the Papacy lost the Papal states and its political and temporal power was withdrawn. These dates clearly show the period of the rise and decline of the Papacy as a political and religious organisation, which oppressed and persecuted religious and political opposition to its power, particularly the faithful believers, the ecclesia.

## Years of Protest

### Bible Reference:

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (Rev 11:3-8)

### History and Commentary 11:3-5

There are “two witnesses” that represent the political and religious forces that opposed the tyranny of Catholicism and stand for political and religious freedom, “standing before the god of the earth”, which identifies the Pope as seen as a god by Catholics. They represent hostility to state-churchism and its monarchical allies. Historically these groups met tyranny with violence and force. Such groups include the Circumcellians, the Men of Munster and Camisards. The “two olive trees” and 'candlesticks' (ie lampstands) are representative of Jew and Gentile fed by the ideals of the hope of Israel.

Again a time period is given, the same length of time, but it is expressed in a different form the previous one. The days are also “1260” days, and 1260 years the time period, but it is described differently as it belongs to a different time period. It is a period of persecution by the Catholic Church. It began in 312 when the state church was established. It was the time of the great division in the Church when the Donatists refused to conform to the decrees of the state church, backed by the authority of Constantine's government. It began a period of religious controversy.

If we take this 1260 year period from 312 and the rise of Constantine, we reach the year 1572 (312+1260). This was the date of the Massacre of St Bartholomew, when Rome tried to destroy all religious opposition. 1572 ended the testimony of the witnesses and symbolically showed the victory of Catholicism.

The witnesses that can be identified historically

include groups such as the Donatists, Waldenses, Novatians and Huguenots. They maintained a continuous opposition to the autocratic and ecclesiastical power of Rome and its political and religious tyranny. Christendom was ruled by the church, which was supported by the sword and the powerful nation states. The militancy of the forces that opposed the church's power, afforded a measure of protection for the non-militant faithful. For instance, in England John of Gaunt, who opposed the church on political grounds, joined with Wycliff, who protested on religious principles. In Bohemia, Huss' political stand ultimately led to a religious-political war that ravaged Europe, the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648.

The 1260 year period, from 312 and terminating in 1572 ended in a period of frightful persecution initiated by the Massacre of St Bartholomew in France, on 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 1572, when Papal interests made a determined attempt to crush all political and religious opposition to its power. It was a war particularly directed against the Huguenots in the south of France.

The growing political influence of the Huguenots made their suppression appear as a necessity to the Catholics. In 1562 a number of them were massacred while assembled in worship at Vassy. Civil wars followed in 1562, 1567 and 1568. The Huguenots experienced some successes and were granted some privileges. However, the King persuaded by the Catholics that his life was in danger, consented to the execution of the Huguenot leaders.

**Continued**

From Paris the massacre of Huguenots spread to the provinces and France was plunged into civil wars from 1572 to 1593. Henry of Navarre, a Huguenot leader, arrived to appease the Catholics and was converted in order to relieve the sufferings of his associates. In 1598 the religious feuds were settled by the Edict of Nantes, which gave privileges to the Huguenots, including the right to retain their strongholds and freedom of religion.

In the seventeenth century, Louis XIV forbade the Huguenots from having political meetings

though they could still retain religious freedom. Cardinal Richelieu and his successor Mazarin wanted to suppress the Huguenots as a political and religious force. Their work enabled Louis XIV to feel strong enough to revoke the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes resulted in the destruction of the liberal forces and thus the witnesses in France. The Huguenots fled, some to England, others to America and South Africa, taking with them their industrial skills and liberal principles.



*French Patriots going to fight in Belgium*

**Bible Reference:**

And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. (Rev 11:9-11).

**Commentary Continued**

During this period in history, the “great city” was still Rome and France was Catholicism's chief ally and the principle place where the war of extermination of the witnesses took place. “Sodom” reflects pride and immorality, and, “Egypt” bondage. These symbolically describe the power of Catholicism which was steeped in immorality and kept its adherents in ignorance of the true faith of the Bible.

The memory of the massacres lived in the memory of the “people and kindreds and tongues and nations” for “three days and a half”. The “bodies” of the witnesses symbolically show the victory of Catholicism. Yearly celebrations of the triumphs of Catholicism over the Huguenots were held to commemorate the events of 1572. The nations of Europe kept these events in memory for a symbolic “three and a half days”. Using the principle of 30 days for a lunar day we have  $(3 \times 30) + (\frac{1}{2} \times 30) = 90 + 15 = 105 \text{ days/years}$ .

After this the “spirit of life from God entered into them and they stood upon their feet, and; fear great fear fell upon them which saw them,” and there was a revival of political and religious witnessing. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 quelled opposition for 105 years. 1685+105 years brings us to 1790, when the witnesses revived.

The political death state of the witnesses lasted until 1790, when France was plunged into the French Revolution, led by the Bourgeoisie, which included the intelligentsia, merchants, traders and peasantry. This group, known as the Third Estate was the largest group in the population of France. It rose against the First Estate, the Clergy, and the Nobility of the Second Estate.

As the most numerous social group, The Third Estate rose to prominence expounding the principles of liberty and equality, so long denied in the realms of the Mediterranean world, the “Abyss”. The power of the Third Estate generated “great fear” among the aristocracy and the clergy. Louis XVI was at that time facing a financial crisis. The Nobility wanted to limit the absolute power of the King and aimed to force him to convoke the Parlement, the States-General which had not been called since 1614. The nobles attempt to dominate the States-General was thwarted by the rising militancy of the Third Estate. The King gave into their demands and announced that the Estates-General would be summoned on 5th May 1789.

From the fifteenth century, with the invention of the printing press, the ideas of men such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and John Knox, were spreading and the movement away from Catholicism had been strengthening. In 1532, Henry VIII of England had made a complete break with the Papacy. In France, thinkers of the 'Enlightenment' such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire and economic theorists, had been disseminating their ideas on liberalism widely, so that by 1750 there was increasing agitation for a more liberal society.

In America, communities of Pilgrims, Quakers and other religious sects, who had emigrated from Europe and England, had settled and established new forms of worship, emphasising the concept of liberalism, that was to sweep through Europe in the nineteenth century. This movement allowed a freedom of worship which ensured the preservation and revival of the truth of the Bible.

## The French Revolution

### Bible Reference:

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Rev 11:12-13)

### History

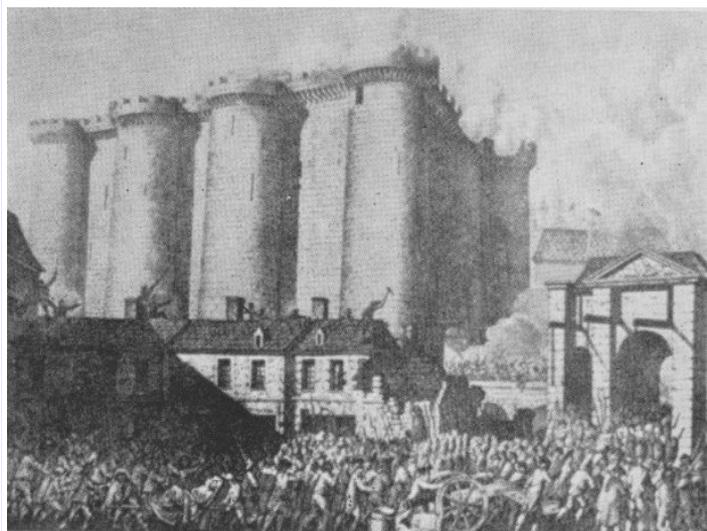
The invitation of King Louis XVI, “the voice from heaven”, allowed the people to air their grievances. The representatives of the common people were being invited to “come up thither” and although the States-General was convened at the instigation of the Nobility to address their grievances, it was this action that opened the way to the French Revolution and the rise of the revolutionaries of the Third Estate to power.

The Third Estate had campaigned to have the same number of deputies as the other two Estates combined, as it constituted the greatest population group in France. They further demanded that the voting should be by heads, rather than one vote per Estate.

Following the opening of the States-General on 5th May 1789, the agitation of the Third Estate resulted in the proclamation that the body would become the 'National Assembly'. On 27th June 1789, Louis XVI recognised the National Assembly. They had achieved power in the government of France and “thus ascended up to heaven (rule) in a cloud (large number)”. Increasingly the clergy and nobility became alarmed by the rise of the common people and “their enemies beheld them”.

The “great earthquake” signifies the political changes of the French Revolution. The “same hour” can be related to similar time periods in

the Apocalypse where the hour is thirty years. In this case, the time span is 1789-1819, the period of the Revolution and Napoleon. The “tenth part of the city fell” and “in the earthquake was slain of men seven thousand” represent the bloodshed and social changes brought about by the overthrow of the Nobility and abolition of clerical titles. All men virtually became citizens of the state. The Reign of Terror caused the “remnant” to be “affrighted” as the guillotine was used in mass killings. Aristocrats as well as the clergy were under attack and churches plundered.



*Storming of the Bastille July 14<sup>th</sup> 1789*

Robespierre disliked Catholicism but he objected to the trend of the Revolutionaries to atheism and devised the cult of the Supreme Being and in May 1794 he presided at a festival at which the “God of heaven” was officially honoured.

### Commentary

The chapter concludes with a vision of hope and the fulfilment of the Divine purpose at Christ's return to the earth. History has shown the vision was not to occur directly after the events. We can see now that the vision was given so the people of God who saw the events could feel their hopes for the kingdom were not now so far from being fulfilled.