

Revelation Chapter 11

11:1-2 A Temple during the tribulation

“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.”

We are still in the parenthetical section that begun with chapter 10:1 and we will continue to be until we reach chapter 11:15. During this time the narrative is not advanced, we are simply informed of other things that will take place during the tribulation. The same angel which spoke to John in chapter 10:1,9 is still speaking to John. Notice the things we have presented in this passage.

A. John is given a reed like unto a rod and commanded to measure the temple of God, the altar, and the worshippers. Evidently, during the tribulation there will be a temple in Jerusalem where Jews worship God in a way similar to the old testament economy. A temple will be built and completed or made available just prior to or shortly after the rapture for this purpose.

B. This is not as some have suggested just a spiritual temple. It really does or will exist. Nor is this a reference to the church as still others have thought. We have already seen that the church is not on earth during this time, and furthermore this description of things does not fit the church at all. The church as such has not been given a temple. It is made up of born again people who are a temple in themselves, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17,6:19-20,11 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22. Nor is this Herod's temple, Herod's temple was destroyed in 70 A. D., before John wrote the book of Revelation. This will be the fifth of six literal temples found in the bible.

(1) The tent in the wilderness constructed by Jews during their journeys.

(2) Solomon's temple constructed in his day and destroyed in 588 BC by Nebuchadnezzar.

(3) Zerubabel's temple destroyed in 170 BC by Antiochus.

(4) Herod's temple in existence in Christ's day but destroyed in 70 AD by Titus of Rome.

(5) This temple of Revelation 11:1-2, the tribulational temple.

(6) The Millennial temple referenced by Ezekiel 40 and mentioned in Acts 15:16.

C. This temple of the tribulation may even be built by the encouragement and assistance of the Antichrist who makes a covenant with Israel for seven years, Daniel 9:27.

However he will break his covenant with Israel in the middle of the tribulation time and cause the re-instituted old testament sacrifices to cease, Daniel 9:27, 12:11, Matthew 24:15. It seems the Antichrist will then erect an image of himself in the temple, Revelation 13:14-15, sit down in the temple and declare himself to be God, 11 Thessalonians 2:3-6, and demand to be worshipped by all, Revelation 13:4-15. Those who refuse him will be sought out and if found they will be killed.

D. God orders John to measure this temple, its altar, and worshippers. Why? God has performed the act of measuring a number of times in the bible. We are all familiar with why things are measured, it's to see its size, to see if something meets our standards, or in preparation of changing it. And the indication here is that this temple, its altar, and its worshippers fall far short of God's standards.

Things for consideration about the measuring of this temple.

(1) A reed like unto a rod is thought to be larger than a man, about ten feet long.

(2) The temple is measured. It has become a den of thieves under Antichrist, Revelation 13:1-18, (compare Matthew 21:13).

(3) The altar is measured. There were in the old testament temples two altars, the altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense. Perhaps it is both altars in view here and simply referenced as one, or perhaps it is either of the two. The sacrifices were certainly not biblically prescribed for the indication is that by this time the Antichrist is killing human beings where animals were to slain by proper biblical authorities for proper sacrificial purposes, Revelation 13:15. The prayers were certainly not biblically prescribed because it seems that the Antichrist is demanding that all people pray to him, Revelation 13:1-15.

(4) The worshippers are measured. Were they worshipping as divinely prescribed? No! God had been forsaken for the devil.

(5) The court which is without the temple, the outer court, is not measured, verse 2. And the reason given for this is that “for it is given to the Gentiles: and the holy city, Jerusalem, shall they tread under foot forty and two months, or three and a half years.” Evidently it is the worship of the Jew that God is primarily interested in during the tribulation. The outer court was where the altar of burnt offerings was located in the old testament tabernacle and it was a picture of Christ work on the cross. It seems that, while the Antichrist has defiled everything else, the gospel message is still available to both Jews and Gentiles as it is being preached by the 144,000 Jews, Matthew 24:14, Revelation 12:11, 15:3.

continued on the next page

11:2-3 The Time Elements or the tribulation

"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. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."

A. There are two periods of time mentioned in these verses.

(1) There is a period of time lasting forty two months. This period of time equals three and a half years. During this time it is said that the Gentiles shall tread the holy city, Jerusalem, under foot.

(2) There is a period of time called a thousand two hundred and threescore days, this is twelve hundred and sixty days, also forty two months, or three and a half years. And during this period of time God gives power to two of his two witnesses who will prophesy, dressed in sackcloth.

B. The questions then arise, Are these the same time period just spoken of in two different ways?

Or, are these two different periods of time each lasting three and a half years? If it is only one period of time spoken of in two different ways, is it the first half of the tribulation or the last half of the tribulation? Well, some expositors believe that this is only one period of time spoken of in two different ways and that it is the last half of the seven year tribulation that's referenced. But, I personally believe that it is two different periods of time that's spoken of, the last half of the tribulation in verse 2 and the first half of the tribulation in verse 3. Here are my reasons:

(1) Immediately after the rapture of the church, gospel preaching as we know it today shall cease because all of the saved who can proclaim it will have been taken to heaven. And it seems that someone will have to start the winning of the 144, 000 Jews sealed in chapter 7 and the vast unnumbered multitude of all nations. So, I believe that immediately after the rapture God will call the two witnesses mentioned in this chapter into service. They will preach the gospel of the kingdom mentioned in Matthew 24:14. This gospel not only offers forgiveness of sins to those who will believe that Jesus shed his blood and died on the cross for them as sinners, was buried, and rose again from the grave for their justification, but also the fact that Christ will soon return, in less than seven years, to establish his kingdom on earth. These two witnesses will be supernaturally protected by God for the first half of the tribulation, and their message will be accepted by Jews who in turn began to preach it themselves until their number swells to 144,000. They will be sealed

and continue to evangelize the world with their message and win an unnumbered multitude from all nations.

(2) Then, in the middle of the tribulation, at the end of the first half of it, the Antichrist breaks his peace agreement with Israel and the world and all hell breaks loose on earth, Daniel 9:27, 9:11, Matthew 24:15, Revelation 6:2. By this time the two witnesses shall have finished their testimony and God then permits the Antichrist to kill them, and multitudes of others who will not receive his mark nor worship him, Revelation 13:1-18. It is during the last half of the tribulation that Antichrist and his armies tread Jerusalem under foot.

(3) It does not matter that the last half of the tribulation is referenced first in verse 2 and the first half of the tribulation is referenced last in verse 3. As we have already noticed, we are in a parenthetical section where the narrative is not advanced and there is no need for chronological order. There are many things in the bible that are not in chronological order and the best way you have to place them is by having a general knowledge of the time frames that are made clear and the events involved in them. I believe that the tribulational events make it more reasonable for us to understand these verses as I have presented them.

11:3-12 The Two Witnesses

"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 proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth 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 ascendeth 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. 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 dwell on the earth. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that saw them. 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."

continued on the next page

Concerning the two witnesses we notice the following:

A. They are clothed with sackcloth. This suggests the attitude of their ministry. Sackcloth was worn by mourners, 11 Samuel 3:31, 11 Kings 19:1-2. Often prophets wore sackcloth, Isaiah 20:2. The garb of these two witnesses suggests that they mourn over the great sin of the world.

B. They are described as the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. Now, when we look at a similar description of two men in the old testament, Zechariah 4:1-14, (Joshua and Zerubbabel, who were God's anointed representatives in their day to Israel), we learn that these two witnesses of the future will be characterized by the power of the Spirit of God to fulfill their ministry. Olive trees provided the oil to keep the candlesticks burning so that they could provide light. These two witnesses of the future will be the ones who provide the oil of the Holy Spirit by their message to the others during the tribulation. They will be the two lights who light the others!

C. The two witnesses are described as standing before the God of the earth. This speaks of their relationship with God and their commission from God. This brings to mind the prophet Elijah who was said to stand before the Lord God of Israel, 1 Kings 17:1.

D. In verses 5 and 6 they are described as having supernatural power that protects them from their enemies until their ministry is fulfilled.

(1) Fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies. This is in reference to their ability to speak to God and call fire down out of heaven. This again brings to mind the prophet Elijah, 1 Kings 18:37-39, 11 Kings 1:10-12.

(2) They have power to stop it from raining during the days they prophesy. This would be for the three and a half years of their ministry, the first half of the tribulation. And this again brings to mind the prophet Elijah, 1 Kings 17:1. Whether it rains or not during the first half of the tribulation will be at the discretion of these two preachers!

(3) They have power to turn waters to blood and smite the earth with all plagues as often as they want. This brings to mind the prophet Moses, Exodus chapters 3-12.

E. These two witnesses will either be Elijah and Moses themselves sent back to earth, or they will be two men raised up who are given ministries like theirs. Malachi 4:4-6 seems to be a double prophecy. For John the Baptist to precede Christ at his first coming, and then for Moses and Elijah to precede the second coming of Christ to earth, Malachi 4:1-6.

F. The two witnesses are supernaturally protected by God until they have finished the work he has for them

to do. Then, the beast that ascendeth out of the pit shall make war against them and shall overcome them, and kill them. Again, their death is best placed in the middle of the tribulation for it seems clear that it is at that time that the Antichrist man is possessed by Satan himself and the spirit of one who's been retained in hell. See remarks on Revelation 9:11, 13:3-5, and also see chapter 17:8-11. This spirit that ascends out of the bottomless pit, also called the beast, seems to be none other than Judas Iscariot himself. More will be said about this in chapter 17.

G. The Antichrist and his crowd irreverently leave the bodies of these two prophets lying in the streets of Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified, which is so depraved under the devil's leadership that it is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, verse 8. Egypt was a very idolatrous nation in the bible, and in the bible it is everywhere a type of the world and sin. And, Sodom needs no introduction, everyone knows that it was the city filled with sexual deviants. Homosexual perversion of all kinds took place there, Genesis 19. The purpose of leaving their bodies in the streets is evidently that of a victory celebration over their enemies who had tormented the people of earth by their preaching and whom they had heretofore been unable to kill, verses 5-10. Their victory celebration is akin to that of a hellish Christmas. They send gifts to one another in celebration of the death of God's two witnesses. Notice these two interesting things about verses 9 and 10.

(1) They of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies for three and a half days. This would not have been possible until the advent of television. But today, because of sophisticated television we can watch events around the world at the same time they are taking place. God knew television was coming before man did!

(2) They world will have reached a place where it considers bible preaching to be a torment. And, I think any thinking person will have to admit, it's just about that way now. You see the world is still willing to tolerate religion and even use it for its own benefit. But the political, judicial, and moral climate of today makes it abundantly clear that they consider real bible preaching a torment to them.

H. After the world is allowed to rejoice over their deaths for three and a half days, the Spirit of life from God enters into their bodies and they are resurrected right before the eyes of an awe struck world. The microphones and cameras hear and broadcast across the world a voice from heaven that says "Come up hither", and suddenly, the watching world sees the dead witnesses come back to life, stand upon their feet, and ascend into heaven. This causes great fear to fall upon those who are watching.

continued on the next page

11:13-14 A Tragic earthquake

“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. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.”

At the ascension of the two witnesses God sends an earthquake which destroys a tenth part of the city. The city is the one of verse 8, it is clearly Jerusalem. Two things take place:

Verse 3. When the earthquake destroys a tenth of Jerusalem, seven thousand men die in it.

B. The remnant are affrighted and give glory to God. If the remnant mentioned here is the one of chapter 12:17, those of the 144,000 who have not yet been slain rejoice and glorify God with holy fear. However, the most natural reading of this passage is that the remnant here is the unsaved survivors of the earthquake in Jerusalem. It seems that there may be a measure of revival at this time with a number of people turning to God in repentance and in glorification of God for his power. But, whatever the case, these events conclude the events of the sixth trumpet or second judgement woe, Revelation 8:13,9:12-14,11:14.

11:14-15 The Third woe

“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

With the announcement of the soon coming of the third woe, the seventh angel sounded. When he sounds his trumpet there is a voice from heaven announcing the fact that the long awaited Millennium is soon to be a reality. This does not happen immediately, but will happen after the judgements of the seventh trumpet which will include seven vials. It is only the announcement that is here proclaimed. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of Christ in Revelation 19:11-20:6.

11:16-19 A Triumphant worship service in Heaven

“And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations

were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

Let's visit this great worship service in Heaven and note their audible praises to God.

A. For the worship of the elders, compare Revelation 4:9-11, 5:8-9,14. However this particular worship service is to take place at the inauguration of the Millennium, verse 17.

B. The nations were angry. This speaks of Psalm 2:1-12, Revelation 16:16, 17:14,19:19. This is in reference to the anger of the nations and their attempt to withstand the second coming of Christ to take over the world. Their attempts were futile for God's wrath had come and no one could stand against it, Revelation 19:11-21. This occurs just prior to the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth.

C. The time of the dead and their judgement had come, verse 18. This statement quite obviously encompasses the judgement of the saved dead at the judgement seat of Christ, the judgement of the old testament and tribulational saints in preparation for the Millennium, and the judgement of the living nations of Matthew 25:31-46 in preparation for the Millennium. Rewards are given in each of these instances to the saved who fear God's name whether they be small or great.

D. They praise God for his vengeance upon the wicked. He is destroying those who've destroyed the earth. This will occur in Revelation 19:11-21.

E. John sees a most glorious sight. The doors to the temple of God in heaven were flung wide open! He sees inside the temple the ark of God's testament. There is lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. Supernatural phenomena accompanies his vision of heaven's temple. Both in heaven and on earth. Since John was very well aware of the fact that Israel's old testament tabernacle, the ark, and other furnishings were built after the pattern of this temple in heaven, Hebrews 8:5, this must have been a wonderful reminder to him that God still had great plans for the nation Israel during the Millennium, Hebrews 8:6-13. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ has made this future Millennium for them possible, Hebrews 9:23-28.

continued on the next page