

# Love Community Baptist Church

## Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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## Revelation – Chapter 11

### The temple of God.

John is instructed to measure the temple, the altar and its worshippers.

***Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.”***

In Ezekiel 40-43, there is an extended passage where a temple is measured. The temple in Ezekiel is best understood as the temple of the millennial earth and the temple of Revelation 11 seems to be before the temple of Ezekiel. Yet there are similarities; the temple in Ezekiel is also measured extensively (Ezekiel 40:17-19).

Sometimes in the Old Testament, the idea of measuring communicates ownership, protection, and preservation. When Habakkuk prophesied, He stood and measured the earth (Habakkuk 3:6), the idea was that the Lord owned the earth and could do with it as He pleased. When this temple is measured, it shows that God knows its every dimension, and He is in charge.

**God is in charge.** This is one of the glorious, mighty themes of the Book of Revelation. Revelation 11:17 again uses the title Almighty for God. The Greek word for Almighty is pantokrater, and it describes “the one who has his hand on everything.” Nine out of the ten times this word is used in the New Testament, it is used in Revelation. This temple will be the scene of great horror and great glory, but God is in charge, working through both the good and bad actions of man.

The identity of this temple is an important matter of interpretation. Many see this temple as a symbol of the church.

- Paul described the church as a temple: Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-21)
- Peter described the church as a temple: You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:5)

However, if this temple in Revelation 11 is a symbolic representation of the church, why should it be measured? What is the significance of the courts and the altar – and if the church itself is the temple, who are the worshippers (those who worship there)? There is too much specific detail here for this to match the generalized picture of the church as a temple unto God.

**The temple of God:** It is more likely that this is the temple that must be on the earth for the fulfillment of what Daniel, Jesus, and Paul said regarding the abomination of desolation.

- The prophet Daniel told us the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jewish people, bringing sacrifice and offerings to an end. This Antichrist will defile the temple by setting something abominable there (Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11).

**Jesus said to look for an abomination standing in the holy place, which would be the pivotal sign that the season of God's wrath was upon the earth (Matthew 24:15-16 and 24:21).**

**Paul told us that the Antichrist would sit in the temple as God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).**

The concept of the abomination of desolation is often spiritualized with explaining it as idolatrous worship established in the hearts of God's people (His "temple"). But in what sense can people be called God's temple if they worship the Antichrist – an emissary of Satan himself? Certainly this isn't the most plain or straightforward interpretation. The simplest explanation of all these passages is to see a real Jewish temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem, yet to be built – but coming soon.

**The outer court of the temple.**

***But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.***

The outer court need not be measured because it has been given to the Gentiles. Perhaps this is because the outer courts of this rebuilt temple include the Islamic Dome of the Rock shrine, which currently stands on the temple mount and is a point of great contention between Jews and Muslims.

When the Romans conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 70 they destroyed the city so completely that the foundations of the old temple are not easily found. Most have long assumed that the Dome of the Rock shrine stands on the place of the old temple. But new research gives some evidence that the temple may have stood to the north where the Dome of the Rock shrine is today, and that if the temple were to be rebuilt at its old place, the Dome of the Rock shrine would be in its outer courts. If this is the case (and the research is by no means settled), then it would explain why the angel told John leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles.

**And they will tread the holy city underfoot:** The holy city (Jerusalem) will be tread underfoot for a period of forty-two months, which equals 1260 days (three and one-half years). This trampling of Jerusalem by Gentiles probably takes place in the last half of the final seven year period described by Daniel 11:26-27 – when the Antichrist pours out his fury on the people of Israel (as described in Revelation 12:13-17 and Matthew 24:15-28).

**The two witnesses.**

**(3-6) The ministry of the two witnesses.**

***And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.***

This introduces two of the more interesting characters of Revelation, the two witnesses. The character of their ministry is prophetic (they will prophesy); they preach and demonstrate repentance (clothed in sackcloth), and they have an effective ministry (I will give power).

**These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands:** The witnesses have an unique, continual empowering from the Holy Spirit, as shown in Zechariah's olive trees and oil lamps picture (Zechariah 4:2-3 and 4:14).

In the picture from Zechariah, oil lamps were filled directly from olive trees which piped oil right to the lamps. This is a picture of continual, abundant supply. If we will be witnesses, we must first have something to witness – our own personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Then, we must have the power of the Holy Spirit to bring forth the story of what we have witnessed effectively.

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies: The two witnesses have special protection from God, similar to Elijah's in 2 Kings 1.

These have power to shut heaven... they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire: The two witnesses have the power to bring both drought and plague, similar to the power Elijah (James 5:17-18) and Moses (Exodus 7-12) had.

**They... These... Them:** In the ancient Greek grammar, all the nouns used to speak of the two witnesses in this passage are in the masculine gender. The two witnesses are definitely two men.

#### **(7-10) The death of the two witnesses.**

***When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.***

The two witnesses are killed by the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit (first introduced in Revelation 9:11, and who is most likely Satan himself) but their ministry is not cut short. They fully accomplish their task (when they finish their testimony).

- God be thanked, we cannot be taken off of this earth until we finish our testimony. The devil does not have power over our lives. We are witnesses of the Lord, and He will protect us until our testimony is finished.

This passage illustrates the difference between being a witness and giving testimony. Witness is not something we do; it is something we are. Giving testimony is what a witness does.

**And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified:** The two witnesses are killed in the city of Jerusalem, which is described in three illustrative terms.

- As Sodom, speaking of immorality.
- As Egypt, speaking of oppression and slavery.
- As the great city, a term often applied to Babylon, the headquarters of Antichrist (Revelation 16:19, 17:18, 18:10, 18:16, 18:18, 18:19, 18:21).

If, during the first three and one-half years, Jerusalem's leadership is in league with the Antichrist, it is easy to see how these titles apply. Any city in love with the Antichrist, or entering into a covenant with him, could be called Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon.

The earth saw and rejoiced over the deaths of the two witnesses. The fact that this is seen by all people, tribes, tongues, and nations is perhaps an oblique prophecy of modern mass media.

- It is amazing – and not far-fetched at all – to think of a live, worldwide broadcast on new channels and over the internet, “Live from Jerusalem,” and seeing the amazing scene described here taking place.

The preaching of these two witnesses and their call to repentance was a torment for many, because they could not stand to hear the truth while they loved their lie.

### **(11-14) The reviving of the two witnesses.**

*Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.*

As this happens before the eyes of the watching world, the enemies of these two witnesses are horrified and astonished.

The earth was not worthy of these two witnesses, so God simply calls them home, and they ascended to heaven in a cloud.

An earthquake brings judgment, and moves many to give glory to God. But it remains to be seen if this will become true repentance unto salvation.

### **The identity of the two witnesses.**

Many interpreters see the two witnesses as symbolic of the entire church in the tribulation period or as symbols of the law and the prophets. But how can so many specific details in their ministry be reconciled with such a symbolic interpretation?

The most plain and straightforward interpretation sees them as two real individuals, not symbolic representations.

Who they are must not be terribly important, or we would have been told exactly who they are!

Some believe the two witnesses must be Enoch and Elijah, because neither of them died a natural death and were instead carried to heaven, and Hebrews 9:27 says that it is appointed for men to die once – so Enoch and Elijah must return to die on the earth. This is a misunderstanding of Hebrews 9:27, which is a principle rather than an absolute, immutable law. For example, Lazarus and others were raised from the dead and apparently died twice – yet this does not disprove Hebrews 9:27. The entire church on earth at the time of the rapture will not die, but be carried to heaven. Hebrews 9:27 stands as a principle, and there are a few notable exceptions which ultimately serve to prove the rule, not deny it. There may be good reasons for considering Enoch and Elijah as the two witnesses, but the principle of Hebrews 9:27 is not among those good reasons.

### **The seventh trumpet.**

### **(15) The seventh trumpet finally sounds.**

***Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”***

The seventh seal brought forth a profound silence (Revelation 8:1); the seventh trumpet initiates joy at the inevitable resolution. There can't be a more glorious proclamation than this: The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!

**Have become the kingdoms of our Lord:** In the ancient Greek grammar, the verb tense of have become indicates an absolute certainty about Jesus' coming and reign, even before the fact is accomplished.

**He shall reign forever and ever!** How can there be such joy, when the King is not reigning completely yet? At the headquarters of a successful political campaign on election night, there is joy, even though it will be a while until their candidate is actually installed into office. The joy anticipates a certain result.

**(16-18) The twenty-four elders worship God.**

***And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:***

***“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,  
The One who is and who was and who is to come,  
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.  
The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,  
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,  
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,  
And those who fear Your name, small and great,  
And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”***

**We give You thanks:** This thanksgiving isn't to thank God that He has already done this; but that the hour has come for it to take place, and that these things are permanently set in motion.

**The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come:** God's punishment matches the crime; there is nothing arbitrary about it. The nations are angry with God and He responds with wrath; those that destroy the earth are themselves destroyed.

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*They are angry because God comes to rule. The world wants anything but the reign of God. As it says in a parable of Jesus, We will not have this man to reign over us (Luke 19:14).*

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**(19) The temple in heaven is opened.**

***Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.***

The ark refers to God's throne, the place where the previously mentioned resolution will come from.

It is called the ark of His covenant – in the Old Testament, this was the earthly representation of God's throne – to emphasize God's faithfulness.

The ark of the covenant is "The symbol of God's faithfulness in bestowing grace on His people, and inflicting vengeance on His people's enemies." (Alford)

**And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail:** The great and awesome phenomenon at the opening of the temple and the revelation of the ark show that the presence of the Lord is there; it is reminiscent of God's manifested presence at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19).