

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 12TH–13TH, 2024 // REVELATION

MEASURING THE TEMPLE (REVELATION 11:1–2)

RECAP:

- Chapters 1–3: The seven churches; Chapters 4–5: The throne room of God; Chapter 6: First six seals; Chapter 7: The 144,000 “sealed” people; Chapter 8: 7th seal and first four trumpets; Chapter 9: 5th and 6th trumpets; Chapter 10: Mighty angel and little scroll

During this part of his vision, John’s location is the same, but the scene has shifted.

- John was given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple and its altar and to count its worshipers.
- There are two views on what this “temple” is:
 1. Solomon’s temple that will be reconstructed.
 2. Symbolic of the “new” temple, God’s people, not yet fully glorified (1 Cor. 6:19).

Many Bible scholars believe that the Jewish temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt for end-times prophecy to be fulfilled.

- Some prophecies seem to describe end time events that presume the temple’s presence.
 - Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 9:27), Jesus’ words (Matthew 24:25), Paul’s teaching (2 Thess. 2:3–4), John measuring the temple (Rev. 11:1–2)

There are several religious and political groups in Israel today who are actively preparing for the reconstruction of the temple and the resuming of temple sacrifices.

- The Temple Institute has recreated many of the temple’s sacred vessels (menorah, incense altar, and showbread table) and has trained priests from the tribe of Levi (they’ve also been searching for a red cow, Num. 19:2).

John’s measuring doesn’t seem to be an effort to determine physical dimensions (since none are provided).

- The measuring signifies ownership, defining the parameters of God’s possessions (Zech. 2:1–5).
- The measured temple and numbered worshipers seem to indicate that God’s people will be under divine spiritual protection during the end times.

John is not allowed to measure the “courtyard outside” the temple because it had been “given to the nations” (people who oppose God) to trample the holy city for forty-two months.

- The “courtyard outside” the temple marked the boundary where Gentiles were forbidden to go.
- Anyone could walk into the outer court, but only a Jew could go into the temple.

Whether this is a literal rebuilt temple or the symbolic people of God, this prophecy is saying that for a period of time (42 months, 3 ½ years), there will be intense persecution against the people of God.

- God will spiritually protect His people from His wrath. However, He will allow many of them to be “trampled by the nations,” becoming martyrs for His sake.

THREE BIG IDEAS:

1. Jerusalem is the epicenter and focal point for the next part of this prophetic vision (vs. 2, 8).
2. Future tribulation will occur against God’s people (42 months of “trampling” by the nations).
3. Both divine protection and judgment are prophesied (measuring the temple, whether a literal or symbolic temple, signifies God’s ownership and protection).

TWO WITNESSES (REVELATION 11:3–6)

John’s focus moves from the temple to “two witnesses”

WHO ARE THESE “TWO WITNESSES”?

1. Literally, two prophets sent to preach the gospel during the last half of the tribulation.
2. The Church in part, or in whole, as being “prophetic” to the earth in the last days.

Why Two? Two witnesses always affirm truth

- God chooses 2 at a time to further show validity (Matt. 18:16; 1 Tim. 5:19).

Witness in Greek is “martyr” and it’s from this word we get the word “martyr.”

- We will see soon enough that these two are “witnesses” in the truest form.
- This begs the question are we truly witnesses ready to give our life for truth?

HUMILITY (“SACKCLOTH”) AND SUPERNATURAL POWER.

- “Fire comes from their mouths” can be the power of the Word of God or literal fire.
- “Killed in this way” is the rejection of the gospel and the “second death,” and “hell.”
- Or, in a literal approach, God will also kill whoever tries to kill them during the 42 months.
- More plagues will be inflicted with extreme drought and polluted water.

THE LITERAL APPROACH

This will be 2 men sent by God, possibly Moses and Elijah, sent back for this specific duty.

- They are called “olive branches” and “lampstands”, which is a description drawn from Zech. 4:1–14 referring to the Spirit of the Lord in them.
- They will come in humility and power and great signs/wonders will accompany their bold proclamation of the gospel (v. 6).

THE FIGURATIVE APPROACH

In Chapters 1–3, only 2 churches had full approval from God, and from this approach, a portion of Christianity will be the “two witnesses” for a specified 1,260 days (42 months) of intense persecution (this idea is supported by the reference to lampstands in v. 4).

- Churches boldly proclaiming truth and speaking against sin will be empowered by God’s Spirit.

BLOOD ON THE STREET (REVELATION 11:7–10)

Remember the bitter/sweet calling? For 42 months (3 ½ years) these witnesses proclaim God’s Word, experience signs/wonders, and are supernaturally protected. But in the end, they are killed in the streets.

- God is sovereign in all this. He will allow His people to finish what they started.
- We must be reminded that this life is temporary, and God is in control the whole time.

What eventually overwhelms them is the “beast” from the abyss (v. 7).

- This is the 1st of 36 references in Revelation to the “beast,” who we will find out is a world ruler called Antichrist who imitates the true Christ and demands to be worshiped.
- The beast “will make war” can mean that this Antichrist will destroy churches and Christians or kill the two literal witnesses.

The beast will succeed for a time. From the figurative approach, many Christians worldwide will be killed in godless

cities (figuratively called “Sodom and Egypt”).

- Literally, it could be the two men being killed in one city, Jerusalem.
- In a sign of contempt, the entire world will watch their dead bodies lie in the street for 3 ½ days (which is very possible in our day and age).

THE LOCATION THIS TAKES PLACE IS OFTEN DEBATED.

The city is called the “great city” and stands as an epicenter against God and morality.

- This could be literal (Jerusalem) or figurative (all people who oppose God) for an ideology.
- A straightforward reading would be Jerusalem (“Where also their Lord was crucified”), but others say this isn’t literal but a metaphorical reference to killing Jesus spiritually.

People around the world will rejoice and celebrate as the Antichrist finally overcomes the two witnesses and kills these two irritating preachers.

- They’ll send gifts to one another and make merry, because these witnesses were a torment to them (v. 10).
- There is an irrational hatred of truth, Christians, and God’s Word that many in the world possess.

RIISING UP (REVELATION 11:11–14)

As the whole earth is partying and giving gifts for “Dead Witnesses Day,” their celebration is suddenly halted by a shocking event.

- The “breath of life from God” enters these two witnesses, and suddenly, they ascend into heaven as the whole world watches in awe and horror.
- This is reminiscent of Elijah’s ascension (2 Kings 2:11) and the burial of Moses (Deut. 34:5–6).

Following this resurrection is a great earthquake where 7,000 people will be killed.

- The rest “were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven,” either meaning many turned to God as a result, or many simply confessed that God was God as a result.
- If one believes the two witnesses are figurative of churches, this ascension/resurrection is referring to something big.

If the figurative approach is taken, when the witnesses resurrect, this could be the rapture of the church (mid-trib. rapture).

- Some also believe this is a special honor just for martyrs. Another idea is that all martyrs will be given a special resurrection before a rapture in the middle of the tribulation.
- Whatever the case may be, God will be glorified, and His witnesses will be honored!

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THESE TWO WITNESSES?

1. God’s witnesses stand boldly for the gospel in the last days, even when we are hated for it.
2. God has a divine, perfect plan for His witnesses, even when it involves suffering.
3. Death is not the end for the witnesses of God. No matter how scary death may be, we will be raised to eternal life through Christ.

THE END? (REVELATION 11:15–19)

The sounding of the seventh trumpet marks a significant milestone in the book of Revelation.

- It will set into motion the final events leading to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly millennial Kingdom.
- This isn’t a single event. Within the sounding will come the final fury of God’s judgments (16:1–21), the final harvest of judgment (16:19), the Lamb’s defeat of the kings of the Earth (17:12–18), and the battle of Armageddon (19:11–21).

There is an interpretive idea that the 7th event (7th seal, 7th trumpet, 7th bowl) in each series is the same, and it makes great sense here.

- The 7th bowl in Chapter 16 is almost identical to the 7th trumpet (which is similar to the 7th seal).
- Moving forward, Chapters 12–18 could be seen as a flashback. If one reads Chapters 12–18 simultaneously with Rev. 11:1–14, the storyline seems much clearer.

John’s vantage point returns to heaven, and he will now see the plan for all creation come to fulfillment on earth.

- The 1st line of the song of the elders shows a change of ownership. Since the fall of man, earth has “belonged” to Satan, but now that is coming to an end.
- The second line shows God’s tenure as ruler will be permanent.

The Elders fall on their faces as their posture changes to one of complete awe that the time has finally come.

- The time for judging has begun as the saints of God will be rewarded and evil will be repaid—destroyed.
- Picture the scene: John knows the end of things has come, and all of heaven is worshiping in a glorious musical overture.

As the music of the elders’ song swells to a crescendo, John sees the Holy of Holies open in heaven and the Ark of the Covenant.

- Nothing was more sacred to Israel than the Ark, and the Ark had been lost when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in the 6th century B.C.
- As he sees what no one has seen for 600 years, lightning, thunder, rumblings, earthquakes, and hail begin.

THE ARK REPRESENTS...

- God’s communion with humanity (place of blood sacrifices).
- God’s communication with humanity (tablets of the Law).
- God’s provision for humanity (the manna).
- God’s willingness to fight for humanity (Aaron’s staff).

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS.

- God chose for Himself a people (Israel) and made a promise to them that He’d never leave them or forsake them.
- But His people sinned and rebelled against Him, separating themselves from His presence.
- The Ark being lost represented God’s presence being removed and His Glory departing.
- In the end, all that was lost will be restored.
- God has not given up on you—and He never will.
- Your ability to fail is not bigger than God’s ability to restore or His desire to commune with you.
- No matter how great the separation because of your sin, apathy, or brokenness, God still desires to commune with, communicate with, provide for, and fight for you!
- All that has been lost can be restored (Lk. 15).