

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:1-14

- I. Continued interlude.
 - A. A “rest” between the judgements.
 - 1. Between the sixth seal and the seventh.
 - 2. Between the sixth trumpet and the seventh.
- II. The “Sanctuary of God”.
 - A. Temple—“God’s dwelling place among His people”
 - B. Three temples?
 - 1. Solomon’s temple—until 586 BC.
 - 2. Post exilic temple— Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua.
 - 3. Herod’s temple—Rebuilt post exilic temple. (2nd Temple?).
 - a. The Jews consider Herod’s temple the second temple.
 - b. Destroyed in 70 AD.
 - 4. The millennial temple—“The third temple”
 - a. Jesus will build this temple—Zechariah 6:12
 - C. A problem.
 - 1. The second temple has been destroyed; the third temple is yet to be built. What and where is the temple in Revelation 11?
 - a. A temple will be built before or during the tribulation.
 - 2. A few prophecies regarding the tribulation temple.
 - a. Daniel 9:27—Sacrifices will return.
 - b. Matthew 24:15—The “abomination of desolation” in the temple.
 - c. 2 Thessalonians 2:1—The “man of lawlessness revealed”.
- III. John measures the temple (Rev. 11:1-2)
 - A. The measuring is an” acted out parable”.

B. “Measuring” in the Old Testament— To emphasize God’s ownership of all that was measured.

1. Genesis 13:17; Ezekiel 40:1-48:35.
2. What God is telling us— this measured out temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it are His.
3. The “outer court”
 1. Refers to all of the city of Jerusalem during feasts—The Temple Scroll.
 2. God does not claim for Himself the “outer court”—the gentiles: the enemies of Israel.
 3. The “trampling of the gentiles” will last through 3 ½ years of the tribulation (Luke 21:20-24).
4. “The times of the gentiles be fulfilled”.
 1. Between the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar (600ish BC) and the glorious return of Christ to establish His kingdom.
 2. The time of the gentiles was given by God.

IV. The two witnesses (11: 3-4).

- A. They are sent to “prophesy” for 3 ½ years.
- B. They prophesy during the first 3 ½ Years of the tribulation.
- C. They prophesied (preached) repentance.
 1. Sackcloth= repentance.
- D. Who are the two witnesses? (11:4).
 1. A historical context.
 - a. Zechariah 4—The olive trees and lampstand.
 - b. Zerubbabel and Joshua

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:1-14

There is no question that this book of Revelation is a challenge for all of us...for me to present it and for you to receive it... Among the books of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation is often considered the most avoided or least studied by most readers.

Its complex symbolism, vivid imagery, and prophetic content make it challenging to interpret and understand... Most people find its visions and descriptions of future events very difficult to grasp, so we tend to gravitate to more straightforward biblical texts....the practical passages and books of the Bible...

Passages in books that give us clear, concise and applicable three-point sermons...

Despite this, Revelation contains vital messages about the supremacy of God... His faithfulness... His sovereignty...our mission as Christians...the urgency of our mission... to reach the lost world...all which is essential for our us to grasp...Revelation gives us great hope... perseverance, and the ultimate victory of Christ, encouraging all believers to remain faithful until the end.

Our passage this morning is no less challenging than all the others...It is a very important passage... I could easily take a month or more to flesh out all the gems it has to offer... there is very rich historical background for each of these first fourteen verses of chapter 11...

Background and context that I believe solidifies the premillennial view of Revelation... the connection and integration of this passage to the messages of the Old Testament prophets... such as Zechariah...Ezekiel...Daniel... Isaiah... and in the New Testament to the words of Jesus in Matthew, Luke and others...

We could spend at least two Sunday's on verses 1 and 2 with all the intricacies, history and background on the temple... three Sundays on verse 3....who are these two witnesses?... a couple of Sundays on verse 4 on the two olive trees and two lampstands...who's kidding who?... we could go all the way to Christmas on these first 14 verses!

I had to make a decision early this week... dive deep to uncover the intricacies or fly high above and get the big picture... So much here to lay the groundwork for understanding what's to come

In that my overall goal in going through this book is not to prove my eschatology view... or to attempt to translate these complex images, symbols, prophecies **further** than the Bible reveals and allows...to get "caught in the weeds" as they say....my goal is for us to see the "big"

message God wants us to see...but not to miss His amazing hand in revealing Himself and His message in the intricacies of the details He gives us.....

Back in chapter 1 verse 3 we are told **“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophesy and keep the things that are written in it, for the time is near”...**

So, as we approach this morning’s passage, let’s remember there’s a blessing promised to those who read, hear, and keep the words of this prophecy. Rather than be intimidated by its complexity, let us be encouraged to seek understanding, trusting **that God’s Word speaks truth and hope for every generation.** Our willingness to engage with Revelation reflects our desire to know God more deeply and to grasp the fullness of His redemptive plan.

We are still in that interlude that we began last Sunday... between the sixth and seventh trumpet, God... as He did between the sixth and seventh seal before...lets us take a breath from all the horrible judgements that have been playing out over the entire world in this first half of the seven-year tribulation period.

The apostle John from the very beginning of this book, from the instruction of Jesus Himself has been writing down everything God is showing him regarding the coming last days of the world...but in this respite... this break... John is a participant.

Last week we saw that an angel hands John a “little scroll”...and a “voice from heaven”...I assume it is God’s voice...tells him to eat it... **take it and eat; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.**

As believers in Jesus Christ... our future is glorious... we have hope in this life because of the promised reality of eternal life with our Lord and Savior... this is sweet as honey in the mouth... but we look around...at the lost who do not have that hope... who without...through rejection or ignorance are without Jesus Christ and will spend their eternity in hell...[*I wish I could say that nicer*]

Family members....relatives... Friends... associates... peers... loved ones... those without Christ.... Leaves our stomachs sick!... so we are left with John’s marching orders... “preach the word!”... share the gospel!

And then John is told to do something else... I assume from the same heavenly source...

Read 11:1

Supernaturally John is handed a measuring device... a staff...like a yardstick but most likely much longer... perhaps 10 to 15 feet long... he is to measure the **“sanctuary of God”...**

Let’s look at this a bit before I go any further... what is the sanctuary of God...or the temple of God?... and what’s it doing here in the tribulation period?... By definition... The temple represents God’s dwelling place among His people, a sacred space where communication with

God happens, and sacrifices are offered. It acts as a physical representation of God's presence and His desire for relationship with us...the first physical sanctuary of God was the tabernacle...a portable sanctuary that Israel carried through their time in the wilderness...

Once Israel settled in their Promised Land... they build a permanent sanctuary of God... His temple.

We all know there is no temple now... there have been three temples... some say two temples... I'll show you:

1. The first temple (after the tabernacle at Shiloh) was Solomon's Temple... which was called "*the Temple of God*" UNTIL the glory of God left the temple...when the Babylonian's desecrated it in 586 BC....Israel goes into Babylonian captivity for 70 years...

2. The second temple would be the rebuilt post Babylonian temple in the time of Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua... the later temple... "Herod's Temple" was called "the temple of God"... some say this is the third temple... but actually Herod's temple is really a remodeled Zerubbabel temple...it took 46 years to remodel... Jews call Herod's temple "*The second temple*".

Herod's temple was destroyed by Rome in 70AD... Jesus prophesied that in Matthew 24 right before His prophesying the tribulation...

Jesus called Herod's temple "**the temple of God**" in Matthew 21:12... **In the New Testament, we are told the bodies of believers are the temple of God...1 Corinthians 3; 2 Corinthians 6:16...our bodies become the "temple of the Lord" because the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer...**

Any more temples in Scripture?... yes!...

3. There is coming in the 1000 year reign of Jesus... the millennial temple...which is described in detail in **the last nine chapters of Ezekiel**...570 BC ish...

Interesting... today Jewish synagogues are often called "temples"... down the street where I grew up was "Temple Beth Emet"... "Temple Beth Shalome"... the word "temple" is to remind the Jews that they do not have a temple, but they are awaiting the Messiah who will someday come and build the "third temple"...as described by Ezekiel....

They are waiting for the Messiah to build the temple... we know they are correct... they just don't know that it is Jesus who is the Messiah and He will build the third temple?...Jesus will build the third temple?. yes!...turn to Zechariah chapter 6:12

12 Then say to him, 'The Lord of armies says this: "Behold, there is a Man whose name is Branch Branch is another term for Messiah for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. 13 Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and

He who will bear the majesty glory and sit and rule on His throne. So He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”

Jesus will build the third temple...He's the builder... His glory will fill this temple... He will sit on the throne... He will be a priest...a mediator between God and His people...but He will sit on the throne... amazing!

But we have a problem...

Here in chapter 11... If I've been right in my view of Revelation... and Jesus will come and remove His church before the seven-year tribulation... all the church age believers will be in heaven... and what we just looked at....

At the end of the tribulation... The Messiah... Jesus Christ is going to return to the earth and defeat all the enemies of the earth... He will stand on the Mount of Olives and declare victory and then set up His kingdom...He will build His temple...

Do you see the problem?... remember...the second temple was destroyed in 70 AD by Romansthe third temple will be build the future millennium... but verse 1 of chapter 11 God tells John to go measure the temple!...we are in between temples!...somehow...someone...sometime, during the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation...or even before the tribulation... a temple will show up.

There's a lot of speculation today about this new temple... there are reports that the orthodox Jews have made all the temple implements and furnishings.... Plans having been drawn... even materials being collected... they have a slight problem with where they want to build it... this *Dome of the Rock thing*...

I don't know about all that... I do know... it could be built any time...they could start building it before the tribulation... the Bible doesn't say it will be built in the tribulation, just that it will be there in the tribulation.....get excited if you see the temple starting to be built!

Daniel in his prophesy Daniel 9:27 tells us about sacrifices being reinstituted in the temple during the week... the period of “seven” in which a coming “world leader” will make peace covenant with Israel to protect them from their enemies...the first 3 ½ years...a covenant that he will break....we'll see all this in the coming chapters...

But temple sacrifices will be restored.

Matthew 24:15... other views say this is to be taken allegorically... don't take it literally... I haven't been convinced...Jesus is looking forward into the tribulation period... 15 **“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation we know him to be the antichrist... which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet Daniel 9, standing in the holy place temple of God(let the reader understand),**

When you see that... RUN! GET OUT OF THERE!... this guy is going to break his covenant with Israel and all hell literally will break loose....the final 3 ½ years...

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, **2** that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. **3** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, **4** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat **in the sanctuary of God**, exhibiting himself as being God...this happens in this tribulation period... the end of first 3 ½ years.

In the tribulation there will be a temple...temple sacrifices and temple worship will be reinstituted...the antichrist will take over this temple after the first 3 ½ years and unleash the most horrible final 3 ½ years of the tribulation..... back to Revelation 11

Read verse 2 (refresh 1)

So John is to take this measuring stick and measure the temple...This measuring of the temple is as one said “*an acted out parable*”... God doesn’t need to know the dimensions of His sanctuary!...He’s not up in heaven wondering “*how big is this thing?*”... it helps to recognize that several times in the Old Testament God tells someone to measure something.

In Genesis 13:17 God tells Abraham... **Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.**...in other words.... *Measure the land Abraham*...again... not because God needed measurements... Abraham did... because all the land between that length and width will define Abraham’s eventual ownership....

Remember Ezekiel’s vision of a man with a measuring rod (Ezek. 40:1-48:35)...this man with a measuring rod takes Ezekiel on a lengthy tour of the temple and measured it inside and outside ... he then proceeded to measure the city of Jerusalem and eventually all the land... why?

The main point was to emphasize God’s ownership of all that was measured: Ezekiel 43:6 **Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me. 7 He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever.**

This concept of measuring is deeply symbolic, representing not only ownership but also restoration...protection and preservation...the act of measuring the temple sets apart what is sacred... indicating that God is intimately involved in the details and destiny of His people and His dwelling place.

Just as in the visions given to Abraham and Ezekiel, these measurements reinforce the assurance that God's promises are secure—He lays claim to what is His...He has what is his defined... and watches over it with purpose and intentionality.

God uses measurements not for His knowledge... but to define His ownership...so here in Revelation 11... God is revealing to John... then to us... that this temple is His... He has a plan for it...and it is directly linked to His people.... **[I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever.]**

God is telling us a story with this measuring...**this measured out temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it... are His....** Remember that.

Interesting... John is told to measure the sanctuary, the altar and the people who worship in it... but not to measure the outer court... that is given to the gentiles...the non-Jews... gentiles were not allowed in the inner court of the temple... they were only permitted in the outer court...

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947... the largest of the Scrolls now called "*The Temple Scroll*" gives insight into this...it tells us that on feast days in Jerusalem... we know that thousands and thousands of people would ascend on Jerusalem...the outer temple court couldn't handle all large crowds who wished to attend the services...

So the court of the temple was decreed to be extended to include the entire city of Jerusalem...so here... this outer court that is *given over to the nations* is the entire Holy City Jerusalem itself...this is important... it shows the magnitude of what verse 2 tells us is going to happen.... verse two tells us these Gentiles will **trample the Holy City under foot for forty-two months...**

For forty-two months is how long?...let's see... 12 months in a year... 2 years is 24 months... 3 years is 36 months...that leaves 6 months... 3 ½ years!

There is going to be a literal "*trampling of the city*"... the extended outer court of God's temple...the last half...3 ½ years of the tribulation period.... God is not claiming the outer court in His measurements...why?... because He is not claiming the outer court as His!...only the inner court...the altar... His people...are His...

Shortly before Jesus went to the cross... He warned about this great tribulation that would take place just before He returns again in Luke 21:20-24

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. 21 Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the countryside must not enter the city;

22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled....what will take place will make the stomach sick... bitter...23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress

upon the land and wrath against this people, 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 are fulfilled**. The end of the tribulation period.... Christ then returns and sets up His great kingdom on earth.

What is this “times of the gentiles?”

“**Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**” ... Does the Bible tell us what the phrase “times of the Gentiles” means?

I’m going into this because it is important groundwork for later in revelation... The Old Testament does not contain this exact phrase... but there are references that seem to match up. Ezekiel 30:3 points to “**a time of doom for the nations**” in connection with the Day of the Lord.

Daniel’s series of visions deals with Gentile world powers and their role in God’s plan for the earth.... Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay (Daniel 2:31–45) represents successive Gentile kingdoms that will dominate until Christ returns and establishes His reign.

Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7:1–27) likewise speaks of four kings, or nations, which will dominate for a time until Christ comes to rule forever.... The vision of the ram and the goat (Daniel 8:1–26) gives more detail about these Gentile rulers and the time involved in their dominion.

In each of these passages, the Gentiles have dominion over the world, including the Jewish people, for a time, but God will ultimately subdue them all and establish His own kingdom once and for all.

Each prophecy culminates with a reference to Christ's kingdom, so the “times” of these Gentile rulers would be all the years **between the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar (600ish BC) and the glorious return of Christ to establish His kingdom**. We are now living in “**the times of the Gentiles**,” that is, in the era of Gentile domination.

In Revelation 11:2, John indicates that Jerusalem will be under Gentile rule, even though the temple has been restored... The armies of the Beast are destroyed by the Lord in Revelation 19:17–19, just before the millennial reign of Christ is initiated.

I want to point out one important thing... notice in verse 2 that this time of the gentiles was given to them?...**for it has been given to the gentiles....** All this is happening because it is all a part of God’s plan... nothing happens here outside of God’s plan... God’s in control....nothing to worry about.

Let me sum it up ... in the second half of the tribulation period, the last 3 ½ years... Jerusalem...the Jews... are literally going to be trodden down by the gentiles the non- Jewish nations...

Can you imagine that?... you can if you've been watching the news lately...the world is against Israel... the Palestinians have one goal and that is to eliminate Israel off the world map... ***“from the river to the sea”*** is a call to eliminate all of Israel... from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea... if everything within those boundaries are eliminated... there would be no physical Israel.

The antichrist makes a peace agreement through guaranteeing the peace and security of Israel from their hostile neighbors... he will change his mind halfway through the tribulation and he is going to desecrate the temple...he will then persecute Israel...

The last 3 ½ years... Israel will be trodden down by the gentiles...this is **called the time of Jacob's Trouble** in Jeremiah...More tribulation and suffering is coming to Israel.... Greater than anything they've ever experienced...in two days it will be the two year anniversary of the October 7th massacre in Israel... the worst persecution on Israel since the holocaust...Jacob's Trouble will be far, far, worse!

“until the time of gentiles is fulfilled...the end of the tribulation...this picture of the measuring of the temple will define what is God's... Israel... the inner court is God's people... the true Israel...a remnant... the Jews... and His promise to restore Israel...and He will.

John measures the temple... we are given the scenario of the future through a parable of those measurements... Now... let me at least introduce the two witnesses.

Read verse 3

How long will they prophesy?... 1260 days... that's what?...42 months... 3 ½ years... are you seeing some reoccurring things in all this?... this number 3 ½.... Laer we will see that two witnesses will be killed by the beast **and all the people and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies** for how long?.... 3 ½ days...

To summarize a few things about these witnesses...

1. **They are sent to “prophesy” for 3 ½ years**... not necessarily foretelling future events... more like preaching the truth... proclaiming what's taking place with God's judgements during this tribulation period.
2. **When is this happening?**... which 3 ½ years?... some say the second half of the tribulation period when things get really bad... I think they are preaching during the first 3 ½ years because the seventh trumpet has yet to sound... with the seventh trumpet comes the GREAT tribulation... the last 3 ½ years...

I think these witnesses preach throughout the first 3 ½ years then at the end, as the final 3 ½ years are ushered in with the seventh trumpet... they are killed as it says in verse 8...some have speculated that it was through the prophesying/preaching of these witnesses were instrumental in bringing the 144000 Jews to Christ...

3. What did they preach?... *It doesn't say*... But we have a clue... what did they wear?... sackcloth!... why is that important?... throughout the Old Testament we run into clothes of sackcloth... Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat's hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear....it represented desolation and ruin... and or repentance.

Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head....I think these two witnesses preached message of repentance...

4. Who are these two witnesses?...that's the million-dollar question...this morning I'm going to tell you the historical identity...the context... but I'm not going to tell you the prophetic identity... you have to come back next week!

Read verse 4

So who are they?.... they are two olive trees... *let's go home!*...turn in your Bibles to Zechariah chapter 4 [second to last book of the O.T.]... Zechariah prophesied to the people of Israel after they are released from the Babylonian captivity... around 520 BC....this is a direct reference to Revelation 11:4

They had come back to rebuild the temple...but they got sidetracked... they started building their own homes and forgot the temple of the Lord and weren't worshipping... so God sent prophets like Haggai and Zechariah to preach to these people and stir them up...

I love the verse in Haggai 1:4 **Is it time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses while this house the Lord's temple lies waste?...you've sown much, but you bring little...you eat but there is not enough to be satisfied...you drink but there is not enough to get drunk...you put on clothing but it is not warm enough...set your heart and consider your ways!**

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to stir their hearts... to bring them to repentance... they are released from captivity and they are to build the house of the Lord.... They get sidetracked indulging themselves in the culture!.... *repent!*

Zechariah had visions that are recoded in these 14 chapters of Zechariah... Zechariah is often called "Little Revelation" because these visions are so important in Revelation... so when Israel came back to build the temple... there were two important leaders to guide them... one of the men was a civic ruler... he was in the line of king David... we find him in the Messianic genealogy... Zerubbabel...

The other man was a high priest... Joshua... not the Joshua who fit the battle of Jerico... this is much later... different Joshua...these are the two leaders who are bringing Israel back... they are referred to in Zechariah as being the key instruments of God to get this project underway and the people to come back to the Lord.

Zechariah 4:14 calls these two men **the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth....** These two are the “historic” background behind the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

Just as God used the two witnesses Zerubbabel and Joshua to bring His people back to Him... back to the Lord...the two witnesses of the tribulation will be to perform the same mission... to bring God’s people to repent...

Read Zechariah 4:1-4

Have the picture?... you’ve seen the Jewish Menorah...the seven candles with pipes attached to the main stand... picture a bowl on top with pipes going down to the candles... the bowl was full of oil which would feed down the pipes to the candles for fuel... the two olive trees provided the oil to the bowl... amazing self-sufficient machine!

Read verses 6-7

The mountain represents obstacles... Zerubbabel is going to remove the obstacles getting in the way of the building of the temple...

The top stone is the final stone placed on the top of the building to show it is completely finished... it was tradition in that day to place the final stone then all the people would have a great party celebrating the completion of the building...

The stone is placed.... Everybody cheers!...*It’s done! We’re finished...we did it!!!!*

But this time... as the stone is placed on top... everybody shouts **Grace, grace to it...**in other words... God did it!...Because of God’s grace we are given what we do not deserve...*we were only able to do this by HIS power!*

Not by our might...our ability... because we wouldn’t be able to get over the mountains... the obstacles... they need to become plains... Only God can do that!

Read verses 8-14

The prophet has a vision of two olive trees standing on either side of a solid gold lampstand. The olive trees supply the oil that fuels the lamps. The two olive trees represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the governor and high priest. The Lord encourages them not to trust in financial or military resources, but in the power of God’s Holy Spirit working through them **Not by power**

but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts..... As in other Old Testament analogies, God's Holy Spirit is represented by the oil of the olive tree.

So when we come back to Revelation 11... we carry this historical meaning into it... who are the two witnesses in Revelation 11:4?...Zerubbabel and Joshua?... Next week!