

## Revelation 11 - The Temple and Two Witnesses

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COURSE COMMENTARY

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### 11:1 - measure the Temple of God

- **measure**  
Ezekiel's temple was measured by an angelic messenger ([Eze. 40:2ff.](#)). Ezekiel was to record the details of the Millennial Temple. Zechariah sees a man with a measuring line who records the great size of the city in a future time of blessing ([Zec. 2:1-4](#)). John must measure: 1) the temple of God; 2) the altar; and 3) the worshipers. Measuring indicates God's interest and separation of that which is measured from that which is not.
- **temple**  
"Temple" is *nao'n* which probably refers to the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place--the places where only the priests are allowed. Eventually, the *Abomination of Desolation* will stand in the "holy place" ([Mat. 24:15](#)). The "man of sin" will also sit in the Temple showing himself as God ([2Th. 2:4](#)).
- **the altar**  
Probably the brazen altar outside the holy place since it is mentioned separately from the *nao's*. The Tribulation Temple will have a sacrificial altar because the covenant of the Antichrist appears to allow for sacrifice--which he will break in the middle of the final week of Daniel ([Dan. 9:27](#)).

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- **those who worship there**  
The worshiping ones are included in the measurement and purposefully separated from the

Gentiles (or nations) in the outer court. The former are recognized by God, whereas the latter are rejected.

## 11:2 - trodden by Gentiles

- leave out the court**  
 A play on words: *the courtyard outside the temple, you throw outside!* God rejects the outer court as essentially not being part of the Temple.
- given to the Gentiles**  
 "Gentiles" is *e'thnesin* which is often translated as *nations*. This supposes that the temple, altar, and inner court are in the control of the Jews.
- they will tread the holy city**  
 There is only one "holy city" in scripture - Jerusalem (or the New Jerusalem). Here it is the earthly Jerusalem because it is trodden down. *Treading* speaks of occupation and desecration as modelled by Antiochus Epiphanes ([Dan. 8:13-14](#)).
- for forty-two months**  
 The "holy city" being trampled is the same "holy city" as was mentioned in *Daniel's 70 Weeks* ([Dan. 9:24-27](#)). The trampling finishes at the Second Coming when the *Times of the Gentiles* ([Luke 21:24](#)) finally come to an end: the final half of the week (3.5 years).

## Temples of God

- Temples in History

Date	Temple	Description	References
4004 B.C.	Garden of Eden	Before The Fall, Adam and Eve had full communion with God. The entire Garden was a "temple."	<a href="#">Gen. 2:25</a> ; <a href="#">Gen. 3:8</a>
1446 - 960/950 B.C.	Tabernacle in the Wilderness	A portable, temporary structure where God's presence met with Israel.	<a href="#">Ex. 24:15</a> ; <a href="#">Ex. 25:8-22</a>
960/950 - 586 B.C.	Solomon's Temple	Erected in Jerusalem according to God's instructions. Planned by King David, built by Solomon. Destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.	<a href="#">1K. 5-8</a> ; <a href="#">2K. 24:13</a> ; <a href="#">2Chr. 36:7</a>
515 B.C. - A.D. 70	Second Temple	Rebuilt under Zerubbabel on the return from Babylonian captivity. Desecrated by Antichus Epiphanes and rededicated in 165 B.C. at Hanukkah. Rebuilt by Herod the Great. Jesus visited this Temple which was destroyed in A.D. 70 by Rome.	<a href="#">2Chr. 36:22-23</a> ; <a href="#">Ezra 1:1-4</a> ; <a href="#">Mat. 23:37-24:2</a>
?	Tribulation Temple	A future Jewish Temple where sacrifices will be offered until the midpoint of the Tribulation when the Abomination of Desolation occurs. The Beast will sit in this Temple and proclaim his divinity.	<a href="#">Dan. 9:27</a> ; <a href="#">12:11</a> ; <a href="#">Mat. 24:15</a> ; <a href="#">2Th. 2:4</a> ; <a href="#">Rev. 11:1-2</a>
Second Coming	Millennial Temple	The Temple built by Messiah which serves as the center of His government during the Millennial Kingdom.	<a href="#">Eze. 40:5-43:27</a> ; <a href="#">Zec. 6:12-15</a> ; <a href="#">Zec. 14:16-21</a> ;

			Isa. 24:23; 56:6-7; Rev. 20:2-4
Eternal State	New Jerusalem	Sin no longer exists. Man has full fellowship with God. God is the Temple.	Rev. 21, 22

## Dome of the Rock

Temple Mount (looking south) in A.D. 2003



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- 1) Not the temple of God (Allah and Yahweh differ in fundamentals).
- 2) According to Tradition, Abraham offered Isaac on an altar on this "Rock."
- 3) Dome of the Rock first built in A.D. 691, Al-Aqsa Mosque in A.D. 715.
- 4) Current status: owned by Israel, but jurisdiction is in the hands of Muslims. (God's ways are strange to us!) NOTE: The Jews do not have full control presently.
- 5) Jewish rabbis disagree whether modern Jews should ascend the Mount for fear of defiling the Holy Place.

## Tribulation Temple

### • Activities of Antichrist in Temple

- 1) Prince to come confirms covenant for one week, then breaks the covenant and *interrupts sacrifice* (Dan. 9:27).
- 2) Daily *sacrifice* is taken away when *Abomination of Desolation is set up* (Dan. 12:11).
- 3) Jesus predicted the *Abomination of Desolation* will stand in "the holy place" (Mat. 24:15).
- 4) The man of sin will sit "as God in the temple of God" (2Th. 2:4).
- 5) John is told to measure a temple with an altar during the time of the end (Rev. 11:1-2).

### • Herod's Temple?

There are significant problems for the preterist view that these passages describe Herod's

Temple prior to A.D. 70.

- 1) The events of A.D. 70 cannot provide bona fide fulfillments of the many prophetic themes and details concerning the end time.
- 2) The accepted date for the Book of Revelation is not early enough. See the lesson on the [Date of the Book of Revelation](#).
- 3) The early church fathers, who lived closest to the time of Nero and of John, had no idea that Nero was the Beast. Like futurists, they expected a *future* figure in a *future* Temple.

## 11:3 - two witnesses

- [Jewish prophets](#)

These are two Jewish prophets who are a key aspect of God's promise to regenerate the Jewish nation after the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in" ([Rom. 11:25-26](#)). (Read Romans [9](#), [10](#), and [11](#) as background.)

- [Symbolic, Corporate, or Individuals?](#)

**Symbolic:** the law and the prophets, Old and New Testaments, the Word and the Holy Spirit.

**Corporate:** Paulikians and the Waldenses, believers who are martyred, a large group of witnesses, the Christian church and the state, Israel and the church, etc.

**Individuals:** Elijah and Moses, Elijah and Enoch, Elijah and John the Baptist, Elijah and John the Apostle, Peter and James, Peter and John, Peter and Paul, two unknown persons, etc.

- [Who Are They?](#)

Three most viable views:

- 1) Moses and Elijah - ministry similarities, Elijah raptured, unusual aspects of Moses' burial ([Deu. 34:5-6](#); [Jude 9](#)), Elijah prophesied to return ([Mal. 4:5-6](#)), represent law and prophets, appeared at transfiguration ([Mat. 17:3](#); [Mark 9:4](#); [Luke 9:30](#)).
- 2) Elijah and Enoch - both were translated to heaven ([Gen. 5:24](#); [2K. 2:11](#)).
- 3) Two Future Prophets - avoids problems with previous views (see commentary), Scripture does not identify them.

## 11:3 - 1,260 days

- [1,260 days](#)

Half of the Tribulation period. 1,260 days = 42 months of 30 days each = 3.5 years of 360 days each. Is this the first half or the last half (when the city is trampled for 42 months)? Reasons suggesting the first half:

- 1) The beast is destroyed at the end of the last half, not the witnesses.
- 2) When the prophets are in power, it seems unlikely that the Beast could declare himself as God in the Temple ([2Th. 2:4](#)).
- 3) The Jewish witnesses would be most effective in Israel's restoration while numerous Jews are still in Jerusalem, prior to the Abomination of Desolation ([Mat. 24:15](#)) and their flight to the wilderness ([Rev. 12:6](#), [13-14](#)).
- 4) The global celebration at the death of the witnesses seems unlikely in the midst of the Campaign of Armageddon ([Rev. 16:16](#)).
- 5) The overthrow of the prophets would more naturally contribute to the ultimate ascendancy and fame of the Beast at the midpoint of the Tribulation.
- 6) If Christ returns with resurrected saints at the end of the week, why do these two witnesses ascend to heaven?

- [clothed in sackcloth](#)

A rough, coarse cloth or bag-like garment worn as a symbol of judgment, mourning, grief, or

repentance. The prophets mourn over the judgments they must deliver. It also indicates that repentance is needed.

## 11:4 - two olive trees and two lampstands

- **two olive trees and two lampstands**  
A direct allusion to Zechariah's vision ([Zec. 4:1-14](#)). Two anointed individuals typified by Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the prince who ministered *during a time of Israel's restoration*.
- **a period of restoration**  
In a similar way to which Joshua and Zerubbabel were used in the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, so will these two witnesses be used to restore Israel for the Millennial Kingdom.

## 11:5 - enemies devoured

- **fire proceeds from their mouth**  
They destroy their enemies by fire, much like Elijah ([2K. 1:10-12](#)) and the fire-breathing demonic horsemen ([Rev. 9:18](#)).

## 11:6 - plagues

- **shut heaven so that no rain falls**  
This occurs "in the days of their prophecy" -- the entire 3.5 years. This recalls the ministry of Elijah ([1K. 17:1](#); [Luke 4:25](#); [Jas. 5:7](#)). Lack of water and the sackcloth worn by the prophets allude to *fasting and mourning* intended to produce repentance.
- **waters turned to blood**  
This recalls the ministry of Moses and Aaron ([Ex. 4:9](#); [Ex. 7:17-21](#)).

## 11:7 - beast from the abyss

- **the beast**  
Not the false prophet, but a known figure *previously revealed* in Scripture ([Dan. 7:3, 11](#)).
- **ascends out of the bottomless pit**  
He overcomes the witnesses after he is healed from his deadly wound ([Rev. 17:8](#)). His revival and victory over the witnesses contribute toward his fame and worship ([Rev. 13:3-4](#)). He is the *overcomer* who rode forth on the white horse ([Rev. 6:2](#)).

## 11:8 - Sodom and Egypt

- **burial refused**  
Their bodies are purposely left unburied as an insult to Jewish sensibilities and as a testimony to the power of the Beast.
- **where our Lord was crucified**  
At the time of the two witnesses, the city has ungodly characteristics like Sodom ([Deu. 32:28-32](#)). We are not left to guess at its identity: **Jerusalem**.

## 11:9 - viewed by the nations

- **peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see**  
Some understand this as a global community resident at the city. Others see this as an indication of a global broadcast.
- **three-and-a-half days**  
Not a lengthy period, but literal days during which their bodies slowly begin to decompose.

## 11:10 - earth dwellers rejoice

- **those who dwell on the earth**  
A technical phrase indicating those who oppose God at the time of the end. These are the ones being tested ([Rev. 3:10](#)).
- **send gifts... because these two prophets tormented**  
The relief over the death of the prophets is so great that the world celebrates, even exchanging gifts. National and regional differences will be set aside due to a common hatred for the two prophets. Their rejoicing is a measure of the depth of their torment at the ministry of the prophets.

## 11:11-12 - resurrection!

- **breath of life from God entered them**  
The life-giving force which animates men's bodies of clay ([Gen. 2:7](#); [Job 33:4](#)).
- **come up here... they ascended to heaven in a cloud**  
The same command which John heard at the beginning of the heavenly portion of his vision ([Rev. 4:1](#)). Their ascension with *clouds* recalls that of Jesus ([Acts 1:9](#)) and the Rapture of the church ([1Th. 4:17](#)).

## 11:13 - a great earthquake

- **a great earthquake**  
There are numerous earthquakes during the Tribulation. A previous great quake attended the opening of the sixth seal ([Rev. 6:12](#)). The greatest earthquake is yet to come--at the pouring forth of the seventh bowl judgment ([Rev. 16:17](#)).
- **the rest were afraid and gave glory to God**  
Unlike other people during the judgments of the end (e.g., [Rev. 9:21](#)), these *repent*. These are in Jerusalem and mostly Jews. God's promise to spiritually awaken Israel in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom is in progress ([Rom. 11:25-27](#)) !

## 11:14 - two of three woes

- **second woe is past**  
This is the second of the three woes which are the final three trumpets ([Rev. 8:13](#)). The events of chapters 10 and 11 (which we've covered so far) are included within the purview of the first six trumpets. More evidence that the witnesses probably prophesy during the first half of the week.
- **the third woe is coming quickly**  
The third woe is the sounding of the seventh trumpet ([Rev. 11:15](#)) which includes the pouring forth of all seven bowls of the wrath of God ([Rev. 16](#)).

## 11:15 - seventh trumpet

- **the seventh angel sounded**  
The angel with the seventh trumpet ([Rev. 8:2](#)). This is not the *last trump* ([1Cor. 15:52](#)). This is the last of *these seven* but not the last of the entire Tribulation period, which occurs at the second advent ([Mat. 24:30](#)). Unlike the *last trump* which occurs in *the twinkling of an eye*, the seventh trumpet covers an extended period of time.
- **kingdom(s) of this world have become**  
The NU and MT texts have *kingdom* (singular). All diverse national, political, social, and religious groups are in reality one kingdom under one king: Satan ([John 12:31](#); [2Cor. 4:4](#); [Eph. 2:2](#)).
- **His Christ**  
Literally, *His Anointed One* -- a direct allusion to [Psalm 2](#) " Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and **His Anointed**, saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.' "  
*Anointed = Messiah* .

## 11:16-18 - seventh trumpet

- **twenty-four elders**  
We discussed the identity of these elders in the lesson on [Revelation 4](#).
- **the nations were angry and Your wrath has come**  
Refers to the rage of the nations ([Ps. 2](#)) exhibited throughout the Tribulation by an unrelenting opposition to God. His response was prophesied: " He shall speak to them in His **wrath** and distress them in His deep displeasure " ([Ps. 2:5](#)). The seven bowls under the seventh trumpet are characterized as seven "bowls of the wrath of God" ([Rev. 15:1, 7](#); [16:1](#)).
- **judgment of the dead**  
Every man will face judgment ([Heb. 9:27](#)). Judgment follows the time of trouble for Israel and involves two categories of resurrection ([Dan. 12:1-3](#)). The times of their resurrection is separated by the Millennial Kingdom ([Rev. 20:4-5, 12](#)).
- **prophets and saints rewarded**  
At the judgement seat of Christ ([1Cor. 3:13-15](#); [2Cor. 5:10](#)). Rewards include many promises in Scripture related to: 1) the inheritance of the believer; 2) the promises to the overcomer; 3) blessings with attend the Millennial Kingdom; 4) blessings of the eternal state.

## 11:19 - temple in Heaven opened

- **temple of God was opened in heaven**  
The chapter begins and ends with Temples: the *earthly* in Jerusalem and the *heavenly* in God's heavenly realm. The Temple is opened to reveal the ark.
- **ark of His covenant**  
Some speculate that this is the *earthly* ark which was previously taken to heaven, but this is not necessary since the earthly Temple is patterned after the heavenly which may have its own ark ([Heb. 8:4-5](#); [9:1-11](#)). The earthly ark contained the *written law* (ten commandments) specifying God's moral requirements. This standard brings judgment on men due to their sin, for "the law brings about wrath" ([Rom. 4:15](#)). Believers are exempt from judgment by the written

requirements which were taken away in Christ ([Rom. 7:6](#); [Col. 2:14](#)). The appearance of the ark is an indicator of God's righteous moral law and is connected with the final judgment subsumed in the seventh trumpet. to go forth.

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).