

Chapter 11

V.1-3 The Temple In these verses as we begin Chapter 11, we see that John is told in a direct quote to measure the temple and also that there will be two witnesses who will prophesy in the context of this temple. We assume that these words come from heaven because the voice says that they are “my witnesses” but we also know that most recently it was the mighty angel who John was corresponding with in the previous chapter. It is important for our understanding of the witnesses and the temple that is being described that they go together in the words from “heaven”. I emphasize this because there is a lot of controversy in the book of Revelation around the concept of the 3rd temple which we will talk about in this chapter. But my initial point is that if you don’t think this is a literal temple then by association it is hard to believe that there are two literal witnesses. My approach in the book of Revelation and in interpretation in general is to start with God’s Word and then fit the conclusions into my theology it is not to start with my theology or preconceived notions and fit God’s Word into it. This matters in our understanding of the book of Revelation especially since we often prescribe ourselves into camps of pre trib, mid trib, and post trib or premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial without conclusive study for ourselves. I am not saying that we should do away with helpful distinctions and categories, but that we shouldn’t be forced to fit God’s Word into a preconceived definition instead of honestly evaluating it. How we prioritize God’s Word matters and we must start any discussion of interpretation with understanding its inspiration and inerrancy.

So, in these verses I understand John being told to measure a literal temple. The issue with this is that there is no temple currently and there wasn’t one when John receives the message for the book of Revelation. The 2nd Temple was destroyed in 70AD and has never been rebuilt since that time. The first initial possibility is that maybe this is referring to a temple in heaven but we realize very quickly that this can’t be the case because the voice from heaven says that it will have an “outer court” where the nations will trample it. The context of this word nations implies unbelievers and we know that there are no unbelievers in heaven and certainly no one who would treat God’s temple with disrespect in heaven. The second thought is that maybe this temple will be somewhere else besides Jerusalem but we see specificity from the voice in heaven who says that it will be in the holy city. We also see in the narrative of the two witnesses that they are in the place “where their Lord is crucified”. The place for this temple and the two witnesses is clearly Jerusalem. If this is speaking of a 3rd temple, how will it come to be? That is a great question that I don’t have an answer for but I don’t want to confine my interpretation by my ability to understand. By the time we get to this point in history where the two witnesses appear by the plainest understanding of Scripture there appears to be a temple in Jerusalem. This passage also indicates that there will be people worshiping there. We get the impression that there will be a 3rd temple with an incense altar where people are worshiping when it begins to be trampled on (at least in the outer court) for forty-two months. This is the same length of time that it is indicated for the two witnesses to prophesy – 1260 days. I do believe that there will be a 3rd temple but that is not necessarily a good thing or anything that we as Christians should fight for or even be happy about because number one those sacrifices will not honor Christ because He was sacrificed for our sins once and for all at the cross on Calvary. Secondly, the development of a 3rd temple means preparations and opportunity for the man of lawlessness and the abomination of desolation. As Jesus indicates in Matthew 24 this will be the worst time that has ever existed on the earth. I don’t want to see the 3rd temple. I just believe I will because of God’s Word. There are two other New Testament passages that are

relevant to the discussion which both imply a 3rd temple as well. In 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul refers to both the man of lawlessness and the temple of God. Now it is very possible that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians before the destruction of the 2nd temple in 70AD but the context of his statement is v.1 “now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together with him...” so it is all about the time of Jesus’ return. Here is the entire passage of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4:

“Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”

The passage is clearly about the end times and Jesus’ return and says that Jesus will not return until 1) There is a rebellion 2) The man of lawlessness is revealed 3) He sits in the temple and proclaims himself to be God. The other verse which implies a 3rd temple is from Matthew 24 in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus is answering questions about “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (v.3) In his response and summary he makes the statement “so when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place - run. We know from Jewish history that there was an abomination of desolation by Antiochus Epiphanies in the 1st century BC before Jesus’ arrival in Bethlehem, but Jesus is talking about the time surrounding His return. He mentions Daniel and confirms Daniel’s interpretation of the event which says that “from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1290 days.” (Daniel 12:11) The point being that before the end and before Jesus’ return there will be an abomination of desolation. Based on this definition it would necessitate a place where the abomination of desolation could take place. [What is the meaning of the abomination of desolation? \(compellingtruth.org\)](http://compellingtruth.org) The opposing argument would be that Jesus was referring to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD when he referred to the abomination of desolation but there is no history or record of Rome defiling the temple before it was destroyed. There was an idolatrous altar that was built after its destruction but that appears to be different than the specificity of the antichrist and the abomination of desolation who oppose God. This view also doesn’t adequately explain Paul’s statement about there being a temple around the time of Jesus’ return. He is very specific to say “that day will not come unless...”.

V.4-14 The Two Witnesses The majority of this passage in Chapter 11 focuses on the commissioning and ministry of the two witnesses. These individuals are placed in Jerusalem before the prominence and destruction of the antichrist and it is a vivid reminder that God will never leave us without a witness regardless of how difficult and trying the end times may get. Jesus said He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. In the end of the end the gates of hell will press and push and persecute but they will not prevail and Christ will come to rescue His bride and ensure the church’s victory. This first description we see of these two witnesses is that they are called the two olive trees and lampstands who stand before the Lord. This description is similar to the two olive trees that we see described in Zechariah 4:2-14. The olive trees that are described in Zechariah passage are Zerubbabel and Joshua who were responsible for initiating the return of the Jews from Babylon and starting the

rebuilding of the 2nd Temple. In a similar way we see the two witnesses here in Revelation will complete the Lord's work in the last days. It is interesting to wonder if these two witnesses will be initiating forces for the 3rd Temple? If that is part of their mission, we are not told so and Scripture says that they will prophesy, provide signs of judgment demonstrating the Lord's power, and be a testimony of the Lord's authority up until the very end.

Who are these two witnesses? I think it is an interesting question and more productive for us in the church to think about than being consumed with the identity of the antichrist. There are several different possibilities that are suggested by commentators and scholars alike which include Joshua and Zerubbabel; Moses and Elijah; Enoch and Elijah; or current day prophets. There is also a possible connection to John the Baptist as we know that he fulfilled part of the prophesy to be the Elijah who was to come and also wore sackcloth like the two witnesses. Although, it is only conjecture I believe that any of these options could be possible. Enoch and Elijah never died natural deaths so they are a natural conclusion to return. Joshua and Zerubbabel already fit the bill once so to speak so they could easily return as well. Moses and Elijah seem to make the most sense theologically because of the prominence in their presence of the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. They were also the ones who show up on the Mount of Transfiguration. And there is also an interesting passage of Scripture at the end of Malachi in Chapter 4 which mentions Moses and Elijah right before the close of the old covenant which may be a foretaste of the last days experience.

Malachi 4:1-6 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts. Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

Is it possible that this is an indication that they will be returning? Or maybe more likely that there would be two witnesses who come in the spirit of Moses and Elijah since that is how it happened with John the Baptist. Elijah didn't physically come again (yet) he returned in likeness through John the Baptist and it is very possible that we will similarly see two witnesses who appear in the likeness of Moses and Elijah.

The story of the two witnesses is a short one but that does not measure the significance of their ministry especially as we consider the similar time length that Jesus engaged in His public ministry. We know that according to this passage that they prophesy and that if anyone tries to harm them fire comes out of their mouths to consume their foes. They have the power to shut the skies, to turn water into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues. This is really the only description we get of their 3 ½ years of ministry but it is obviously a very impactful and notable time on the earth. At the end of this time, we are told that the beast rises from the bottomless pit and makes war on them and conquers them. This beast is most likely the antichrist since that is the name for him that we see throughout Revelation but we also know that Abaddon came from the bottomless pit and that it could be a reference to Satan as well. Most likely though it is the

antichrist in the power of Satan who kills them. Regardless of how it happens it is important for us to remember as we examine the ministry of these two witnesses that it doesn't happen until God says it's time. Not until they "have finished their ministry" does the beast arise to attack them. Even Satan himself cannot take these two witnesses out until God allows it. It is clear that the whole earth is filled with hatred toward these two prophets and the antichrist would like to end their ministry immediately. He is prevented at every turn and these two witnesses finish their testimony. It is a great reminder for all faithful followers of Jesus Christ that no matter what ministry the Lord has called you to that the enemy cannot overcome you until God allows it. When it is your time, it is your time, but before that moment no power of hell can thwart God's call on your life. Oh, and God always gets the last word regardless of what happens in this life. There will be a resurrection of the dead for all Christ followers who will look on the enemy and ponder how this enemy could have made the earth tremble after they see his final end. God will put His foot down and add an exclamation point with these two witnesses and after they are killed and disgraced, He will miraculously raise them from the dead and raise them to be with Him in heaven. God always gets the final word and He makes it clear that despite their death that He is still in ultimate control and rules over the affairs of men. There is a great earthquake and many people are killed because of it and those who survive were terrified and gave glory to God. It is not clear whether this is a recognition of their faith that leads to salvation but it is one of the only spots in the end of the tribulation period where we see any positive response to God. We see that this is finally the end of the 2nd Woe and we turn to the 7th Trumpet to find our 3rd Woe.

V.15-18 The Seventh Trumpet We already saw in the last chapter that something very significant is happening with the blowing of the 7th Trumpet. With the statements that Scripture makes about it I doubt we can exaggerate its meaning or importance. Revelation 10:7 "but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets". This is finally where we see the trumpet blow in Chapter 11 and the first thing that happens is that John hears loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." The war is over the deed is done. There will be no more struggle or even a need for faith because all of God's promises will have become yes and amen. Immediately the twenty-four elders fall on their faces and worship God. In their worship they make a conclusive declaration about who God is and about what He has now done. They say in verses 17&18:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

We see in this declaration that the twenty-four elders make a confession about God's great power and five resulting actions that have transpired because of His power. With the blowing of the 7th Trumpet 1) God has begun to reign; 2) His wrath has come; 3) The dead are judged; 4) The saints are rewarded; 5) The destroyers are destroyed; We can trust that whatever happens in the last days or whatever calamities or devastations the antichrist brings about that God will use His great power to accomplish these five things. These things will happen and God will utilize His great power in due time. You can count on it. You can take it to the bank. It is

finished. The underlying question then remains when will these things happen and when will this trumpet blow. This is part of the difficulty with the message of Revelation and until the trumpet blows faith will be required of us. I have included a chart below with relevant Scripture passages about some of these issues but we also need to remember that God's priority is not on the figuring out of when or He would have made it much clearer. His primary motivation for us is in the purification of our faith as we await His coming and learn how to patiently endure. As we think about the 7th Trumpet one of the primary questions about it transpiring in the book of Revelation is - Is this the same trumpet that Paul and Jesus mention in the New Testament? (1 Corinthians 15:52 & Matthew 24:31)

1 Corinthians 15:51-52: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

Matthew 24:29-31: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

They sound very similar in their finality to the 7th Trumpet in Revelation. But we are only in Chapter 11 as we hear the 7th Trumpet blow so how does that work with the timeline of Revelation? That is a great question and one that we have looked at in the past and one that we will continue to encounter as we go through cyclical and parallel events all leading up to the final Day of the Lord. Most likely we see that this trumpet doesn't blow in consecutive order but is very near or in the same time frame of the 7th Seal and the 7th Bowl at the very end of all things.

V.19 The Temple (In Heaven) We began this chapter with the measuring of the temple on earth and we end this chapter with a glimpse of the temple in heaven. No doubt that the scribes who divided these words into chapters and verses saw this connection being primary to the content of this section we call Chapter 11. The temple on earth is trampled on by the nations. When the temple in heaven is opened there are flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, an earthquake and heavy hail. Just a glimpse of the temple in heaven releases such a glory that the earth cannot contain it. John also mentions for the first time the revealing of the ark of the covenant. Up until this point we have focused on the throne of God, those who surround the throne, the Lamb and the scroll, the incense altar, and the angels of Revelation, but now we are introduced to the ark of the covenant. This is interesting in and by itself because the natural assumption may be that the ark of the covenant isn't needed in heaven because its purpose on earth was to house the glory of God. In heaven His glory is not confined and yet we see the ark of the covenant anyways. Has the ark of the covenant from earth been translated to heaven or is this the original plan that created the model for the earthly ark of the covenant that was lost? For more information about what could have happened to the ark of the covenant check out the following article. [What happened to the Ark of the Covenant? | GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org) As we close our time in Chapter 11, I ask you to remember that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit as a

follower of Christ. Is it a temple that allows the name of the Lord to be trampled on or is it a container for the very glory of God seen in the Holy of Holies?

	Daniel	Jesus	Paul, Peter, Prophets	Revelation
70th week (7 years)	Daniel 9:24-27			
3 ½ years	Daniel 12:11 Daniel 9:27 Daniel 7:25			Revelation 13:5 Revelation 12:14 Revelation 11:2-3
The Last Trumpet		Matthew 24:31	I Cor. 15:52 1 Thessalonians 4:16 Isaiah 27:13	Revelation 11:15
Antichrist	Daniel 9:27 Daniel 11:29-45 Daniel 7:23-28	Matthew 24:15	Isiah 16:12 Isaiah 28:18 Isaiah 27:1 Isaiah 14:14	
Abomination of Desolation	Daniel 9:27 Daniel 12:11	Matthew 24:15	2 Thessalonians 2:3-4	
The 3rd Temple		Matthew 24:15	2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Revelation 11:1	