

REVELATION 11

I. BACKGROUND:

“The best guideline to follow in interpreting this section is to take each fact literally. In line with this principle, a literal temple will be in existence during the Great Tribulation, and the city should be considered the literal city Jerusalem in keeping with its identification in 11:8. The time periods of 42 months (v. 2) and three and one-half days (vv. 9, 11) again should be considered literally. The earthquake will kill literally 7,000 individuals, and the two witnesses should be considered as two individual men” (Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT, notes on Revelation, ch. 11:1-14).

II. TEXT:

A. Read Verses 1-2:

v. 1 “Reed” – a bamboo-like cane that grew along the banks of the Nile River in Egypt and the Jordan River in Israel, often reaching 20 ft. in length; historically used as a light-weight, convenient standard for measure.

Why should John **“measure”** (Greek *metreo*; where we get our word “metric” from) the temple? In a similar way the temple of Ezekiel 40 was measured and the New Jerusalem was measured (Rev. 21:15-17). The temple here will be constructed so that orthodox Jews can offer sacrifices according to the Mosaic Law in the period in the first half of the seven-year period known as Daniel’s 70th week.

Measuring is commanded in Revelation 21:15 where the physical dimensions of the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven are found (1,400 mi. x 1,400 mi. x 1,400 miles; just as the Holy of Holies in both the Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple was square/cubic: Exodus 26; 1 Kings 6:20).

This tells us several things:

(1) A temple **will** be built;

(2) Ezek. 40:5 pictures a wall completely enclosing a new Temple, separating the holy from the profane. Temple preparations; 322’ to the north per premier Israeli archaeologists. .

There are scholarly men, such as Dr. Asher Kaufman, who has made a study over many years of the Temple Mount. In his studies of all the ancient records that he can get hold of -- all of the pictures of that area, all of the charts, aerial and space photography -- he has become convinced that Solomon’s temple stood to the north of the Dome of the Rock mosque (aka Al Aqsa Mosque). The 322’ north of the Dome of the Rock is this little flat rock outcropping called the “Dome of the Spirits” or the “Dome of the Tablets”. That is where the Holy of Holies was in Solomon’s temple. The fact that looking from this location directly east, you look over the East Gate to the Mount of Olives, which helps to confirm the position of Solomon’s temple.

“Count the worshipers” - God will evaluate both the Temple and those in it!

v. 2: The **“outer court,”** the Court of the Gentiles, contained about 26 acres -- now occupied by the Dome of the Rock (Al Aqsa Mosque). In Herod’s temple the outer court was marked off from the inner by “the middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:15), beyond which a Gentile could not go. In this outer court was a house of prayer for the Gentiles (cf. Mk 11:17).

During the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike against the Arabs and regained the Old City of Jerusalem. In a gesture he himself never explained, Gen. Moshe Dayan let the Arabs retain control of the 35-acre parcel called the Temple Mount. Thus the outer court of the Temple has been “given over to the Gentiles” ever since!

“42 months” – 3 ½ years; cf. Dan. 9:27 divides the 7-yr. Trib. into 2 equal parts; same as 1,260 days. This period covers the duration of the triumph of the Gentiles, of the prophesying of the two witnesses, of the sojourn of the woman (Israel) in the wilderness (Rev. 12:14).

Gentiles will “**trample**” on the holy city – cf. Palestinian’s appeal to the General Ass’y (193 member states) and/or the Security Council (16 members). Two days ago: NY Times article. CBS News yesterday: “Intense Talks Ongoing Over Palestinian Statehood application.”

Voice of America News yesterday reported, “A senior Palestinian politician said on Tuesday that Palestinians will pursue full recognition from the United Nations with the start of next week's meetings in New York... Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is scheduled to officially outline the Palestinian strategy on Friday.... It remains unclear whether Mr. Abbas will seek full recognition from the Security Council as a member state of the U.N., or instead seek "non-member status," which only requires a simple majority from the 193-member General Assembly. Palestinians currently hold observer status at the world body.”

Do you know how many states hold observer status at the UN? ONLY ONE!!! Palestine! Pres. Obama is in favor of partitioning Jerusalem as the capitol of Palestine AND Israel and promotes further land concessions to aid Palestinian statehood for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which would cut Israel in half!

vv. 3-6 Numerous and varied interpretations have been given concerning the two witnesses. Some have suggested that they are not literal individuals. However, in view of the fact that they die and are resurrected, the implication is that they are actual people (duh!).

v. 3: “**Two witnesses**” required by Mosaic law: Dt. 17:6; 19:15. “**Sackcloth**” -- prophets = mourning; Sackcloth was proper OT apparel for mourning or repentance; the two witnesses are apparently wailing over the sins of God’s people. Biblical prophecies figured on a calendar of 360 days, 30 day month; 1260 days = 3 ½ yrs.

Two witnesses Jesus referred to several times were (1) The Law and (2) The Prophets. Who better epitomizes the Law than MOSES? And who better the Prophets than ELIJAH, esp. to reprobate Israel? FIVE times the phrase “the Law and the Prophets” is mentioned in the NT.

v. 4: "two olive trees and the 2 lampstands" - The description of the two witnesses as olive trees and lampstands has an Old Testament background. In Zec 4: 2,3,14 the lampstand or candlestick (*menorah*) is Israel, and the two olive trees apparently Joshua and Zerubbabel, but John makes his own use of this symbolism to refer to these 2 “**witnesses**” (*martus*). “*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD.*” The implication is that the 2 witnesses will be supplied with God's power in a mighty way.

* Continuous supply of oil > Holy Spirit being poured out; the fullness of God's power.

* Show position in Tabernacle (Holy Place [10 cubits] 15’x15’x15’).

* Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:20 – [20 cubits] 30’x30’x30’)

v. 5: "Fire from their mouths" - cf. Elijah (2 Ki. 1:10ff) deals with Ahaziah's messengers (Ahab's son, in Israel). Elijah was able to call down fire from heaven on those who sought to arrest him. When Elijah was ministering upon the earth, King Ahaziah sent a captain of 50 men to bring him back as a prisoner. While Elijah was sitting on the mountain, the captain came and said, “*You, man of God, come down!*” (2 Ki. 1:1-15).

v. 6: Elijah had caused drought in the time of Israel’s king Ahab (1 Ki. 17); Moses turned water into blood (Ex. 7:17-21 - 1st plague after staff turned into a snake).

Also, in Malachi 4:5 God promised to send Elijah before the great day of the Lord, and in Matthew 17:11 Jesus said that Elijah would come and restore all things. Moses and Elijah also appeared together at the Mount of Transfiguration.

v. 7: "Beast" = antichrist (we'll see him lots in chs. 13 & 17); was released with 1st seal (Rev. 6:1-2); that he comes up from the abyss indicates his demonic character (abyss opened, 9:1).

Very appropriate statement: “**until the time they finish their testimony,**” these 2 men are indestructible; no one can touch them. God's anointing and God's hand are upon their lives – as they are on

OURS! We like them are immortal until God's purposes in us are fulfilled. When the 2 witnesses finish their testimony, then "**the beast that ascended out of the abyss**" shall kill them. This is the Antichrist described in detail in Rev. 13,17.

vv. 8-9: "Sodom and Egypt" = Jerusalem, because of its corruption, apostasy and rejection of God; how is it possible for the whole world to view them except by satellite? Thanks, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC and FoxNews. In John's time it would have been impossible for all the people of the earth to see the two dead bodies. Today, satellite and cable television make it possible.

v. 12: Cf. 1 Thess. 4:17 "*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*"

Imagine being a TV camera-man on that assignment. You arrive in Jerusalem and focus your camera on these 2 bodies. Suddenly, they stand up and begin to ascend into heaven. What a shock!!!

Who ARE the two witnesses??!

Possibilities include:

1) Elijah and Enoch -- these 2 often suggested as they were the only two biblical characters who never experienced death. This view was very popular in the early Church. Cf. also:

Heb. 9:27 ". . . it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (KJV).

But Heb. 11:5 "*By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found because God had taken him away.*"

2) Elijah and Moses -- Elijah taken to Heaven in a whirlwind of fire (2 Ki. 2:11 ff); Malachi 4:5f prophesied the coming of Elijah before the coming of the Lord. John the Baptist was that forerunner (Mt. 17:9-13), yet did not fulfill all that Malachi predicted.

In addition, Elijah did not experience death and Moses' was surrounded by mysterious circumstances. Apocryphal sources (Assumption of Moses) and Jude 9. Neither man fulfilled their mission completely; both seemingly cut short. According to the text it doesn't appear mandatory that these must be people who have never died. Moses would represent the Law; Elijah the prophets. Both of these men appeared at the Transfiguration with Jesus (Mt. 17:1-13), which anticipated the 2nd Coming. Finally, the ministry of these two witnesses (martyrs) is uniquely similar to that of Moses and Elijah.

3) Unknown and un-named Tribulation saints that emulate the miracles done in the time of Moses and Elijah. "While there is room for considerable discussion of these various views, the fact is that the passage does not identify the two witnesses, and they probably do not have historic identification" (Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT, notes on Rev. 11:3-6).

v. 13: You remember when Jesus was crucified there was an earthquake (Matthew 27:54) and another at His resurrection (Matthew 28:2). A great earthquake occurred when the sixth seal was opened (Rev 6:12), and there will be a greater one when the seventh bowl judgment is poured out (Rev 16:18-20).

7,000 "people" perish; population: about 750,000 in the greater metro area in an around Jerusalem. The survivors "give glory" to God: not necessarily an act of repentance, but the terrified realization that Jesus Christ, not the Antichrist, is the true Lord of all!

vv. 14-15 The first ref. to the "**woes**" was in 8:13; the "**woes**" are the 3 remaining trumpet judgments, so called because of their severity. There have been attempts to relate this "7th" trumpet with the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15:52, which heralds the rapture of the Church. Such an identification only strains the Scripture, and there is no true scriptural evidence to warrant relating the two.

The implication here is that the kingdoms of this world are presently not the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. That implication is correct. Satan is the ruler of this world. Man forfeited his rights over to Satan,

and Satan became the ruler of the world through Adam's transgression. But Jesus came to redeem the world back to God by purchasing it with His blood.

v. 17 God is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9). God is giving opportunity for men to repent. Thus, the delay is salvation to those who will believe. But God said to Noah, "*My spirit shall not always strive with man*" (Gen. 6:3).

v. 18 They gave thanks for three special blessings: that Christ reigns supremely (Rev 11:17), that He judges righteously (Rev 11:18), and that He rewards graciously (Rev 11:18).

Why are the nations angry? Because they want to have their own way. "*Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their fetters.'*" (Ps 2:1-3). They want to worship and serve the creation instead of the Creator (Rom 1:25). Like adolescent children, the nations want to cast off all restraint; and God will permit them to do so.

v. 19 The Temple in Heaven! This chapter opened with a temple on earth, but now we see the temple in heaven. The Old Testament Ark of the Covenant was probably destroyed by Nebuzaradan on Aug. 14, 586BC when he burned the Temple.

III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE

- All a vignette aside between the 6th and 7th trumpets.
 1. Gentile domination (the rise of Islam is inevitable);
 2. God is never without a witness;
 3. The perpetual supply of God's Holy Spirit = POWER!
- If the identification of the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah is correct, it certainly affirms God as the "God of Second Chances." If you have previously failed in your walk as a Christian, know that God specializes in forgiveness, healing and restoration; He is the God of Second Chances. He can restore what sin, the world and the devil have tarnished.
- The two witnesses are raised up by God to complete the work begun by the Church, but not completed: the evangelization of the world! Let's do our part NOW! Let's begin here in our own "Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8) as Jesus instructed His disciples to begin in their own Jerusalem.

I know that sometimes we feel so insignificant; "What can I do; I'm just one person among 6.96 billion (per the U.S. Census Bureau as of July 1, 2011)?"