

Two Witnesses, Part 1

Revelation 11:1-2

66-36

We are at a real milestone, in a sense, in our study of Revelation as we come to chapter 11, having worked our way through the midway point in this glorious book, learning so much about what is planned for the future events surrounding the coming of Christ. As we come to this eleventh chapter I have to confess to you that this is probably the most difficult chapter yet in our study of the book of Revelation, and that primarily relates to the first few verses which we'll attempt to address tonight. But before we get into this, just by way of reminder, a little bit of context for you. This wonderful book of the revelation is really designed to reveal Jesus Christ. He is the main character, the central theme. The book focuses on His Second Coming, His return to earth in glory with a twofold purpose to judge the wicked and to reward the righteous. The book tells about the events leading up to His return and the events following His return. The Tribulation event leads up to it, the Millennial Kingdom follows it.

The many features of His divine intervention, His takeover, His return, the establishment of His Kingdom began to unfold for us in chapter 6. The first three chapters dealt with looks at the church in Asia Minor with tremendous implications and ramifications for the church all throughout history. Chapters 4 and 5 gave us a vision of heaven as things were getting ready for the breaking of judgment on the earth. Then hitting into chapter 6 we began to see the unfolding of judgment as the Lord prepared to come and take the earth and the universe that is rightfully His.

Now the whole flow of events that began in chapter 6 are related to a little scroll that was in the hand of God. And in that little scroll were all of these events that we're now involved in understanding as these tremendous judgments take place prior to the coming of Christ. You remember that the little scroll was sealed seven times, that was to keep its contents hidden and safe until the proper moment. The rightful heir came along, the only one who had the right to break the seals. He broke them one at a time and as those seven seals are broken, each time one is broken it reveals more events. And we've gone through the first six seals, we are now in the seventh seal.

Each of those seals, you'll remember, when it was opened depicted a coming element of future judgment. And now we have entered into the seventh seal and in the seventh seal are listed seven trumpet judgments. We've already gone through the first six of those trumpet judgments, so we've gone through seven seals and six trumpets. We are about to hear the blowing of the seventh trumpet and when the seventh trumpet is blown there will be seven bowl judgments, the pouring out of inundation of wrath that is the final flurry of wrath, rapid-fire wrath at the very end.

Now each of these series of seven...seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls that sort of unfold in a telescopic way...are so fearsome and so frightening, so devastating that before the final one, before the seventh seal, before the seventh trumpet and before the seventh bowl, the Holy Spirit

allows us to stop and catch our breath. They come six seals and then a breath. Six trumpets and then a breath. Six bowls and then a respite, a breath, a rest before the final and most fearsome of all. The Holy Spirit has chosen to give us an interlude to comfort us, to encourage us and particularly to comfort and encourage the people who will be living through these events as they see them unfold and things get worse and worse, worse than ever in all of human history, they're going to need a little window of opportunity to look and to understand and find out that God is still on the throne and the righteous are still going to be protected and blessed and the Kingdom is still going to come. And that's what these little moments of interlude are for.

So as we come into chapters 10 and 11, down through chapter 11 verse 14, we're in an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet. When the seventh trumpet blasts at the end of chapter 11, out of that seventh trumpet are going to come the seven bowl judgments. But before that, this interlude to comfort and encourage God's saints now and particularly those who will be alive at that time and will be wondering if everything is really going according to the plan of God, or if everything is coming apart as directed by Satan, Antichrist and these fearsome judgments.

Now remember, by the time people get to this point in the sixth trumpet, they have experienced amazing things...false peace, wars, famine, earthquakes, pestilence, death, vengeance, the collapse of the universe. The seventh seal then is opened and seven trumpet judgments come, including the destruction of one third of the earth, one third of the seas, and the creatures in them, one third of the ships, one third of the fresh water, one third of the sun and the moon, the release of demons that have been bound in the pit for centuries, and they come across the world to torment men. And they are followed by an army of two hundred million more hellish fiends that have been locked up somewhere in the Euphrates area, they come and they kill one third of all mankind with fire and brimstone and smoke. And we've been through all of that. As bad as it is, the seventh trumpet blows, the seven bowls are instantly poured out. They're big wide saucer type bowls and they just dump judgment rapidly. And as they do, what has come before will seem small compared to what will come then. And so we're in this brief interlude as the Lord allows us to catch our breath and to find out that He is still in control, His plan is still in place and He will still redeem the righteous. As I said, this interlude covers chapter 10 and 11 down through verse 14, and you can see for yourself in verse 15 of chapter 11 the seventh angel sounds.

Now in chapter 10 as the interlude began, the first part of the respite, we saw an unusual angel doing an unusual act and then instruct John not to write what he had heard. In the voice of thunders then he was told to take the little scroll, emblematic of the title deed to the earth and the universe, to eat it and it was both sweet and bitter. And so here we find that John is exposed to a revelation from God and the revelation is to remind him that God is still in charge. God sends a mighty angel to stand on the sea and stand on the land. He represents the sovereignty of God, no matter what may be happening, two hundred million demons may be overrunning the earth and there may be those demons that have been let out of the pit going everywhere and tormenting men short of death. And now another wave coming and killing a third of mankind. The unbelievable collapse of the sky, the destruction of seas, and land, and fresh water may be taking place, but God is still sovereign, He is still in control. The mighty God, verse 6, who created heaven and the things in it, the earth and the things in it, the sea and the things in it is still in charge. And He is going to come in final glory, and verse 6 says the delay will be no longer. The final judgment is about to come and the Lord will establish His Kingdom.

And then when John is told to eat this little book, it has some very interesting implications. The book

represents all of these judgments because they're written in it. And as John looks at them they are both bitter and sweet and that is what is represented in the vision as he takes the little book and eats it. At first when he takes it into his mouth it is sweet, as it comes into his stomach it becomes very, very bitter. Why? Because this final glory of Christ, this final judgment and establishing of the Kingdom is bittersweet. It is sweet for Christ and sweet for God and sweet for holy angels, and sweet for believers and it is very bitter for the unrighteous and the ungodly who will receive their final judgment in hell.

And so, chapter 10 is a reminder that no matter how many demons run all over the earth, no matter how much demonic power is released and they create havoc and devastation across the globe, God is still in charge, Christ is still coming. The end is very near and we can find that sweet as well as bitter when we think about what it means to us and what it means to the ungodly.

Then we come in to chapter 11 and as we come to chapter 11 we have just heard John told that he must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. The end is near but there's more to write. There's more for John to put down, more to come. And John must be ready to write about it. Though the end is near, we're only in chapter 10 when he's given this instruction and there are still many chapters of revelation that John will receive and must write. The worthy one is coming, the Lamb is coming to redeem His own and condemn those who refused Him. There's much more yet to say about all of that.

But John and his pen are not the only witness. John and his pen are not the only witness at this point. We've already met a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews, haven't we, who have gone around to evangelize the world. We know that the fruit of their efforts has been an innumerable number of Gentiles in chapter 7 that can't even be counted, a massive group of people from every tongue and tribe and people and nation who name the name of Jesus Christ. There are many then who have come to Christ, Jew and Gentile, and they will all be speaking about Christ. Many of them will be martyred, as you know, many of them will die in the judgments, the temporal judgments, and so forth. Some of them God will spare to go into His Kingdom. But in addition to the writing of John which will be around then, the book of Revelation, in the addition to the hundred and forty-four thousand and the many Gentiles who will come to Christ and proclaim His name, there will also be a supernatural act of this angel, you remember, flying through heaven preaching the everlasting gospel. But that's not all. Right in the very last days, as all of these judgments unfold in the Great Tribulation, there will be two more very unique evangelists. And they're going to be preaching in the end time, and we meet them in chapter 11.

Let's read the first four verses. "And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff and someone said, 'Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it, and leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months, and I will grant authority to My two witnesses and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.'"

Now these are very remarkable individuals. Read on, "If anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. If anyone would desire to harm them in this manner he must be killed. They have power to shut up the sky in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying. They have power over the waters to turn them into blood, to smite the earth with every plague as often as they desire. And when they finish their testimony, the beast that comes up

out of the abyss will make war with them and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom in Egypt where also their Lord was crucified and those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, they will send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. And after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, they stood on their feet and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. They heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they went up into heaven in a cloud and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake and a tenth of the city fell and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven."

Pretty remarkable guys, I would say. So, John is instructed here that there are going to be some witnesses coming in the end time. And this is indicative, isn't it, of the grace of God. They come warning men, obviously, telling men of the imminent impending blowing of the seventh trumpet. In fact, they start at the midpoint in the Tribulation so they're warning men all the way along, during the seal and trumpet judgments that take place in the second half of the Tribulation, the time known as the Great Tribulation. So they all along are preaching the gospel, warning, calling men to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. And they keep doing that right up until the end. And this is a wonderful comforting truth for us to know because it reminds us that people will have an opportunity to hear the gospel, if not from the hundred and forty-four thousand or the converted people from every tongue and nation, or the flying angel, they will be able to hear these two individuals. And we know that these two men are going to have worldwide ministry because it says the whole world is going to see them. Everybody, verse 9, is going to look at their dead bodies. That's certainly because of satellite television. They're going to have a tremendous impact on the world, just two men, but because of the power of what they can do, stopping the rain, turning water into blood, smiting the earth with every plague and when anybody tries to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth and destroys them. Because of the nature of these two men, the whole world will know who they are, the whole world, it says, will be tormented by their threats and warnings, tormented because they refuse to believe the gospel. And so what this reminds is that during these times of fierce judgment, the Lord keeps preaching the gospel right up until the very end. It's reminiscent, isn't it, of Matthew chapter 24 where, you remember, the words of our Lord in the Olivet Discourse, He said in verse 14, "The gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations and then the end will come." But right up to the end, gospel preaching will go on. God will always have His prophets confronting the rejecters, calling them to repent.

When these two are through, then the seventh trumpet blows, the bowls are poured out in final fierce furious wrath, flaming judgment follows as Christ comes at the battle of Armageddon, conquers all, destroys the ungodly and then sets up His Kingdom. But before we look at those two witnesses, and that was a brief overview, before we look at the two witnesses, the first two verses are thrown in here and they introduce for us a somewhat difficult text of Scripture that I want to try to unfold for you in a way that you can understand it. And if you go away tonight saying, "That wasn't very difficult," then I've accomplished my purpose. It's taken me about ten years to figure it out and I hope you can figure it out in about a half an hour.

John is told to do some measuring in verse 1. Let's call this the temple measured. There was given me a measuring rod like a staff and someone said, 'Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it.'" Now John had a lot of visions and every once in a while he got

involved in his vision, like in chapter 10 when he had the vision of the great angel and the little book in the angel's hand, he was told to eat the little book. Now that's getting involved in the vision. And here again he is very involved in the vision and he is told by someone, it says, to take this rod and measure the temple of God.

Now let's break this verse down so we can get a grip on it. There was given me...he says, probably by the same person who also spoke to him, the someone who said, likely an angelic being, if you go back to 10..chapter 10 verse 8, there you have an angelic being speaking to him. I think if it were to be God or Christ, they would probably be identified as such, maybe not but it seems best that an angelic voice is here speaking to John and also is the one giving him this measuring rod.

The measuring rod, like a staff, was just that. It was a rod used in ancient times for measuring. John has just received this prophecy, chapter 10 verse 11, and he has been told that he's supposed to say many more things, write many more things. It's almost as if chapter 10 verse 11 is a renewed commission for John to write the book of Revelation. And now as he is ready to write, he is going to be actually involved in the very vision about which he will write. And the first thing he's told to do is take a measuring rod. The word is calamos it refers to a reed that grew in the Jordan Valley, it's the name of a reed. And they grew down in the lowlands of the Jordan Valley and they grew to be somewhere between ten and fifteen feet high. They were a hollow stalk, like a bamboo stalk and because they were so very light they were cut down and cut into proper lengths and used as measuring instruments like a yardstick. They were also used, by the way, when they were refined and shaved down with some kind of an instrument to a point as a pen. We find such use even in the Scripture and they were used as a walking staff. So they had a lot of use. So here John is told to take this stick, we don't know how long it was, it's to be used as a measuring instrument. He says, "Rise, get up and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it."

Now the question obviously is...why is he doing this? What is the point of this? Well, there are two things that occur in the Bible with regard to God in measuring out things, one is judgment and the other is ownership. God in Old Testament history has at times measured out something for destruction. That is to say He measures it out. It's a way of saying, "I'm confining My destruction to this particular area, or this particular city, or this particular location, or this particular people.

But in this case that doesn't seem the best understanding of the measurement. It is also true that in the Old Testament God also measured out things as being His own, His own possession, personal possession for the sake of preservation. For example, in chapter 21 of the book of Revelation you have also very carefully measuring out of the city, the new Jerusalem. Verse 15 of Revelation 21, the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city and its gates and its walls. And the measuring is of the new Jerusalem, the heavenly holy city in which the saints will dwell forever and ever. And it seems it's in a similar usage of the measuring that John is instructed to act here, that God wants him to measure out His temple because it belongs to Him. He's identifying it as His own. That is particularly true because he says measure the temple and the altar and those who worship in it. This appears then to be an act of defining the parameters of God's property, what it is that belongs to Him, or better, who it is that belongs to Him. In fact it would be easy to understand that God is saying, "I am going to measure out the people of the temple, the people who worship in it, the people to whom it belongs, namely Israel." And if you understand that God is measuring off Israel for some protective, preserving, favored position, then you get the idea.

Now this is good for us to understand and it was good for John to understand because his

recollections, of course, of Israel were that they rejected God in 70 A.D., the city was devastated and destroyed. The temple was literally leveled to the ground. That's twenty-five years before he's receiving this revelation. Israel for all intents and purposes has been literally overrun by the Romans, nine hundred and eighty-five towns have been devastated by the Romans, over a million Jews have been massacred by the Romans. And Israel's future at this point looks very bleak and you get in this prophetic picture for John and for all of us the idea that God is measuring out His temple and those who worship in it for preservation in the future. Keep in mind also that Antichrist has already desecrated the temple, he is already largely involved in the massacre of Jewish people. But at the same time, a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews, twelve thousand from every tribe, are already evangelizing. Other Jews are believing and Romans 11:25 and 26 says, "All Israel will be saved." And I think God is saying by this scene, "I'm measuring out protection and favor over My people." Not necessarily temporal protection because many of them will die, some of them will live and we'll see more about that in a few moments.

The temple refers to nahos, the Greek word, to the inner temple, the Holy of Holies and the holy place, that's important. The inner temple was the Holy of Holies and around it was the holy place. And then he adds the altar. That probably refers to the brazen altar in the outside area, whereas usually in the book of Revelation we've been looking at the inner altar which is the incense altar. And the reason I say that is because it was around the brazen altar that the worshipers collected. They couldn't go into the holy place, only the priests could go in there. They had to stay on the outside. So when he says "measure the temple," he means the holy place and the Holy of Holies, the brazen altar would be the outer area where the people could go to express their worship and offer their sacrifices. And that's where they prayed as the incense went up on the altar behind in the holy place.

And those who worship in it, who would that be? It would be Jews...it would be Jews in the time of the Great Tribulation. This implies, now follow this thought, this implies that there will be a temple during the time of the Tribulation. How can they be worshiping in a temple if there isn't one? That is why Bible scholars believe there will be a rebuilding of the temple during the time of the Tribulation. It doesn't have to happen before the time, they can put the thing up in one day if they wanted to. And when that temple is put up, the Jews will begin to worship there.

Now remember, at the time John wrote this there was no temple. It had been extinct for twenty-five years. Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:2, "Not one stone would be left on top of another," and that's exactly the way it was. There was no temple.

So when John is told to go and measure the temple of God, it must have stuck him that at this particular time in prophetic history there would be a temple again. But that wouldn't be too hard to understand because the prophets had already said that. Now follow this because it's leading to a wonderful truth. If you go back, for example to Amos chapter 9, and don't try to look these up, just kind of listen, in verse 11 the prophet Amos says, "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David," talking about the end times, and the salvation of Israel, "I will raise up the fallen booth of David, or house of David, and wall up its breeches, I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old." In other words, God says I'm going to restore all of those things that were a part of David's time. Certainly that would include a house where God could be worshiped.

In Micah even more specifically, chapter 4 and verse 1, "It will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills and the people will stream to it." It's coming, the prophet said, a temple is coming.

Now that may be an allusion to the Millennial temple, it's not specific. Perhaps it looks ahead to the Millennial temple, but the point is the prophets predicted a coming rebuilt temple in the end days.

In Haggai chapter 2 and verse 9, "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts, and in this place I shall give peace." In other words, I'm going to build a greater house some time in the future than what you have now.

Another prophecy that needs to be looked at is Zechariah chapter 6. In Zechariah chapter 6 verses 12 and 13, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Behold a man whose name is branch...that's the Messiah...for He will branch out from where He is and build the temple of the Lord. It is He who will build the temple of the Lord, who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne.'" So the prophets were always looking to the future temple. Ezekiel 40 to 48 talks about a glorious temple in the future.

Now admittedly, most of those prophetic references looked at the temple Messiah will build in the Kingdom. But at the time at which the Jews were living, time in which John was alive, he would only anticipate generally that a future temple was to be built. Now he hears something about that temple. God is measuring a future temple out for protection. Just to keep our bearings, the temple which John is measuring is the temple during the Tribulation which is different than the one during the Millennial Kingdom.

You say, "Does the Bible tell about a Tribulation temple also?" Yes it does. Follow this, Daniel chapter 9, you know the very familiar prophecy, the prophecy of the coming of the Antichrist. And it says, when the Antichrist comes he'll make a pact with Israel for one week, that's for seven years, in the middle of the week, the middle of the seven years, three and a half years in, he'll put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering. Now isn't that interesting? If during the week of the Tribulation the Antichrist stops the sacrifice and grain offering, then you have to ask the question, where is the sacrifice and grain offering happening?

The only place it can be done legitimately is in a temple. That leads us to believe that during that seven-year period a temple will be rebuilt. It will be rebuilt in the early time, the pact with Antichrist will give the Jews the freedom to worship in their own temple, only in the midweek he will stop that worship and he will do what is called the abomination of desolations and he will move into the temple, desecrate it, throw the Jews out and he will slaughter false animals offered to himself as a false god. He will slaughter animals, I should say, offered to himself as a false god in the temple, desecrate their worship. But the temple needs to be there if that's to happen.

Over in Daniel 12 we find a similar kind of indication that God is going to be involved in letting them restore a temple. Verse 11, "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be twelve hundred and ninety days. And we'll come back to that in a few moments. But he says from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, it's abolished half way through, so it had to be going on prior to that so they had to have a temple.

In the New Testament I would point you to Matthew chapter 24, also indicates to us there must be a temple. Verse 15, referring back to Daniel, "You will see the abomination of desolation spoken of through Daniel the prophet." Those are the words of Jesus, Jesus then affirming there will be a temple, there will be sacrifices which the Antichrist will desecrate.

And then the most important text, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 4...2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 4, speaking about the son of destruction, the man of sin, the Antichrist. It says he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God. That's what the abomination is. He makes a pact and the Israelites think they're getting protection from this world leader. They're getting safety and he lets them have their temple and have their worship and he gives them that freedom and they think that he's protecting them. Midweek he comes in, destroys their worship, abominates their temple, takes his seat is he is God, demands that the whole world worship him.

Now these Scriptures then conclusively tell us that not only are there prophecies in the Old Testament about a Millennial Kingdom and about a Kingdom in which the Lord Himself will establish a temple, but there will also be a Tribulation temple which will be abominated at the midpoint.

Now follow this, the Jews then before the midpoint will have their sacrificial system back. And they'll be doing the sacrifices according to Old Testament law. This, by the way, will be the fourth temple. Solomon built the first one. Zerubbabel built the second one. Herod built the third one. And the Tribulation Jews will build the fourth one. Christ will build the fifth one in the Millennium described in some of those Old Testament prophets and mostly in Ezekiel 40 to 48.

This, by the way, is the dream and the passion and the hope of orthodox Jews today. They want their temple. And they want it on Mount Moriah. The problem is Mount Moriah is now occupied by one of the holiest places, in fact the second holiest place in the Muslim world, the Dome of the Rock. John sees here that they will have a temple.

What that's going to mean is that early in the Tribulation the Jews are going to go back to their old style of worship. And I believe this is part of God preparing them to look again for their Messiah. You know how many secular Jews we have in the world today? Most of the Jews are secular Jews, the orthodox Jews are a very small group. Most of the Jews are only in to the traditions. They have forgot the significance of the sacrificial system. But when it's all reinstuted and they all flood back to it because of the love of Tradition, they're going to have to come face to face with the fact that they have sins. Those sins need a sacrifice and that those sacrifices which they offer on that altar do not take away sin and do not transform their lives. And all of a sudden the New Testament reality of the gospel being preached by a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews and an innumerable number of Gentiles, and flying angel is going to come to bear heavy on their hearts. And I believe the reinstitution of this kind of stuff is what is going to really be a component in God's redeeming the people of Israel, as Romans 11 says, "Yes, so all Israel will be saved." And I really believe that as that temple begins to work and as the Jews start to move back toward Jehovah God and show some interest in their Messiah again, the Antichrist is going to say, "That's enough." And he's going to step in and abominate the place. Halt the worship and demand that the whole world worship him. We find that in chapter 13 verses 14 and 15. "He deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which was given to him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those that dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and come to life. There was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed."

In other words, you either worship him or you die. But the institution of Judaism again in the temple is going to stimulate the hearts of Jewish people toward their Messiah and I believe will refocus them so that what Zechariah says will become reality. Go to Zechariah chapter 12...Zechariah chapter 12 verse 10. "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of

grace and supplication so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son. They will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo and that land will mourn, every family by itself, the family of the house of David by itself, their wives by themselves, the family of the house of Nathan by itself, their wives by themselves," and so forth. And 13:1, "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."

I believe what's going to happen is they go back to the temple. They go back to focusing on what's happening in the temple, seeing what's going on brings the reality back that they need a redeemer, they don't have one. They look back at all the New Testament says about Christ, they start to look on Him whom they have pierced. They hear the preaching of the hundred and forty-four thousand and there's a tremendous stimulus.

And so what the angel is saying to John is, "Go measure this place out because God is going to do something in this place." It's going to be His place to accomplish His purpose. Chapter 13 verse 8 of Zechariah, "It will come about in all the land...declares the Lord...two parts and it will be cut off and perish but the third will be left in it, and I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name. I will answer them. I will say they are My people. They will say the Lord is My God." And that right before the final coming of Christ described in chapter 14.

So God, I believe, is measuring out the temple because He has plans for it. And those plans have to do with God's purpose in the redemption of Israel. Wouldn't this have been wonderful news to John that Israel was not permanently set aside, but the promises God made in the Old Testament were going to come to pass, there would be a future temple, not just a Millennial temple but even a Tribulation temple in which God would accomplish His purposes?

I have to note for you something else in Zechariah, look at chapter 2 for a moment, just to complete this whole picture. This has great similarity to the text of Revelation 11. Zechariah 2:1, "Then I lifted up my eyes...Zechariah says...and looked and behold there was a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, 'Where you going?' He said to me, 'To measure Jerusalem to see how wide it is and how long it is.'" God is really in to measuring things. "And behold the angel who was speaking with me was going out, another angel was coming out to meet him, he said to him, 'Run, speak to that young man saying Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of man and cattle within it, for I...declares the Lord...will be a wall of fire around her and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

What's he saying in this vision? He's saying, "Zechariah, Jerusalem may be in devastation now, but the day is coming in the future when Jerusalem will rise to a glory like its never know, it will be so glorious, it will be so filled with people and so filled with cattle that it will overflow but it won't need any walls because the flaming fire of God will protect it." In that day, by the way, Ezekiel says the name of the city will be Jehovah Shimah(?) which means the Lord is here.

So there in chapter 2 God was measuring out Jerusalem to say this is My city and some day in the Millennial Kingdom it's going to be all packed and all glorious and I will be its protector. It is being marked out as My possession.

So, in Revelation 11 John is asked to measure and he measures out a temple for the Tribulation in which, I believe, God is going to begin to initiate longings in the hearts of Jews as they go back to their worship patterns of the Old Testament and the sacrificial system and they're going to cry out and long for a true Lamb who can really take away their sins. And in the midst of it all they will be bombarded by a hundred and forty four thousand invincible converted Jews, a flying angel and a lot of converted Gentiles, all preaching the gospel. In the midst of the weak their temple is going to be desecrated and abominated but their hearts will still be opened. And then will come along these two witnesses who preach for the last half, twelve hundred and sixty days, that's three and a half years, and they are preaching repentance and warning about judgment and proclaiming the gospel. And I believe all of these things work together to lead Israel to repentance.

So John measures the temple in order that it might be set apart for divine purposes. Now look at verse 2. And this is a prohibition here, quite an interesting one. "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it."

Now stop there for a moment. The temple was interesting. It had in the inner heart the Holy of Holies. Just outside of that the holy place, just outside of that the courtyard of the brazen altar where sacrifice was made and outside of that what was called the court of the Gentiles. Gentiles couldn't go any further than that. Jews could go the next step, priests the next step and only the high priest into the inner sanctuary. He says don't measure the court. Don't measure what's on the outside. Don't measure the place where the Gentiles are, that doesn't belong to Me.

What? God is saying, "I have no plan, I have no obligation by promise to redeem Gentiles, I do have an obligation by promise to redeem Israel." The outer court was called the court of the Gentiles. He says that's not Mine. That's not part of this purpose and this promise. Now keep in mind, innumerable numbers of Gentiles will be saved, but it never says, "So all Gentiles will be saved." But it does say God will redeem all Israel after having purged out the rebels. God will have purged out a myriad of Gentile rebels and they'll still be a myriad more shaking their fists and cursing His face when He comes back. But in Acts 21 verse 28 Paul preaches, he says, "Men of Israel, come to our aid, this is the man who preaches..." well actually Paul had preached and just to fill in the gap here, the Jews begin to stir up the multitude to take him prisoner, and they said, "Men of Israel, come to our aid, this is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the law and this place. And besides, he has even brought Gentiles into the temple and defiled the holy place." False accusations all along the line, but to a Jew to bring a Gentile into that inner place was a defilement. So God following the prescription of the temple says, "I'm not asking you to measure the place where the Gentiles are, I don't have any long term covenant promise with them as a people." Obviously He is redeeming them out of every tongue and tribe and nation but nowhere does it say all the Gentiles will be converted. But all the Jews after the rebels are purged will be saved.

Just a footnote here. This clearly gives the idea to me that the church is not present here. You say, "Why?" Because this doesn't feel like the church age anymore. In the church age you remember Colossians chapter 3 verse 11 and Ephesians chapter 2 verses 14 to 16 tell us that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and Ephesians 2, that the middle wall of partition has been...what?...broken down. But here, all of a sudden, there is definitely Jew and Gentile as God says measure out the Jew as My people, but not those Gentiles. And the middle wall of partition which is down in the church age is back up again. And that's another of the reasons why we feel that this leads us to the conclusion that the church has been removed. We're now back in the seventieth week of Daniel, to

the same kind of dichotomy between Jew and Gentile that existed in the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel, from the decree of Artaxerxes up until Christ's entry into Jerusalem. This is more of an Old Testament feeling that the wall is back up. It's more like the old dispensation than the new one. The Jews are back to being identified as a constituted covenant people of privilege and the Gentiles are on the outside. They can come one by one but God has no redemptive covenant with them as a whole people. So don't measure the outer court.

Why? Verse 2, "For it has been given to the nations." It doesn't belong to God. I'm not claiming the Gentiles. Those that come to Me, yes, but not as a special people. This is another reason...people always ask me, "Are you a dispensationalist?" There's a whole chapter on that in the new book Faith Works. Yes, and what my dispensationalism means is there is a distinction between the church and Israel and that some day in the future God is going to complete His promise to Israel. He says, on the other hand, the Gentiles, you let them have the outer area, it belongs to them and they will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months. How long is forty-two months? Twelve hundred and sixty days, three and a half years. The Gentiles are going to attack Jerusalem. What's going to happen? The Jews are going to want to worship there, the Gentiles are going to want to desecrate and destroy the city. This is part of the time period which Luke 21:24 calls "the times of the Gentiles...the times of the Gentiles." The times of the Gentiles are the times when the Gentiles dominate the city of Jerusalem and that's not going to end until the return of Jesus Christ. Some way, some form, the Jews have been dominated and will continue to be dominated by Gentiles since the destruction of Jerusalem and even long before. God used Assyria in ancient times, God used Chaldea, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. He used the Turks, He used the English, He used the Arabs. Always somebody oppressed Jerusalem. And even in the time of the Tribulation, according to Daniel chapter 8 verses 9 to 14, Gentile armies will completely overrun and inundate the city of Jerusalem in devastating fashion. So he says for forty-two months for the second half, from the abomination of desolation when the Antichrist sets up his throne as God and when he starts to rule the world, he will move the forces of the world against the city of Jerusalem in devastating destruction. So for the latter half, they will destroy the holy city from the abomination on.

By the way, this is the same time period as the career of Antichrist. It tells us very specifically in chapter 13 verse 5 that this Antichrist with a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies has authority to act for forty-two months, same amount of time. So the Gentile devastation of the holy city, Jerusalem, is the same length as the reign of Antichrist. This is the same time period as the twelve hundred and sixty days exactly. Over in chapter 12, for example, you see it again. Here's another component during this same twelve hundred and sixty days...look at this, verse 6...the woman...and the woman in chapter 12 represents Israel, we'll see that very soon...fled to the wilderness. Of course. Now get the picture. First half of the Tribulation, all the Jews go rushing back, their temple is rebuilt, they want to reconstitute their ancient religion. They go rushing back to Jerusalem, everything is fine. They're in to the sacrificial system and the grain offerings. They're all doing very well. Immediately in the middle, Antichrist comes down, devastation happens. If people don't worship him they are massacred, many Jews will die. The rest of them, very clearly in verse 6, run to the wilderness. And they hide. And it says they will have a place prepared by God. Some people think it will be in the city of Petra, which is a massive limestone city built in the inside of huge rock cliffs and the entrance is only this wide. I've been through it a number of times.

But wherever it is, God's going to take them and hide them. How long? One thousand, two hundred and sixty days, same time period. So at the moment of the desolation, they flee and there's a remnant of Jews that God protects and hides in order that He might keep His covenant with them.

Remember now, by that time they have been exposed to the sacrificial system, they've heard the preaching of the gospel from the hundred and forty-four thousand, now they are protected by God and I believe through that process will come to their Messiah.

Then in verse 14 of chapter 12 it says the great wings of an eagle are given to the woman, that's Israel again, to fly her into the wilderness to her special place where she's nourished for a time, times and half a time from the presence of the serpent. The serpent tries to drown her any way he can. Verse 17, he's so enraged with Israel, he goes off to make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. He can't get this hidden group, but God's going to hide them and the devil is so furious and the Antichrist so furious but they can't get to them because God protects them so they take their hatred and their venom out on everybody who names the name of Christ. So from the abomination on, everybody coming to Christ out of the Gentile world will be subject to the devastation of Antichrist and Satan.

One little footnote, Daniel 12 says there will be twelve hundred and ninety days, instead of twelve hundred and sixty. And then Daniel 12 verse 12 says there will be another forty-five days. There's a little seventy-five day edition and I think what that is is some time between the return and Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom to clean up the carnage and to set up the Kingdom of Christ on earth. But the Antichrist, he only goes forty-two months. The trampling of Jerusalem, forty-two months. The hiding of Israel, forty-two months and they can come out of their hiding place. And by then with the rebels purged out, converted, they will enter into the glories of the Kingdom of Christ.

So, the promise then from God that He has a future for Israel will be fulfilled, and I think that's what is in the imagery of those first two verses. From there he moves to a discussion of these two witnesses. And I'm not going to do that tonight because this deserves a message all on its own. But they are just another force of divine agents who are part and parcel of the instrumentality of God to lead Israel to its Messiah, as well as many others in the Gentile world.

What strikes me about this, in conclusion, is how absolute, unbending are the promises of God. God said you're going to get a temple, they're going to get a temple. God said I'm going to make you My people again, He will. God said I'm going to redeem you, He'll redeem them. And this is the promise given. It would have been easy for someone like John who knew the Old Testament well to see these pictures of images of demons overrunning the earth, two hundred million of them in one fell swoop, added to the ones that came out of the pit that tormented men, to see the whole disintegration of the earth and ask himself...what about Israel? It would be easy for people living at that time who knew the Bible to say...Well what is God going to do for His people Israel in the midst of this? And all of the features that are laid out in prophetic history come into focus in just those two simple verses...what profundity is there. The promised purging of the rebels from Israel will take place and then salvation for the nation. No matter what Antichrist does, no matter what Satan does, God's going to redeem Israel and He's going to redeem an innumerable number of Gentiles before Jesus returns.

We read in Matthew chapter 7, "Narrow is the way and few there be that find it," but in the end the way will still be narrow, but a whole nation, Israel, will find it as will the greatest work of salvation on behalf of Gentiles the world has ever known, as God in an incredible flurry of grace keeping His gracious promise to Israel and expressing His immense love to the rest of the world will redeem many. Next time...two weeks from tonight...we'll meet the two witnesses.

Father, we thank You for Your Word and its tremendous truth. Thank You for how we have been reminded again tonight of the inviability, the absolute accuracy of Your promises. You know what You're doing. It is amazing to us that there are Jewish people, that You've preserved them, that they're in their land, that they have this passion to build their temple, and it's all moving toward the time when it will happen. The seventieth week of Daniel will come as surely as the first sixty-nine did, the time when Israel sees the heart of its religion which was the sacrificial system, and begins to long for a Lamb, a Lamb, a Lamb. And here's from its own people a hundred and forty-four thousand of them that the Lamb has come and died and salvation is already provided. And just to reinforce it, God allows the Antichrist to just devastate the temple, stop the sacrifices. They aren't really necessary. They aren't necessary at all. They were a brief time reinstated to get the focus back on the need for a Lamb. And then they're stopped because the Lamb is come. O Lord, what wonderful truth. Thank You for the way in which You will fulfill Your promise to Israel. You are the God who cannot lie. Your Word is immutable. You will accomplish all Your good purpose. We are comforted in that no matter what devastating judgment, no matter what hellish fiends roam the earth, You've measured out Your place and Your people for redemption. And You will accomplish all Your good purpose. We're so blessed to be a part of that eternal plan, to share eternity with the redeemed of the past, the present and the future who shall gather before Your throne forever as one great congregation with no distinctions, all made like Christ, praise You forever. We thank You that You keep Your promise to us as individuals, to Israel some day as a nation. Thank You for being the God that You are in whom we can perfectly trust. We give You praise in Christ's name. Amen.

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