

## REVELATION 11:1-10

In the opening verses of Chapter 11, John was given a rod to measure the temple of God, the altar and the worshippers, and he was told to leave out the outer court of the temple. John also mentions the location of the temple and a period of 42 months. There are several views on the temple.

- The temple is in Jerusalem before its destruction in AD 70.
- The temple is a literal temple that will become reality just before and during the time of Christ's return.
- The temple is a message of hope reserved for the Jewish converts in the days of the Apostle John.
- The temple is a symbol of the church at worship.

### REVELATION 11:1-2

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. (Revelation 11:1–2)

#### A. “And there was given me a reed like unto a rod...” (11:1a)

The “reed” is the same word that describes the mock scepter given to Jesus (Matt. 27:29). The reed is a plant that grows in the Jordan Valley. The stalks, because they are long and lightweight, are ideal for use as measuring rods.

In the OT, both Ezekiel and Zechariah were also given a vision of the new temple area, and there was also a man with a measuring rod surveying the temple buildings (Ezek. 40-43; see also Zech. 2:1-2).

In Ezekiel's vision of the mountain of the Lord's house, an angelic messenger measures the so-called Millennial Temple using a measuring rod (Ezek. 40:2ff). Zechariah beheld “a man with a measuring line in his hand. (Zech. 2:1) who measures the dimensions of Jerusalem.

#### B. “Rise, and measure...” (11:1b)

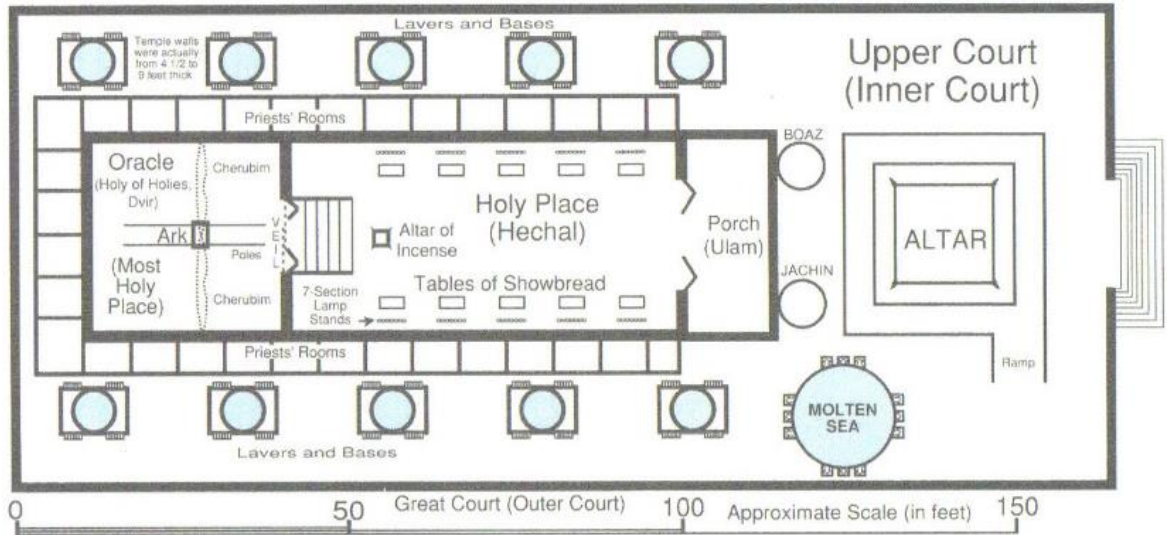
John was commanded to rise and measure the temple, the altar and the worshippers. John was told not to measure the outer court of the temple. The purpose of measuring the temple but not the outer court seems to be to distinguish between those which were holy from those which were common (profane).

##### 1. Temple

The word “temple” [Gk: *naon*] does not mean the temple complex; rather it refers to the temple building, which includes the Holy Place and the Holy of

holies. God opened the Holy of holies at the time of our Lord Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51).

In Hebrews 9:12, we read that this was the place where Christ entered to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice and removed the sins of his people. The temple of God, therefore, is a symbol of the very presence of God; it is here where He meets His people, accepts their worship.



## 2. Altar

Since the holy place has been revealed by God, it is more likely that John was asked to measure the altar of incense, and not the altar of sacrifice. Moreover, the altar of sacrifice would have been obsolete since our Lord Jesus became the perfect sacrifice; whereas the altar of incense, which represents the prayer of the saints, continues to be relevant (6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7).

## 3. Worshippers

The multitude of saints was numbered in Revelation 7, and they are now being measured in Chapter 11. These saints are measured to symbolise that they are under God's divine protection.

### C. **"The court which is without the temple leave out..." (11:2a)**

God is deliberately making the distinction between the saints who worship Him in spirit and in truth, and those who "honoureth [Him] with *their* lips, but their heart is far from [Him]" (Mark 7:6; Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8-9).

Here is the contrast between holy and profane. The saints are those who have God's seal on their foreheads (9:4); they are measured (i.e. protected). The profane are the people who refuse to repent of their evil deeds (9:20-21); they are not to be measured (i.e. rejected). This differentiation is also seen in Revelation 22:14-15.

**D. “The holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months...” (11:2b)**

When John speaks of the Gentiles, he is not making a racial distinction. The Gentiles here refer to the unbelievers.

In the OT, Jerusalem is known as the holy city because it is the place God has chosen to dwell with his people (Ps. 48). The Jews in Jerusalem are known as those who are from “the holy city” (Isa. 48:2). Daniel spoke prophetically about the holy city (Dan. 9:24), and Nehemiah noted the restoration of Jerusalem when the Jews resettled in the holy city (Neh. 11:1, 18).

John was also told that the holy city shall be “tread under foot forty *and* two months” (11:2). The 42 months work out to be 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6) or “a time, and times, and half a time” (12:14), which is three and a half years. These 42 months work out nicely to be half of the final week in the 70 weeks of Daniel. In the context, the 1,260 days correspond to the first three and half weeks of the final seventieth week.

**REVELATION 11:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

<sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. (Revelation 11:3–4)

**A. “I will give *power* unto my two witnesses...” (11:3a)**

The two witnesses are given “power” although the word is not in the original manuscripts. Who are these two witnesses?

1. As Symbols

Those who interpret the “two witnesses” as symbols agree that the two witnesses are not human beings.

2. As Institutions

Those who interpret the “two witnesses” as institutions also differ as to what institutions they represent. The problem with this interpretation is that the word “witness” [Gk: *martusin*] always refers to persons. They are not institutions or movements.

3. As Individuals

The “two witnesses” are two individuals. Who then are these two witnesses? We will examine the three most viable options.

Reasons in support of Elijah and Moses

- The miracles they performed in the course of their ministry are alluded to Revelation 11:6.
- The return of Moses and Elijah is prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and Malachi 4:5-6.
- Both Moses and Elijah left the earth in unusual ways. Elijah never died, but was transported to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11-12), and God supernaturally buried Moses' body in a secret location (Deut. 34:5-6; Jude 1:9).
- Both Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3). Moses represented the Law and Elijah the Prophets. Scripture stated that God would raise up a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18) and Elijah would reappear (Mal. 4:5).

#### Reasons against Elijah and Moses

- There is nothing in Scripture that limits miracles such as these to Moses and Elijah. There are others who did the miracles that Elijah and Moses did.
- It is wrong to interpret Deuteronomy 18:15 as referring to Moses and Elijah. The meaning of Deuteronomy 18:15 refers to one who is "like" Moses and not one who is Moses.
- The translation of Elijah makes it unlikely that he is one of the two witnesses. Since Elijah has already received a glorified body, he cannot die. If one of the two witnesses is Moses, it would also mean that Moses would have to physically die a second time, which would contradict Hebrews 9:27

#### Reasons in support of Elijah and Enoch (This is the view held by the early church fathers, Tertullian and Irenaeus.)

- Based on apocryphal writings, it is believed that Enoch will rejoin Elijah for a ministry like that of the two witnesses (1 Enoch 90:31; cf. 4 Ezra 6:26).
- Both Elijah and Enoch were translated to heaven, and they did not see death (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11). Since Hebrews 9:27 says "it is appointed unto men once to die," it is argued, God must have reserved Enoch and Elijah as His witnesses for this future time.

#### Reason against Elijah and Enoch

- The rapture means that there would be a whole generation of believers who will not see physical death (1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). The idea that Elijah and Enoch must return to make Hebrews 9:27 applicable to all men has no ground. Hebrews 9:27 is general principle and not an absolute rule.

Two Unknown Persons who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah at the time of the Tribulation.

Reasons in support...

- Avoids the various problems of the other two views.
- Does not positively identify the individuals so there is no need to find fulfilment in previous individuals.

Reason against...

- Although Jesus indicated that John the Baptist served in a capacity like that of Elijah who would come prior to the day of the LORD (Matt. 11:14), John himself said that he was not Elijah (John 1:21), which means that there must be an Elijah prior to the day of the Lord.
- If Malachi is to be taken literally, then it is necessary for Elijah to come, not his likeness (Mal. 4:5).
- Both Moses and Elijah are connected with the coming of Christ in His kingdom (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27) by their appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30). The character of the ministry of the witnesses seems to intentionally recall that of Moses and Elijah.

**B. “They shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” (11:3b)**

The duration of their ministry will be 1,260 days, which will be the first half of the final week of the seventy weeks of Daniel, before the Antichrist renegades on his promise.

The two witnesses were dressed in sackcloth. Sackcloth was a rough, coarse cloth, or a bag-like garment made of sackcloth. Sackcloth was worn as a symbol of mourning, grief, or repentance (Jer. 4:8; 6:26; 48:37; 49:3; Amos 8:10).

**C. “These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (11:4)**

In verse 4, John describes the two witnesses as two olive trees and two candlesticks (11:4). The phrase “these are” indicates that these are individuals.

Israel is often referred to as “green olive tree, fair, *and* of goodly fruit” (Jer. 11:16). The Psalmist also refers to the one who trusted in God as “a green olive tree in the house of God” (Ps. 52:8). The definite article “the” indicates that John was referring to a specific pair of olive trees.

The “candlesticks” is the same word that describes the seven churches of Asia (1:12, 20; 2:1, 5). Evidently, these two candlesticks will serve a similar purpose to the seven candlesticks. Again, the definite article indicates that the olive trees and the candlesticks would be known to John.

Here, John, as he had done previously, relies on OT pictures; in this case, John alluded back to the fifth vision of Zechariah (Zech. 4:1-14). The prophet Zechariah mentions

two olive trees and a solid gold candlestick (Zech. 4:2-3); olive oil placed in the candlestick functions to spread the light and dispel the darkness.

Zechariah's fifth vision is related to his fourth (Zech. 3). Zechariah's fifth vision ends with "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:14). In Zechariah's fourth vision, Joshua is said to be standing before the Angel of the LORD. In the fifth vision, Zerubbabel is told that the construction of the temple will be completed "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). Thus it is by Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor that the Holy Spirit will accomplish the restoration of the second Temple.

Thus, it can be said that in the context of Zechariah and the Jews who were restored to Israel, "the two anointed ones" were Joshua and Zerubbabel. In the same token, the two witnesses in the Revelation would be representatives of the entire church.

## REVELATION 11:5-6

<sup>5</sup> And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

<sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. (Revelation 11:5–6)

### A. “And if any man will hurt them...” (11:5)

In verse 3, John was told that power was given to these two witnesses. The power would include the power to do the work and to keep themselves from being hindered in doing their work.

Verse 5 is known as a synonymous parallelism. There is essentially one thought but it is repeated. Synonymous parallelism is intended to stress the weight of John’s words. Those who go forth witnessing for the Lord receive his power that is able to protect them (Matt. 28:18-20).

John again alludes to the OT. John clearly had Elijah in mind when he wrote verse 5. It was Elijah who called fire from heaven and destroyed the priests of Baal (2 Kings 1:10, 12; see also Ps. 39:3; 18:8; 97:3; Jer. 5:14; 23:29).

There are three general interpretive approaches to verse 5.

- There are some who see verse 5 as purely figurative. In other words, the fire which proceeds from their mouths speaks of general judgments. The judgments result in death, but not necessarily by fire.
- There are some who take verse 5 as literally, meaning to say that there was real fire coming out of the mouths of the two witnesses, like the demonic horses in Revelation 9:17.
- There is a third view which is part figurative. The enemies were devoured by fire, which the two witnesses called from heaven in the same way that Elijah called down fire from heaven which destroyed the priests of Baal (1Kings 10:10-12).

Fire speaks of God’s judgment, and in some cases is used figuratively to describe destruction (Judg. 9:14, 20; Ps. 18:8). Often, judgment by God according to His Word is described as a weapon of His mouth (Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Hos. 6:5; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 1:16; 19:15).

### B. “These have power...” (11:6)

Here again, the allusion to Elijah is undeniable. Elijah prayed that it might not rain, and it did not rain for three and a half years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17; 1 Kings 17:1). There is also the allusion to the miracles that God wrought through Moses when the water of Nile turned to blood, and Egypt was afflicted with all manner of plagues (Exod. 7:17, 19-20).

This does not mean that the two witnesses have the power to control the weather, water supply, and plagues. God controls all these forces, but his people possess the power of prayer as they petition the Almighty to intervene in respect to climate, life-sustaining necessities, and environmental disasters.

The phrase “the days of their prophecy” refers to the 1,260 days. Incidentally, 1,260 days work out to three and a half years.

## REVELATION 11:7-10

<sup>7</sup> And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

<sup>8</sup> And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

<sup>9</sup> And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

<sup>10</sup> And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. (Revelation 11:7–10)

### A. “The beast that...” (11:7a)

The “beast” [Gk: *thērion*] refers to wild animals (Rev. 6:8). It is also used to describe animals as revealed in visions, such as that of Daniel (Dan. 7:3, 5-7, 11-12, 17, 19, 23). The beast stands in contrast against the lamb.

The Beast	The Lamb
The Antichrist	The Christ
The “Beast” is the persecutor of saints	The “Lamb” is the Saviour of sinners
The “Beast” tells of the ferocity of the Antichrist	The “Lamb” calls attention to the gentleness of Christ
The beast is unclean and unfit for sacrifices	The lamb is ceremonially clean and used in sacrifice
The beast comes from the bottomless pit	The Lamb comes from heaven

This is the first time that “the beast” was mentioned. That John introduces the beast with the definite article implies “the beast” was a recognizable figure, and John here alludes to Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 7:3, 11).

### B. “Ascendeth out of the bottomless pit...” (11:7b)

The phrase “bottomless pit” [Gk: *abyssou*] refers to the abode of fallen angels. And the mission of the beast is to make war. This is the trademark of the beast. He makes



war against the saints in general (Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 7:9-16; 12:11; 13:7; 20:4), and against the Jews in particular (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 8:24; 12:1; Rev. 12:13, 17). Here, he wages war against the two witnesses.

**C. And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city...(11:8a)**

The dead bodies of the two witnesses are left on the streets of the great city. In all civilised countries, the dead are treated with respect and dignity. To leave corpses out in the open without burial is the height of indignity and shame (1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 2 Kings 9:37; Ps. 79:3; Jer. 7:33; 8:1; 16:4, 6; 22:19; Ezek. 29:5; Rev. 11:9).

The beast deliberately leaves the bodies of the witnesses unburied as an intentional dishonour and insult (Isa. 14:20; Jer. 8:2; 14:16).

The “great city” would be Jerusalem because it was where our Lord Jesus was crucified. Whereas Jerusalem has always been identified as the holy city, here John describes it as a great city. The reason is the spiritual condition of Jerusalem, it has been identified with Sodom and Egypt.

**D. “Which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt” (11:8b)**

Both Sodom and Egypt typify cities which were opposed and judged by God.

- Sodom was an exceedingly wicked city which was overthrown for her sins by God’s judgment (Gen. 13:13; 19:24).
- Egypt was the nation which held Israel in bondage and was judged by plagues prior to the Exodus (Ex. 1:13-14; 3:7; 20:2).

Jerusalem, in her godless state, is likened to both the wicked city and the wicked nation. The prophets often describe the defiance of Israelites and compare them to the inhabitants of Sodom (Isa. 1:9-10; 3:9; Ezek. 16:46, 48-49). The sin of Jerusalem is said to be as the sin of Sodom in that it was flaunted openly (Isa. 3:8). Even the apostate prophets are likened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jer. 23:14).

Nowhere in the Old Testament is Jerusalem identified with Egypt.

**E. “Where also our Lord was crucified...” (11:8c)**

It is interesting that John should describe Jerusalem not positively – as the city of God – but negatively – as the place where our Lord Jesus was crucified. The idea seems to be that Jerusalem is the city where people continue to live in defiance of God, and thus crucify our Lord anew (Heb. 6:6).

**F. “And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies...” (11:9)**

The dead bodies of the two witnesses are put on public display so that people from all over the world can see the corpses. The phrase “the people and kindreds and tongues

and nations” (11:9; see 10:11; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15) refer to mankind as a whole. The people all over the world are set against the two witnesses and what they represent.

**G. “And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another...” (11:10)**

The people who “dwell upon the earth” are unbelievers, whose lives are centred on earth, without any thought for heaven. When the two witnesses were killed, their message also died, and the people of the world “rejoice...make merry...send gifts one to another” (11:10). That any person can rejoice over the death of innocent speaks of their perverseness.