

# Revelation

*Part Twenty-Eight  
A Measured Temple  
(Revelation 11:1, 2)*

*With Study Questions*

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Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. <sup>2</sup> But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for* forty-two months. <sup>3</sup> And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." <sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. <sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. <sup>7</sup> When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup> And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup> Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. <sup>10</sup> And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup> Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup> And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. <sup>13</sup> In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. <sup>14</sup> The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly (Revelation 11:14).

## Introduction

An atheist friend publicly rejoiced last year at the sight/photo of a large mass of people bowing before the representatives of a current social justice movement. He indicated that such a genuflection finally gave him hope for his country. It is an interesting social-political dynamic that a people in the midst of apostasy (turning their back on God), pine away to be like other nations. They become very open to any shiny ideology that seeks to sideline the Christian faith. As Chesterton opined:

**When a man stops believing in God, he doesn't then believe in nothing, he believes anything.**

Conversely, the citizens of evil nations tend to welcome the rule of a wise, loving, benevolent God over the whim of man. People in such a condition will travel hill and dale to arrive in nations who seek the bow the knee to the Triune God who lives and governs the affairs of man. We read in Scripture how the surrounding nations would feel this way about Israel.

**Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'<sup>7</sup> "For what great nation is *there* that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him?<sup>8</sup> And what great nation is *there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day (Deuteronomy 4:6-8)?**

This dynamic is very much in force in our current passage. To say that Jesus came into His own and His own received Him not (John 1:11) is almost an understatement. He was greeted with vitriol, hostility at a level that could only be described as diabolical (in the true demonic sense of the word, as we'll see very clearly in chapter twelve). The heart of this diabolical religious cultus revolved around the temple. This chapter opens with a reference to it and it would do us well to grasp the sense of this.

## Preface

I feel as if I've stated many times that certain passages in Revelation lead theologians down paths of disagreement. That may be true here as well, but there is general agreement that this chapter is the most difficult of all, no matter what your end-times view might be. Over one hundred years ago, Henry Alford, the Dean of Canterbury said, "No solution has ever been given to this portion of Revelation." I am not sure if that is entirely true, but it should help us appreciate the difficulty of the chapter.

With that in mind, I would like to give a brief synopsis of the first fourteen verses of this chapter followed by two things: First, what I think is the best understanding of it. Second, (and perhaps more importantly, considering its difficulty) how does what's conveyed minister to our hearts, i.e., what are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us. After the synopsis, we will look at the first two, very significant, verses.

## Synopsis

What we have here is the continuing conversation between John and the colossal angel of the previous chapter, who may very well be Christ Himself. We are in the sixth trumpet of judgment (Revelation 9:13), the seventh coming later in this chapter (Revelation 11:15). John is no longer a mere conveyer of information; he is now part of the drama. He had been called to eat the "**little book**" of prophecy (Revelation 10:9) and here he is commissioned to make some measurements.

John is to measure the "**temple,**" the "**altar**" and the "**worshippers**" (ones worshiping, *proskynountas*) (**Revelation 11:1**). He is specifically told not to measure the court outside the temple because it will be given to the "**Gentiles...and tread underfoot for forty-two months**" (**Revelation 11:2**).

We are then introduced to one of the most enigmatic parts of the cast of Revelation, Christ's "**two witnesses**" (**Revelation 11:3**), who will "**prophecy one thousand two hundred and sixty days**" (**Revelation 11:3**), which is the same amount of time of the treading underfoot. There is some, but not a great deal of, identification regarding who these two witnesses are, but we are told that their enemies will not be able to harm them (at least for a while) and that they have significant power (Revelation 11:4-6).

Nonetheless, when they **“finish their testimony” (Revelation 11:7)**, they will be killed. Here, for the first time in Revelation, we are introduced to **“the beast.”** The beast is the one who **“makes war against them”** and kills them. Their deaths be a display of public dishonor, where their **“dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city” (Revelation 11:8)**. This great city is identified **“spiritually”** as **“Sodom and Egypt”** and the city where **“our Lord was crucified” (Revelation 11:8)**.

They will remain in this display of humiliation and defeat for **“three-and-a-half days” (Revelation 11:9)** during which time people will celebrate, **“make merry” (Revelation 11:10)** because of the torment these two prophets put them through.

After the three-and-a-half days the two witnesses come back to life and stand **“on their feet.”** This elicits a **“great fear...on all who saw them” (Revelation 11:11)**. They then hear a voice calling them to heaven and they ascend **“in a cloud” (Revelation 11:12)**. In the same hour there is a great **“earthquake,”** killing seven thousand people and **“a tenth of the city fell”** causing the rest to be afraid and give **“glory to the God of heaven” (Revelation 11:13)**. Let us dig in a bit.

**Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. <sup>2</sup> But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months (Revelation 11:1, 2).**

## **A Measurement**

When you go out on the street and see a person wearing a neon vest, standing behind a tripod with some fancy gadget on it (a theodolite, apparently), you know their measuring something, generally with the intent to define boundaries in order to build or demolish, or both; and to do so accurately. This is what John is doing.

*Measuring* in the Bible can mean destruction (Amos 8:2). It can mean rebuilding or protection (Zechariah 2:2, 5). Measurement, especially here, has been said to divide the holy from the profane. God is a God who surveys.

**For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart is loyal to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9).**

## A Temple

John is measuring the temple, the altar and the worshipers. Here the interpretations explode well beyond what we can discuss in our allotted time.

Perhaps the most popular contemporary view is that this is the future rebuilt temple in which Jesus will dwell after the rapture, where animal sacrifices will be made before Him as a “memorial”.<sup>1</sup> Here we have the proverbial *Procrustean Bed*. The giant, Procrustes, would capture people and stretch them out or cut off their limbs to make them fit into his bed. Here we see adherence to a system of reading our Bibles that requires we adopt something (the rebuilding of the temple) that is never once taught in the New Testament, other than when Jesus was speaking of His own body (John 2:21).

This, I believe, has led many to an unhealthy preoccupation. I was invited to a baseball game with a group of Christian friends. Having met a new couple, I happened to be sitting next to them, they discovered I was a pastor. With buzzing excitement, they asked if I thought the temple would be rebuilt soon. I answered that I thought it already had been rebuilt. It was the temple of Christ’s own body. It was a buzzkill. They answered, ‘Yeah, that’s true, but what about the one in Jerusalem?’ The building that was designed to teach us about Christ had become a source of greater elation than Christ Himself.

Other, more tenable, options regarding this temple are that this is the fate of the church in a hostile world or that it’s the prophecy of the salvation of the Jews or Israel’s repentance in the last days, etc. I might also point out that Revelation 11:1 contains strong evidence of an early date of the writing of Revelation. How can you measure a destroyed temple? If Revelation was written in the nineties, as many suppose, there would be no temple. And even if you spiritualize the temple (which I am inclined to do) how could there be absolutely no reference to the destroyed temple, which was central to Jewish worship?? The silence would be deafening.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. p. 1299.

It would appear to me, based upon the context and the somewhat odd fact that he is measuring, not just the temple, but the altar and people, that this is God creating a line of protection for His own during the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem and end of the Old Covenant. This is an idea we have already been introduced to in the sealing of the 144,000 (Revelation 7).

We see something similar in the second chapter of Zechariah.

**And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand!...And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the Lord, and I will be the glory in her midst (Zechariah 2:1, 5).**

In short, I believe these two verses are speaking of the true believers, often referred to as the **"temple"** (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). The **"altar"** should remind us that our lives are to be marked by a life of **"living sacrifice"** engaged in **"spiritual worship"** (Romans 12:1). In significantly less symbolic books in the New Testament, this is how these terms are used. We should bring what we have learned through the clearer teaching in Scripture into our understanding of Revelation.

But the passage does not merely speak of God's preserving of His bride, it also carries a message of judgment. As we have seen so often, there is a reversal of fortune. The temple itself, which had become a **"den of thieves"** (Matthew 21:13), would be cast out. It will not have survived the measurement and be left in the **"court outside"** the true temple.

The Israelites which have been compared to **"Sodom, Egypt"** (Revelation 11:8) and **"Jericho"** (Revelation 8:6) had here become like the Babylonians, utilizing the implements/vessels of God, the temple itself in an unholy, unworthy manner. Is it possible that churches today can fall into the same trap? Could the glitter of our religious surroundings (whether religious artifacts or some form of religious, cultural acceptability), be blinding us to Christ Himself.

It might be worth examining how Babylon (a nation which become symbolic of that which is anti-Christian) ended the way they did. It included the acquiring and profaning of that which was to be utilized in a holy manner. It begins with a visit and an invitation. The trajectory of their demise begins long before it happened.

Let's offer a summary of how this happened. In 2 Kings 20:12-20 we read the Hezekiah, the king of Judah was ill and received some visitors from Babylon. He was sick, which may have made him more vulnerable, but he wasn't too sick to give his Babylonian visitors a tour. Things that were designed for the holy worship of a holy God were put on display. It became a bit of a show.

It is not uncommon for liberal churches to invite politicians or celebrities into their pulpits. There are consequences for this type of compromise. Hezekiah should have known better. He is confronted by Isaiah.

The prophecy of Isaiah is that the Babylonians, who you have brought into view these holy things, will take them all to Babylon, along with your own people. Like David on the rooftop, eyeing Bathsheba, resulting in the eventual downfall of the nation, Israel's bondage begins with what appears to be a slight social faux pas. Hezekiah's response to the prophetic outcome of his indiscretion it, itself, illuminating:

**Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days" (2 Kings 20:19)?**

The lesson for today's church are numerous. Consideration of the future is of value. Also, to beware of union, intimacy and a shared vision with the world. Hezekiah was short-sighted. Well, did Lamentations apply to his lack of foresight.

**She [Jerusalem] took no thought of her future; therefore her fall is terrible (Lamentations 1:9).**

Within a hundred years, give or take, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, but there will be a bit of a turn. Israel had been taken captive by Babylon and Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son is now king and throwing a party. Recorded in the fifth chapter of Daniel, we see how Belshazzar thought it would be fun to break out the good China. Those vessels that were designed for holy use were filled with booze and used to praise the gods of gold, silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

God had been so patient with Babylon. But's it's as if this was the last straw. They had crossed the proverbial Rubicon. It is here that the finger of



God invites Himself to the party and Belshazzar becomes the recipient of a horrifying text. The account is almost humorous. We're told that Belshazzar's hips got loose, and his knees started knocking. Then he reached out everyone in his kingdom to interpret the writing on the wall, but nobody could.

The queen finally speaks up and suggests Belshazzar utilize Daniel. Her description of Daniel is pretty remarkable. He is a man **"in whom is the Spirit of God... [with] wisdom and understanding."** It's as if they all knew this, but they just weren't interested in that type of person. We should all seek to be the type of person who our friends call when the chips are severely down.

So, Daniel is brought to the king and the king promises Daniel that if he can interpret the writing, he'll receive gold and power. Daniel tells the king he can give the gold and power to someone else, but he will interpret the writing, nonetheless. First, Daniel reminds Belshazzar that he didn't learn the lesson his father had learned. Daniel is not shy to tell the king that he had not humbled his heart. He then points out how Belshazzar used holy things in an unholy manner, while ignoring the God who holds his breath in his hands.

Finally, he gives the interpretation. Again, we're given a measurement.

**This is the interpretation of *each* word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; <sup>27</sup> Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; <sup>28</sup> Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." ...<sup>30</sup> That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. <sup>31</sup> And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, *being* about sixty-two years old (Daniel 5:26, 27, 30, 31).**

Apparently, God does not take lightly the use of those things that He has deemed to a holy purpose. The measurement here was a measurement of weight. Belshazzar had been weighed and found wanting. And that night his kingdom would be taken from him.

Now hear the words of Christ. In the temple, Jesus is confronted by the chief priest and elders, questioning His authority. He tells the *Parable of the Landowner* where landowner's vineyard is leased to vinedressers who

kill the landowner's servants and, eventually kill his son. These religious leaders, unwittingly pronounce their own judgment when Jesus asks what the owner of the vineyard will do to those vinedressers.

**They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: *'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'*? <sup>43</sup> "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. <sup>44</sup> And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." <sup>45</sup> Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them (Matthew 21:41-45).**

The physical temple, which would be destroyed (Matthew 24:2) will now be viewed as part of that outer court. What a warning for buildings with a cross and a pulpit, who have rejected the true Christ. Paul warns the New Covenant churches, lest they suffer the same fate.

**Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. <sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off (Romans 11:19-22).**

The temple, altar and true worshipers (believers, the church) will not be part of what will happen in the outer court, which will be destroyed. In our next meeting will continue with the discussion of the "**forty-two months**" and all that means. Let us now adhere to the warning against the superficial, veneer or a humanly defined faith. The judgment God's people were protected from when it came to the Roman armies, is not worthy to be

compared to the protection they receive from the wrath of the holy God Himself. It is a wrath endured by Christ, for those who would trust in Him. Little wonder that every implement, sacrament, prayer, song and thought should herald Him and Him alone.

## Questions for Study

1. Contrast how people might respond to be ruled by men over being ruled by God. What dynamics come into play (pages 2, 3)?
2. What does *measurement* mean when we see it in Scripture (page 4)?
3. Offer some of the options given regarding the nature of the temple in Revelation 11:1. How do you think of that temple, altar and those people (pages 6, 7)?
4. How had Israel become like Babylon? Describe the process we see with Hezekiah and Belshazzar (pages 7, 8).
5. How does what happened during the time of Christ mirror what happened during the time of Daniel? What warning does this contain for today's church (pages 9, 10)?