

Measure Me! Revelation 11:1-14

I'm so glad that you're hanging in there with us in our Revelation study. Today we're looking at a passage in chapter 11, one that has most intrigued me for quite a while now. Let's go ahead and dive straight into it, look with me at Revelation chapter 11, **verses 1-6...**

Alright, we have several decisions to make in how we attempt to understand this passage. Let's first talk about the measuring of the temple. It would be wise for us to consider if there are any other Biblical passages that might help clarify what this is talking about. And yes, it just so happens that a similar thing is described in the book of Zechariah, in the same type of end-time prophecy context. Zechariah followed after Daniel, as God's prophet, and his book records the vision that God gave him concerning future events pertaining to Jerusalem, as well as pertaining to a coming figure referred to as the "Branch," who would, as it says, "*remove the guilt of that land in one day.*" (Zec. 3:9) And God tells Zechariah that this "Branch" would also build the Temple of the Lord (6:12), and that He would also serve as a priest and as a king. (6:13) We now know that these words were prophetically referring to Jesus Christ. And Zechariah wasn't just writing down these words given by God, he was also commanded to accompany these words with specific actions to perform that conveyed symbolically what was being told to him.

For instance, concerning this coming Man named the Branch, Zechariah was told to make a silver and gold crown and set it on the head of the High Priest's son, whose name was Joshua. In this time, the High Priest symbolically-spiritually- represented God. So the son of the High Priest in this instance, is pointing to a figure who would be considered as the son of God. And if that's not enough of a dead give away pointing to Jesus, then the name of the High Priest's son *Joshua* should be. Joshua is a Hebrew name- Yehoshua- meaning Yahweh is Salvation- in other words- God saves. And the name Joshua, translated from Hebrew to Greek is *lēsoûs*- the name we pronounce in English as *Jesus*. So basically 500 years before Jesus is born, God tells Zechariah and the people that there will be a son of God coming who will serve as priest and king, who will build a "temple," and he will be named Jesus. Absolutely incredible, right? Along with this message, the book of Zechariah calls for repentance before God, and throughout the book there's cryptic, prophet language foretelling of judgement

and blessing, doom *and* restoration, war *and* peace and it's a little tricky to today decipher which verses we are to assume were fulfilled in Jesus' first coming, and then which ones will be fulfilled in the time leading up to Jesus' return.

But in Zechariah chapter 2, there is described a man going to measure Jerusalem, and I think this directly correlates with what we read in Revelation 11- let me go ahead and read that passage to you... **(Zec. 2:1-5)**

Ok, again this is real mysterious, prophetic, cryptic language, but the idea seems to be a vision of a man going to measure the distance from one side of the city to the other, as would a surveyor, but then he is told that it really can't be measured in that way, that he's not supposed to literally measure from border to border, because the city is going to be *open* to a multitude of people- and the only "border" will be God Himself, as in God will be a spiritual border wall of protection and yet- He will also be the substance of what is contained within the walls- the "glory in her midst," as it says. This type of language should immediately indicate to us that we're not really talking about a physical city location that is being measured- no, the whole point is that the physical surveyor measuring guy is to be *corrected* in that the understanding is supposed to be *figurative*, spiritual- not literal.

Ok, so back to Revelation 11. I'm pretty confident that this passage is to be understood in the same way as the Zechariah passage- there's a figurative spiritual understanding we're supposed to arrive to, rather than taking this passage to be speaking of a literal temple building structure being measured. And I say that because there *are* many voices out there who interpret this verse very literally, and would thus say, well, there must then be a new temple built in Jerusalem before Jesus comes back. Personally, I don't think there are any verses in the Bible that would support that being a requirement before Jesus' return, and as I've said in the past, if a new temple is reconstructed in Jerusalem and sacrifices are re-instated- that would be the ultimate rejection and mockery of Jesus Christ by the Jewish people and anyone else involved, and it would be something that should grieve our hearts greatly.

But again, I don't think this verse is talking about a literal temple, and I'll give you more biblical reason as to why. As a reminder, when we are forming our opinions, our theology, our interpretation of scripture- we can't just go along with

what feels right, what we read online, what a popular pastor or teacher says in a sermon or in a book- no, we have to let scripture interpret scripture. In other words, with any viewpoint, that viewpoint has to be in agreement with every other place in scripture the topic is mentioned- every viewpoint has to be backed up by other scripture, and if it's not- then we have to hold very loosely to that viewpoint.

So keeping that concept in mind, we already read the parallel passage from Zechariah that directly correlates to this passage, and there in Zechariah it gives the idea that we are to be thinking with spiritual minds when interpreting the man mentioned who is measuring Jerusalem. Not only this, but immediately after this language, the book of Zechariah starts talking about the "Branch," who we know with 100% certainty is Jesus, and as I already mentioned it says that this Branch would *build the temple of the Lord*. (**Zec. 6:12**) Ok, so the question is, did Jesus *literally* build a temple?

Well, no- Jesus did *not* build a literal physical structure temple. And actually, as recorded in all 4 of the Gospel books, when the subject of the physical temple was brought up, Jesus responded that the physical temple would be completely demolished- and He seemed to be 100% ok with that idea. And the rest of the New Testament agrees with Jesus in that the idea of a physical temple has transitioned into the idea of a *spiritual temple*. We see throughout the New Testament that the definition of the temple of God is the Church- believers *in*, followers *of* Jesus.

Pauls says in **1 Corinthians 3:16** "*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" Then again in his 2nd letter to the church in Corinth, **2 Corinthians 6:16** says "...*For we are the temple of the living God...*" Specifically writing to non-Jewish, Gentiles, Paul says in **Ephesians 2:19-21** "*So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*" Paul says there is 1 temple, and it is built of believers in Jesus- Jew and Gentile.

This concept is confirmed in the book of Revelation, every single use of the word “temple” in the book of Revelation, is referring to a spiritual, figurative, heavenly temple. We read back in Revelation 3 that the ones who overcome through Jesus will be made into pillars in the temple of God. **(Rev 3:12)** This verse, along with all the others I read from Paul’s letters, tell us *in what way it is* that Jesus, the Branch from Zechariah, would build a temple. Again, it’s not literal language- believers in Jesus aren’t turned to stone so that we would serve as supports for physical temple walls and a roof- no, the idea is that the concept of “temple” has shifted from the Old Testament understanding of a stone and mortal building, to now the New Testament understanding that is spiritual- a *figurative* “temple”- as **1 Peter 2:5** says, a temple built from *living* stones- *“being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* There is not a separate Judaism path to salvation, there is not a path to Heaven through physical temples, re-instituted sacrifices, earthly nationalistic rule and prosperity, no- there is one path to the Heavenly Kingdom and it is through the sacrifice of Jesus who is building His followers into a spiritual dwelling place fit for God.

Revelation 7:15 says those who come out of the tribulation will be before the throne of God, serving in His “temple,” there in Heaven, sheltering them in His tabernacle- His tent covering over them. Again, the idea is not a literal physical earthly building, but rather a heavenly one. **Revelation 15:8** again mentions God’s temple in heaven, and that entrance will be granted only after the 7 bowls of wrath are finished. At the end of this chapter 11, in **verse 19** it says the Temple of God is opened, and it defines the location as being in Heaven. **Revelation chapter 21:22** says John saw no temple in the new city, because God, Jesus the Lamb, are it’s temple. *All* these verses are telling us to see this mention of a temple in chapter 11 as being spiritual, figurative. And since this verse mentions the word altar, let’s consider the usages of that word in Revelation as well. Again, as it is with the word “temple,” every instance of the word altar used in the book of Revelation, is used not as an earthly location physical place or thing, but rather a spiritual, figurative, Heavenly thing. For time sake, I won’t mention all the references, but here’s a couple examples- we read in Revelation 6 **(6:9)** about those killed during the tribulation period, who will cry out asking God how much longer they will have to wait for God to take action and judge those who are killing Christians- and it says the place from which they are crying out is from underneath “the altar.” Again, this can only be taken

figuratively, it's not talking about an Old Testament physical altar table that you burn animal sacrifices on, with multitudes of people crammed under it- no, that would be physically impossible. The idea rather is spiritual- it is describing the real fact that Christians have, and will be sacrificed, but describing those real facts with metaphorical language and descriptions- the people are crying out metaphorically from a place of death (an altar).

Then in chapter 8 (**8:3**), we read about the prayers of all the saints on the golden "altar" before the throne of God. The idea is not people praying at a specific, physical, altar location- but rather it refers to the sacrificial prayers of God's people, worldwide, being offered up Him.

with all these verses helping us define the meaning of temple as being spiritual, figurative- it would be really strange and very bad interpretation manners to attempt to single out this one verse and interpret it as referring to a literal temple building. It would also be very odd to interpret this literally, with the 1st temple, and the 2nd temple, and the temple described in Ezekiel- all having specific Bible verses already defining their exact dimensions. There would be no reason for John to be told to literally measure any of those temples, he and we both already know from scripture those measurements. Another clue is that **verse 1** says to measure the temple, the altar, *and those who worship in it*. If we take this literally, we would have to go with temple length/width/height, altar length/width/height, and peoples' length/width/height. Can you image John reporting back to the angel, yes there are 28 people currently in the temple who are 5'7," waist sizes ranging from 28-48 inches, 23 people over 6 foot tall, 32 children under 4 feet tall, etc...? No, that wouldn't make any sense, nor would it carry any relevance.

Ok, so with all that said, I think we can be pretty confident this in *not* referring to a literal temple. Ok, so if that's the case and it's spiritual, what then is the spiritual significance? Well, I think we have to use the Zechariah measuring passage to again help guide us, as well as the rest of the context from this passage itself to help us determine the meaning. So let's look back to Zechariah again- as I explained, the Zechariah passage seems to point us to the idea of the measuring being a *spiritual* measuring, a spiritual evaluation of sorts- that conveys to us the idea that the borders of Jerusalem are open- the borders are defined spiritually by God Himself. In other words, we're not talking about people

born physically in Jerusalem, we're not talking about modern day Jews, Arabs, or Christians fighting over pieces of real estate in Jerusalem- no we're talking metaphorically about a place that doesn't have physical borders but rather has spiritual borders maintained by God Himself.

And then if we were to read the very next few verses from Zechariah 2, that follow directly after the measuring man description and God being the border- there is then immediately a direct command for the people in Jerusalem to come out from those who are doing wrong- a command for them to separate themselves from "the daughters of Babylon." (**Zec. 2:6-7**) This is a figurative use of the name "Babylon," the idea is that there are Jewish people in Jerusalem who have been enticed into the same sins that the people of Babylon were entangled in. God says to flee from that place of entanglement in sin, escape from that lifestyle- repent and turn to God because He is coming, holding judgement AND reward in His hand.

So the idea is that there is a measuring that will take place, not a physical survey measuring, but a *spiritual* measuring. A spiritual measuring in order to take a right evaluation of who is the true church, the true Israel, the true Jerusalem, distinguished from all other people. And a major theme of Zechariah, as well as a major theme in the other prophetic books (including Revelation), is that God is warning that a measuring is coming- so repent, get right, separate yourself from those who do wrong- so that you can be measured in with those who will be residents of God's "Jerusalem." This is what I believe is being described here in Revelation 11. There's a measuring coming- the measuring is for the temple of God in Heaven made of people that Jesus has built, the measuring is for the altar containing those who have given their lives for Jesus, the measuring is for those who worship in a temple not made *with* human hands- but rather a temple made *of* human hands surrendered to Jesus, who is the cornerstone.

Back here in Revelation 11, immediately in **verse 2** there is mentioned a separation of the temple from the courtyard. The courtyard and those in it- they *aren't* being measured. They aren't being evaluated for the Kingdom-Temple-of-God-in-Heaven life. And then there is described 2 witnesses, these 2 will

hopefully help encourage people in the right direction, to help spur them on to make life changes that will result in them getting measured in with the people who will be built into God's Temple in Heaven.

And then our time frame that we see over and over again, our 3.5 years- is mentioned as 42 months that the holy city (Jerusalem) will be trampled and 1260 days that the 2 witnesses will be prophesying- speaking truth, preaching, proclaiming God's work in order to cause people to turn to Him. Concerning trampling the holy city, I think here we transition back to literal language. There are the ones being measured spiritually for the new Kingdom that is coming- the New Jerusalem, and now here are described the ones who are of the physical, worldly kingdom Jerusalem. The book of Revelation seems to indicate that the physical city of Jerusalem, the city that was once regarded as the "holy city," will during this time of Tribulation, be the location of all kinds of *unholiness*.

Remember we read in Daniel 12 recently that at the end of the 3.5 year tribulation, there will be a smashing of the power of the holy people. Leading up to the return of Jesus and the end of time when the power gets smashed, those who are of Daniel's people will be in power, and it won't be considered a good thing. No, there will be very evil things that take place in Jerusalem. We'll have an example of that coming up here in the next several verses, and also later on in the chapters that follow, we'll see even more evidence of that as well.

Here it's worth noting that all throughout the Bible- Old and New Testament, but *especially* in the New Testament, there is all kinds of language making a distinction between a physical worldly Jerusalem and a spiritually Godly Jerusalem; a physically worldly Israel and a spiritually Godly Israel; and as I've already mentioned- a physical temple, and a Spiritual Temple. Here the distinction is between a physical worldly sinful Jerusalem that God is calling people out of, so that they can be measured into the spiritual *New Jerusalem Temple of God*.

The next thing we might want to figure out is *who* these 2 witnesses are. They have special, prophet power to do miraculous things like Moses and Elijah did in the Old Testament, and I think the idea is that like Moses, Elijah, Jesus- they will prove the truth of their words by the signs they perform. Here again we have to decide on a literal or spiritual interpretation. But let's first read the rest of the description before jumping to any conclusions. Here's **verses 7 through 14...**

Ok, so if the 2 witnesses are spiritual, figurative representatives of something other than 2 real people- the options might be the Old and New Testament, or the church and Israel, God's Law and the Holy Spirit, we could basically try to guess any 2 things and blindly apply it. But I think we can do better than that. These 2 witnesses are also referred to in the book of Zechariah- **verse 4** here in Revelation 11 that we read earlier points us back to that reference. These 2 are mentioned in Zechariah chapter 4, immediately after the passage I mentioned about the High Priest's son Joshua representing the Branch priest-king who is to come. Zechariah sees in his vision 2 olive trees incorporated into 2 lamp stands, and the angel tells him that these are the "*two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.*" (**Zec. 4:14**) And we aren't given any more information about these 2, not until here in Revelation chapter 11.

Now, in this instance, I think it makes much more sense to see these 2 as *literal* real life figures. And I promise you, I'm not just switching back and forth between literal and figurative interpretations randomly- a huge part of the hard work in interpreting the Bible, *especially* prophetic books in the Bible, is analyzing what is meant by the author to be taken literally and what is meant to be taken spiritually. And we don't do that based on our own assumptions or preferences, we do that based on the context, surrounding context, and entire Bible context- as I've said before- we let scripture interpret scripture. And every now and then, there's also a language translation thing or a cultural thing to note that can help us as well.

Here in this passage, looking directly at the immediate context, we already have figurative language pointing towards a real thing that the language symbolizes- these 2 witnesses are presented figuratively as olive trees and lamp

stands, that are then explained as real life witnesses. It would be weird to have described a figurative representation of a real thing that is then pointing to something else figurative. In other words it would be weird, and again bad interpretation skills, to say the 2 olive trees and 2 lamp stands are *humans who are witnesses*, who are *the Old and the New Testament*. That wouldn't make much sense.

In addition to this, there are details mentioned here that would also not make sense if we interpreted this figuratively. Could we say that the Old and New Testament, or the church and Israel, or that God's Law and the Holy Spirit could be killed and then resurrected and drawn up to heaven? No, that probably doesn't make much sense. And besides, it doesn't make any sense to attempt to separate out the church from Israel- the whole New Testament argues against that idea, and Jesus Himself says in **John 10:16** "*I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice; and they will become one flock, with one shepherd.*" No, the entire New Testament argues *against* salvation based on ethnicity, culture, gender, location, language, nation- again, the only path to salvation is through Jesus, and there is only one flock, with one shepherd. There is only one church. There is only one bride.

Ok, so if this is literally referring to 2 literal beings that will serve as witnesses during the 3.5 year tribulation, then who might they specifically be? Some suggest it could be Enoch and Elijah, the only 2 Biblical figures who are described as never dying a physical death on Earth- both of them were caught up from Earth by God. Maybe. Others say they could be Moses and Elijah- I already mentioned they will perform miracles as those 2 did, so that could be a possibility. According to Malachi 4:5 the Prophet Elijah must come before the day of the Lord, but when the disciples asked Jesus about this in Matthew 17, Jesus told them that "Elijah" had *already* come- and was equating Elijah to John the Baptizer who came ahead of Jesus to prepare for Him. So maybe it wouldn't make as much sense to say one of these is Elijah, if Jesus already said that Elijah had already come previously.

Another option could be that these 2 witnesses are angelic beings. I would say that's probably the least likely- the book of Revelation doesn't seem to have any problem telling us when there's angels involved, so if these were 2 angels- John would probably just outright tell us that they were 2 angels.

Lastly, these 2 witnesses could be 2 modern day individuals who are alive during the tribulation who the Lord will select to fulfill this ministry role. Now, because we don't have any other verses that help us interpret who specifically these 2 are, we just have to confess that we really don't know, and we'll find out one day. But my personal favorite idea, and my hope, is that these 2 individuals are 2 ordinary, modern day people, who God selects at this time, for this specific mission.

For the longest time, I've been drawn to this passage, and my secret aspiration is that if I'm alive during the tribulation, that I'd be considered worthy to fulfill such a role as this. Probably most of you are like, "that's weird," you're thinking "I'd never want to be one of these guys who is killed and left dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 days"- but for some strange reason I've always been like- "sign me up let's go- where do I buy sackcloth fabric clothes from and whose going with me?" Anybody else down for this mission? I need one other volunteer...

It says they will testify for the full 3.5 year time period, and verse 7 says at the end of that time, the *beast* (defined as the one that comes up out of the abyss) will kill them. We haven't been introduced yet to the beast that comes up out of the abyss. We saw previously demonic locust scorpions released from the Abyss, but the beast is not specifically described until later in chapter 13. We'll look more closely at understanding the beast that is mentioned here when we get to chapter 13. John here is just giving us a name description of someone he will later describe in more detail.

But notice where it says they will be killed, there's a little bit of a location riddle to solve in **verse 8**. It says they will be killed and left dead in the streets of

the “great city.” And then how is the “great city” defined? It says spiritually- in other words figuratively, metaphorically- this great city is called Sodom and Egypt. In other words, the great city is *not* literally Sodom, it’s *not* literally a city in Egypt- but rather the great city is to be *likened* (spiritually) to Sodom and Egypt in some way. Sodom and Egypt were both places of great evil, that God called His people out of, that were being judged by God because of the people’s sin. Sodom was known for it’s sexual sin and perversions. Lot and his family were called out to leave that place. God judged and destroyed Sodom with fire reigning down from Heaven. On a side note- that area where Sodom was, to this day, the ground has a ridiculous amount of sulfur residue, that would be indicative of fiery hot volcanic type activity. Egypt was known for it’s worship of false demonic gods, and unjust enslavement of the tribes of Israel. Moses and the tribes of Israel, along with even some Egyptians, were called out to leave that place. And then God judged and “destroyed” the Egyptian Pharaoh kingdom of that time through a series of plagues and waters collapsing on the entire military.

So the Bible says this “great city” is like Sodom and Egypt- assumedly a place of great sin, from which God is calling people to separate themselves, because His righteous judgment is coming. Then the final clue that totally is the obvious give away of what is being referred to is that the city is where their “Lord was crucified.” *Jerusalem*. This understanding fits what we previously read at the beginning of the chapter- a new, spiritual type of temple people are being measured, who are different than the unmeasured, trampled down, physical old temple location place people. And verse 9 says all the nations gathered there in that city seem to be proud of the witnesses’ deaths. They want the bodies to be seen, no burial- they will celebrate their deaths. No longer will they hear that Jesus is the only way to salvation. No longer will they be made to feel guilty over the lives they live. No longer will someone be telling them to repent and get right with God. In fact, they’re so happy about this that they celebrate it as if it were Christmas- giving gifts to each other even though they reject the gift of Jesus.

But that celebration will not last. In the same way in which Jesus arose from death after 3 days, these 2 will rise from the dead, accompanied with an earthquake bringing judgement upon 7,000 within the city; and then it says the rest will be terrified and will give glory to God. We probably can’t be 100% sure,

but I *hope* this is a moment, after all the tribulation events, right before Jesus returns (which is described immediately after this verse, with the sounding of the 7th trumpet)- I hope this is a moment in which some people finally repent and give glory to God by surrendering their lives to Jesus, there in the last seconds before it's too late and no longer possible to make that decision. I hope that's the case, we have previous language that tells us people's hearts will still be hard even through all the earthly disasters and that they will still not repent, but maybe in this moment people's resistance to God will finally be worn down. I hope it's not just saying they will give glory to God and by that time the 7th trumpet will already be sounding and it'll be too late- but that could be the case. I hope it's not just saying people will be like "wow, that was evidence of a God- what a miracle!" and then still go on living their lives apart from Jesus- but that could be the case. That's human nature, that's often what we do.

This entire passage is telling us *not* to do that. This passage warns us what it will be like in the days leading up to the return of Jesus, and I think the application for us is to make sure we're living focused on the eternal things if we're going to experience that time of tribulation, but I think the application is for us also to live with that mindset even now. We spend so much time focusing on the measuring of things that *won't* be measured at the time in which real life begins. We are measured so much in this temporary world. The amount of follows or likes on social media is measured, our children's grades and school performance is measured, our website reach, our bank accounts, sports performances; our possessions are measured, our ability to retire at a certain age, the positives and negatives of the current ruling political party; people's opinions of us are measured, geopolitical opinions are measured, we measure our health, happiness, prosperity. Now, I'm not saying these things shouldn't be measured- many of these things have value, and it's wise and Godly to evaluate, plan, take into account- but we totally fail in life if we're focused more on the measurement of all these things, and *not* on the measurement of our relationship with Jesus, expressed through our sacrificial worship of Him, in His eternal temple of worldwide believers.

Maybe there are some here today, or listening online, who have never fully surrendered to Jesus. You know *about* Jesus, you know some of the Bible

stories, you hang out with Christians, you mostly try to be good and do the right things- but I want you to know that without surrendering to Jesus, without receiving His forgiveness, without choosing Him as your Lord and Savior- absent of that decision and lifestyle, this measuring spoken of in Revelation 11 will not include you. I beg you to fix that, do something about that *today*, and be measured in with God's people.

For the rest of us, if we right now figuratively think of ourselves as a house being built by Jesus (which is what scripture says is true) -if we consider ourselves as a temple (a house) being built by Jesus for Him to live in, and the final inspection is coming due, what things is the building inspector going to measure and find lacking- unfit for occupancy?

I need a volunteer. No, not for the 2 witnesses thing- just for a simple illustration here. I want you to imagine I'm the building inspector measuring people for this temple in Revelation 11. (Measures height of person with tape measure) Hmm... there's not quite enough clearance here, Jesus wants to bring peace with Him, but right now there's just not enough room- anxiety over temporary worldly concerns is just too big. (Measures arms stretched out) Hmm... There's a gap here that only Jesus can properly fill, but it's been haphazardly filled with lots of other trivial things that are now in the way. (Measures waist) Hmm... this is really where the blessing, redemption, and healing of Jesus should be attached, but instead there's unforgiveness of past things fastened here.

This morning, I want us to consider what repairs, adjustments, removals need to take place in expectation of Jesus' return to live with us as His temple. Let's bow our heads and ask Him to point out some things that will not only make us more inhabitable, but that will also help free us to live life with the purpose, peace, strength, and encouragement that He intends for us.

