

Morning Sermon October 10, 2021

“The Measuring of the Temple” Revelation 11:1-6

I. Great question, is the Temple a literal temple, or is it symbolic for God’s people as God’s dwelling place?

11 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. Revelation 11:1 (NKJV)

I believe strongly, this temple is symbolic, it is the people of God, the church, what evidence do we have for this interpretation?

1. Already in the Book of Revelation we had the Temple referred to symbolically –

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. Revelation 3:12 (NKJV)

A. Now, if you take the temple of God in Revelation to be a literal, physical building, do you want to be a pillar in it? A literal pillar? Not me!

B. If you look later in the Book of Revelation the “New Jerusalem” referred to in Revelation 3:12; which comes down from Heaven, from God is also the Bride, the Lamb’s wife –

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2 (NKJV)

2. There is a progressive change from Old Testament to New Testament in regard to the dwelling place of God, that cannot be ignored –

A. God’s dwelling place in the wilderness with His people was the tabernacle, a tent –

9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses. Exodus 33:9 (NKJV)

B. David’s son Solomon built a glorious physical temple for the LORD –

27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! 1 Kings 8:27 (NKJV)

C. This temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and yet eventually replaced by a much less glorious temple -

3 ‘Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, *is this* not in your eyes as nothing? Haggai 2:3 (NKJV)

D. However, as recorded in John’s Gospel, John who is the writer of this Book of Revelation, Jesus Himself was counting His body to be the true temple of God’s Spirit –

18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” **19** Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” **20** Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” **21** But He was speaking of the temple of His body. **22** Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. John 2:18–22 (NKJV)

How was Jesus’ body the Temple? Did He literally change Himself into a physical building? No! He was the dwelling place of God’s Spirit –

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. **17** And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. **18** And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, Colossians 1:15-19 (ESV)

E. Does God’s Spirit currently dwell in any physical building or does God’s Spirit dwell in the church, are we God’s true temple or does He need to build another physical building? -

• Consider Paul’s words to the Gentiles in Ephesus –

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22 (NKJV)

➤ Or Paul's words to the Corinthians –

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV)

➤ Or Peter's words –

⁴ Coming to Him as *to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4–5 (NKJV)

3. Arguments for this Book of Revelation referring to the rebuilding of a physical temple usually also include:

A. A separate future for Jews, and sometimes even a separate way of salvation –

B. Not only a rebuilding of a physical temple, but a reinstatement of an unneeded sacrificial system –

¹¹ And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:11–14 (NKJV)

Ezekiel 40-48 speaks of a measuring of God's temple, some refer to this passage or others in the Old Testament as an argument for a future physical building, and yet Ezekiel is apocalyptic literature and no less full of symbolism than the Book of Revelation –

“What is figuratively established by the measuring in Ezekiel and in Revelation 21 is the infallible promise of God's future presence... “

G.K. Beale

II. *What is symbolized by the measuring of this temple, and God's people –*

...“Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. Revelation 11:1 (NKJV)

1. *Evaluation –*

God evaluated Belshazzar, an unbeliever, this was for punishment -

²⁵ “And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN ²⁶ This *is* the interpretation of *each* word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷ TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Daniel 5:25–27 (NKJV)

Note God evaluates His people, as a building - - -

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17 (NKJV)

2. *But measurement of His people also is evidence of His care and protection of them –*

⁴ “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! ⁶ “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Luke 12:4–7 (NKJV)

III. *The time period mentioned in these verses -*

² 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 11:2 (NKJV)

³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” Revelation 11:3 (NKJV)

This particular time period is first mentioned here but will be mentioned more in this Book of Revelation –

Two ways of understanding:

1. *Literal – I believe most of the numbers used in this Book of Revelation are symbolic, yet this one I believe could be taken literally, its repetition, its being written in different ways forty-two months, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, three and a half days – could be in order to separate it from other symbolic numbers, John’s way of saying this number is literal. A short time of tribulation at the end of time for the church?*
2. *Symbolic – Three and one half years is exactly on half of seven, God number of completion and perfection, therefore it could be symbolic for any shortened period of time! As we have already seen the time is SHORT –*

⁵ The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, ⁷ but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets. Revelation 10:5–7 (NKJV)

IV. *A beautiful symbolic picture of the church, taken from Zechariah, Moses and Elijah, the Law and Prophets –*

⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. Revelation 11:4-6 (NKJV)

Two olive trees, two lampstands, two anointed ones –

⁴ Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. ² And he said to me, “What do you see?” So I said, “I am looking, and there *is* a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. ³ Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.” ⁴ So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What are these, my lord?” ⁵ Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” ⁶ So he answered and said to me: “This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. ⁷ ‘Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel *you shall become* a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ’ ”

⁸ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁹ “The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish *it*. Then you will know That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. ¹⁰ For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” ¹¹ Then I answered and said to him, “What *are* these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?” ¹² And I further answered and said to him, “What *are these* two olive branches that *drip* into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden *oil* drains?” ¹³ Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these *are*?” And I said, “No, my lord.” ¹⁴ So he said, “These *are* the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.” Zechariah 4:1–14 (NKJV)

1. *Note in the Book of Revelation, lampstands = churches –*
²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. Revelation 1:20 (NKJV)

2. *It is as Christ’s church, empowered by God that we are the light of the world -*

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a

lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14–16 (NKJV)

3. *Where do churches find power to LIGHT, to SHINE?*

⁴ These are the two olive trees... Revelation 11:4 (NKJV)

³ Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.” Zechariah 4:3 (NKJV)

A. *Lamps in the OT times and in Jesus’ day were lighted with olive oil / also prophets, priests and kings were “anointed” with “olive oil” ---- “olive oil” was symbolic of the Holy Spirit, oil too, was fuel for lamps –*

B. *This is why the answer to Zechariah’s question and the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel is -*

.” ⁶ So he answered and said to me: “This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. Zechariah 4:6

C. *What is being communicated both in Revelation 11 and Zechariah 4 is that the power of God to shine in this world and build Christ’s Church is not money, numbers, or flashy advertising, but the power of God’s Spirit ---*

4. *We see in these passages also the relation of Zechariah and Zerubbabel to Christ’s Church -*

¹⁰ For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Zechariah 4:10 (NKJV)

A. *Zerubbabel was building a much smaller temple than Solomon did – day of small things, yet it would be the temple in which Christ would minister ...*

B. *The LORD’s eyes were on it, even if the world’s eyes were NOT, so much more are God’s eyes on the building of Christ’s spiritual temple the church, though outwardly it may be trampled by the world, the outer courts, inwardly, spiritually it is protected and empowered by God -*

⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. Revelation 11:4-6 (NKJV)

C. *Two anointed ones are Moses and Elijah, but they represent all God’s people who witness through God’s Word, the Law and the Prophets ... God’s Word is a fire –*

²⁹ “*Is not My word like a fire?*” says the LORD, “And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces? Jeremiah 23:29 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will acend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah 5:24 (NKJV)

D. *We don’t all witness fire consuming our enemies in this world, but we are all more than conquerors through Him who loves us*

—
³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies. ³⁴ Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “*For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*” ³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:31–39 (NKJV)

We see this seemingly weak, like the little Lamb of Revelation church, conquering, represented in Hymn 347 “The Church’s One Foundation” is Jesus Christ, her Lord ... He is not a literal physical foundation, but spiritually the Chief Cornerstone of the Spiritual Building of God, us!

Arnold Brevick