

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #21 (Pt. 9)

Revelation 11:1-2
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For the past few sermons we have been examining the eschatological system of Preterism (especially Partial Preterism) as it relates to the prophesied hope of the conversion of Israel as a nation and the conversion of the nations of the world (from primarily two texts: Romans 11 and Revelation 20). What especially distinguishes Preterism from other interpretive systems (as we have noted in previous sermons) is its view that almost all of the Book of Revelation (in the case of Partial Preterism) or that all of the Book of Revelation (in the case of Full Preterism) was already fulfilled by 70 a.d. at the destruction of Jerusalem (with its temple). But in order for the Preterist to label the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as “prophecy” that was yet future to John when he penned the Book of Revelation, it must be determined from internal evidence (within the Book of Revelation itself) and from external evidence (outside the Book of Revelation) that John penned the Book of Revelation before 70 a.d. when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. To what do Preterists turn when seeking to demonstrate that the Book of Revelation foretells the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple? One alleged piece of internal evidence is found in the text previously read: Revelation 11:1-2. Let us consider this portion of God's Word this Lord's Day.

I. Preterism and Revelation 11:1-2.

- A. How does the Preterist interpret Revelation 11:1-2?
 - 1. In considering how Preterists interpret this portion of Scripture, it is not my intention to insinuate that all Preterists (without

exception) interpret this passage (or all of the Book of Revelation) in the exact same way, but rather to indicate an interpretation that has popular and broad appeal among Preterists in general.

2. In **Revelation 11:1** of this vision we read, “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.” Here the apostle John is given “a reed” and is told to use it to measure the temple of God (i.e. the Holy Place), the altar that was in the Holy Place (i.e. the golden altar of incense as in Revelation 8:3), and those who worship in the temple or Holy Place (namely, consecrated Priests who worship the Lord as He has authorized in His Word). The Preterist understands this act of measuring on the part of John to be a figurative way of signifying the Lord’s intention to preserve His Church, Christ’s New Covenant people (which is His new temple according to 1 Corinthians 3:16) from destruction by the Jews and the Romans. However, the Preterist also argues that behind the figurative meaning just given of the temple is the actual material temple in Jerusalem which John is commanded to measure in this vision. It is argued that John would not have been commanded to measure a temple that had already been destroyed. Thus, the Preterist believes the standing temple in Jerusalem was that which John was commanded to measure (in a vision), but that the physical temple that still stood in Jerusalem yielded a figurative meaning of Divine preservation to the Church (God’s new temple). Thus, since the temple was destroyed in 70 a.d., the Preterist concludes that this prophecy of the temple being measured by John must have occurred before its destruction in 70 a.d.

3. Then as we move to **Revelation 11:2** of this vision, we read the following: “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.” Here, the apostle John is commanded not to measure the outer court of the temple because it is

given to the Gentiles who will trample underfoot both the outer court and the holy city of Jerusalem for 42 months. The Preterist interprets this verse in a very literal way (with no figurative meaning as in verse 1) to mean that the outer court of the temple and the city of Jerusalem will be under siege by the Romans for a period of 42 months by the Roman armies and then destroyed. Since this siege and destruction of the outer court and of Jerusalem is yet in the future at the time of John's vision, the Preterist concludes the Book of Revelation must have been written before the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. To add further weight to this interpretation, the Preterist turns to a couple other passages.

a. First, there is **Revelation 11:8**. Here in this verse it is argued by the Preterist that one may find a positive identification of the city referred to in Revelation 11:2. For before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in Revelation 11:2, two figurative witnesses for Christ (signifying the prophets and apostles who bore testimony against Jerusalem for its covenant-breaking) will be put to death in the same city "where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:8), which was Jerusalem.

b. The second passage that for the Preterist confirms that Revelation 11:2 is foretelling the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is **Luke 21:24**. Here the Lord Jesus prophesies that Jerusalem will be taken by the Romans and will be trodden down (the same Greek word as is used in Revelation 11:2, *πατέω*) by them until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This seems to be the thrust of the Preterist's argument from Revelation 11:1-2 in seeking to make the case that both the temple and the city of Jerusalem were both standing at the time John was given this vision by Christ. And it may appear at first sight to be very compelling internal evidence, but let us consider more carefully these passages.

B. Problems with the Preterist's interpretation of Revelation 11:1-2.

1. First, let us consider once again **Revelation 11:1** and take a closer look at the text: ““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.”

a. John's measuring of the temple (the Holy Place), the altar of incense, and the consecrated priests alone in the Holy Place gives us a figurative representation of God's prophetic promise to preserve His faithful New Covenant Church (1 Corinthians 3:16) so that Satan and the Beast are not allowed by Christ to destroy His faithful Church that worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24) according to His revealed will as spiritual priests (Revelation 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5). This measuring of the temple is intended by the Lord to distinguish that which is sacred and faithful from that which has become profane and unfaithful; and in addition to that, this measuring by John further signifies the Lord's prophetic intention to preserve of remnant of that faithful Church through whatever trial, tribulation, persecution, death they may face (Ezekiel 42:20; Zechariah 2:1-5; 2 Samuel 8:2; Ezekiel 22:26). Just as the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:3-8 was intended by the Lord to prophetically distinguish between Christ's faithful Israel (His faithful New Covenant Church) and those who were not, and to preserve His faithful Israel by means of His Divine preservation (just as the Lord in the time of Elijah preserved a symbolic remnant of 7,000 out of a corrupt Church in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, 1 Kings 19:14-18) before the Lord brings the trumpet and vial judgments upon the earth and before that papal antichristian persecution of the Beast and the False Prophet begin, so likewise the measuring of the temple in Revelation 11:1 is intended to prophetically portray the same truth. This measuring of Christ's faithful Church is prophetically the realization of what Christ promised in Matthew 16:18: “I will build my Church; and the gates of hell

shall not prevail against her.” That faithful remnant of Christ’s New Covenant Church may seem to be dead and silenced by the Beast (as in Revelation 11:7-8), that faithful remnant of Christ’s New Covenant Church may flee from the persecution of Satan into the wilderness (as in Revelation 12:14), but the Lord will preserve a faithful Church for Himself on earth as is summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith (25:5): “There shall be always a church on earth to worship God according to his will.” Thus, I agree with the Preterist this far, namely, that the measuring of the Holy Place, the golden altar, and the worshippers therein signify a figurative (rather than a literal) representation of Christ’s preservation of His faithful New Covenant Church in the face of great hostility and persecution from Satan and the Beast.

b. However, what is not proved by the Preterist at this point (but is merely asserted and assumed) is that this must mean that John was commanded in this vision to measure the temple that was still standing in Jerusalem. This is simply not the case. The fact that John was commanded to measure the temple simply does not imply that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing. For we likewise see a prophetic measuring of the temple in Ezekiel 40-43. However, it is clear from what is stated in Ezekiel 40:1 that the measuring of the temple was not of a temple that was then standing at the time of Ezekiel’s vision, but was rather a measuring of the temple that had been destroyed 14 years earlier. For along with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was the destruction of the temple as well (as we see in 2 Kings 25:1-9). Thus, we see that the mere fact that the temple is measured (in Revelation 11:1) does not at all assume or demonstrate that it is still standing. The temple in Revelation 11:1 was measured in a vision as was the temple in Ezekiel 40, and it is far more likely that the actual temple was not standing in Revelation 11:1 since the vision given to John closely parallels the vision of measuring the temple that was given to Ezekiel (at which time the temple was not standing).

2. We now move on to consider once again **Revelation 11:2**:
“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.”

a. Here we find that the court outside the temple (i.e. the court wherein Israelites in general would gather to worship the Lord) was not to be measured because it was to be given over to defiled and profane Gentiles who would not worship the Lord in spirit and in truth according to His revealed will.

(1) In fact, the words “leave out” (ἐκβαλε in Greek) in Revelation 11:2 literally mean “cast out” (when used in an ecclesiastical context) and refer to casting one out of the Synagogue or Church by way of excommunication (especially John 9:34,35, but also 3 John 10). Here in Revelation 11:2, the Lord commands John to excommunicate the outer court of the temple (and no doubt those profane “Gentiles” to whom it is given who offer corrupt worship in it, in contrast to those who offer pure worship in the Holy Place as was noted in Revelation 11:1).

(2) The fact that the outer court is to be excommunicated by the Head of the Church implies that these who are called “Gentiles” must have been viewed in some sense within Visible Church (though having become an unfaithful Church). These “Gentiles” could not be excommunicated from the Visible Church who were not in some sense “members” of the Visible Church (as to its being not its well-being). Thus, these profane “Gentiles” to whom the outer court of the temple (i.e. the court of Israel) is given are not the Roman armies under Titus who in 70 a.d. destroyed the temple, for the Roman armies could not be excommunicated never having been within the Visible Church. To the contrary, these “Gentiles” are profane worshippers who have gained control of the greater part of the Visible Church (i.e. the outer court of Israel).

(3) Jesus Himself made such a distinction between true worshippers who worship God in spirit and truth according to His will and false worshippers who corrupt the true worship of God and worship according to their own will (John 4:21-24; cf. Colossians 2:23). I would submit that what was especially profaned by those here called “Gentiles” was the brazen altar in the outer court upon which animal sacrifices were offered (which signified the finished and substitutionary work of Christ for His elect and redeemed people). These “Gentiles” have polluted the outer court of the temple by their false doctrine and corrupt worship of the living God. They profess with their mouths to worship the Lord, but by their deeds they deny Him in offering Christ as a continual sacrifice in their heathenish, cannibalistic, alleged eating of Christ’s body and blood in the Mass. Dear ones, it is the man of sin, the papacy, that in this vision given to John was to usurp the place of Christ in His temple (the Visible Church, 1 Corinthians 3:16) sitting as God in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (calling himself the head of the Church on earth and using many other blasphemous titles to refer to himself). That antichristian harlot (the Church of Rome) and her harlot daughters (all those Churches who follow in her footsteps) are here prophesied in John’s vision to take up residence (along with her pope) and to profane that which is holy in the temple (or Church of God). Herein is prophesied the great apostasy and falling away that would occur by way of the man of sin in polluting the temple of God by way of false doctrine, corrupt worship, and tyrannical Church government.

b. Carefully observe the glaring inconsistencies and problems with the Preterist interpretation of Revelation 11:2.

(1) Problem #1. Whereas the Preterist interprets the temple (νάος) in Revelation 11:1 figuratively, he then interprets the temple (νάος) in Revelation 11:2 literally, so that the same temple (using the same Greek word, νάος) is remarkably figurative in one verse and becomes without any indication or clue literal in the very next verse of

the same vision. I submit that this is simply fitting and adjusting the words of Scripture to conform to an eschatological system rather than allowing these inspired words to be interpreted consistently. If the temple in Revelation 11:1 is a figurative temple (as indeed it is), then the temple in Revelation 11:2 is also a figurative temple and not the literal temple in Jerusalem (contrary to the interpretation of Preterists).

(2) Problem #2. Revelation 11:2 states that the “holy city” (and the outer court of the temple presumably) will be trampled underfoot by these profane “Gentiles” for 42 months. As already observed, the Preterist interprets these words literally to mean that Jerusalem and the temple will be besieged by the Romans for 42 months (which I do not dispute was the case historically). However, is that what this verse states? Does the Lord reveal to John that the “holy city” would be BESIEGED and SURROUNDED by the Gentiles for 42 months?

(a) The identification of the “holy city” that is trampled underfoot by these profane “Gentiles” that have polluted the doctrine, worship and government of Christ’s Church is not, as far as I can see, a reference to the literal city of Jerusalem, but is rather a reference to the Church of Christ upon earth. For the precisely same Greek words and Greek case are used one other time in Revelation: Revelation 21:2. There “the holy city” refers to the heavenly and glorified Church of Christ (cf. also Revelation 22:19 which also refers to the heavenly and glorified Church of Christ).

(b) Thus, I submit that what is in view in Revelation 11:2 is not the trampling underfoot the literal city of Jerusalem, but the trampling underfoot of the figurative “holy city”, namely, the earthly Visible Church of Christ by these same polluters of the temple of God (the papacy and his harlot Church of Rome along with all her spiritual daughter Churches who imbibe her doctrine, worship and government). I would submit that just as “Sion” may be used of the

heavenly Church (Hebrews 12:22) and of the earthly Church (Romans 9:33; Romans 11:26; 1 Peter 2:6), so likewise “holy city” may be used of the heavenly Church (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 22:19) and of the earthly Church (Revelation 11:2). Why not allow the Scripture to interpret Scripture or the Book of Revelation to interpret the Book of Revelation in identifying “the holy city”, especially when the only two uses of “holy city” in the Book of Revelation are references to the Church of Jesus Christ?

(3) Problem #3. Carefully observe that historically neither the city of Jerusalem nor the temple was literally trampled underfoot by the Romans for a period of 42 months. I said earlier that I agreed that there was a siege set about Jerusalem for a period of 42 months, but besieging Jerusalem as opposed to trampling it underfoot is not the same thing. According to standard lexicons, the Greek word, *πατέω* (that is translated “tread underfoot” in Revelation 11:2), in its literal use does not mean to surround or to lay siege, but rather to trample upon, or to tread underfoot as in the other two uses of the same Greek word (*πατέω*) as found in the book of Revelation: Revelation 14:20; Revelation 19:15. What is prophesied then in Revelation 11:2 is not the PREPARATION to trample underfoot “the holy city” by way of a siege set around the city for 42 months (as is promoted by Preterists), but rather a real treading underfoot “the holy city” and the outer court of the temple by these profane “Gentiles” for a period of 42 months. In order to tread underfoot the literal city of Jerusalem and the literal outer court of the temple, the walls and the gates of the city had to be breached and the city occupied by the Roman legions (which did not happen until the 42 months had already expired). Thus, I submit once again that the Preterist position falls short of accurately understanding and interpreting the Word of God in this passage. As much as the Preterist alleges to see in Revelation 11:2 historical fulfillment in 70 a.d., it is not historical fulfillment, but rather historical contradiction.

(a) Though I do not have time presently to elaborate on this (but will seek to do so in a future sermon), I believe the period of time in which “the holy city” (i.e. the Visible Church of Christ on earth) will be trampled underfoot by the hostility, the seduction, the persecution, the idolatry, and the tyranny of the papacy and his harlot Church will be a figurative 42 months (which is equivalent to 1260 prophetic days or 1260 actual years—one day being equivalent to one year as in Daniel 9:24; Ezekiel 4:5-6).

(b) At the end of that period of 1260 years, the Lord Jesus Christ shall in His great power tread underfoot these very enemies of the Church (Revelation 19:15), will bind Satan for a figurative thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3), and will figuratively raise up his martyred and faithful witnesses who were downtrodden by Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Image of the Beast and they will live and reign with Christ for a figurative thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

(4) Problem #4. Revelation 11:2 states that only the outer court of the temple was to be given over to the “Gentiles” (rather than the Holy Place). However, historically in 70 a.d., both the outer court of the temple and the Holy Place were destroyed by the Romans. The Preterist cannot fit what is said in John vision (Revelation 11:2) with what happened historically in 70 a.d. Here again, having looked more closely at Revelation 11:2, I submit there is no ground for the Preterist to argue that this passage teaches that Jerusalem or the temple were still standing at the time that John penned these words of Scripture.

3. Very briefly, we now consider the two other passages that Preterists use to confirm their interpretation of Revelation 11:2. However, having already seen how Preterists have misinterpreted Revelation 11:2, we should expect that other passages they cite cannot be used to support that which has already been demonstrated to be in error.

a. First, let us consider **Revelation 11:8**: “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.”

(1) Is “the great city” where the two witnesses were slain a reference to the literal city of Jerusalem? I submit it is not, for when we turn to the several uses of this “great city” upon earth that is in view (Revelation 14:8; Revelation 16:19; Revelation 17:18; Revelation 18:10,16,18,19,21), it becomes clear what earthly city is in view. Consider especially what is said about this “great city” in Revelation 17:18: “And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” I submit this cannot be a reference to Jerusalem, but must be a reference to Rome which at the time of John’s writing did in fact reign over the kings of the earth.

(2) The Preterist seeks to understand this to mean that Jerusalem covenantally reigned over the kings of the earth. Where in God’s Word are there other places that teach that Jerusalem reigned over the kings of the earth covenantally. Certainly Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was (and still is) in covenant with God, but that covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel is not explained in Scripture as a reigning over those nations or their kings. Furthermore, this same “great city” in Revelation 17:18 is further identified in Revelation 17:9 as represented as “seven mountains”. Rome is historically the “great city” built on “seven hills”. Here the Harlot Church (or Mystery Babylon concerning which John speaks in Revelation 17) that was revealed to John will have her headquarters in that “great city” of the “seven mountains” that reigned over the kings of the earth at the time that John penned this prophecy. I submit this clearly identifies for us what “great city” is in view in Revelation 11:8. This “great city” of Rome (considered politically and ecclesiastically) wherein the two faithful witnesses of Christ are persecuted, slain and silenced in Revelation 11:8 is also FIGURATIVELY (not literally) described as Sodom for its immorality,

as Egypt for its tyranny and idolatry, and as Jerusalem for its persecution of Christ (and the faithful witnesses of Christ who when they are persecuted, Christ is persecuted, as in Acts 9:4 and Matthew 25:34-45). Thus, I submit that Revelation 11:8 does not reference the literal city of Jerusalem, and therefore adds no weight to the view of Preterists that the literal city of Jerusalem was still standing at the time John penned the Book of Revelation.

b. The second passage that Preterists turn to in order to confirm their view that Revelation 11:1-2 prophesies the literal destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is **Luke 21:24**: “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

(1) Although I would agree that Luke 21:24 prophesies the trampling underfoot (or destruction) of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., it must be noted that the words of Jesus clearly indicate that the trampling underfoot of Jerusalem by the Gentiles does not mean laying siege to the city for 42 literal months (as per the Preterists’ interpretation of Revelation 11:2).

(2) Note that Jesus speaks of the siege of Jerusalem in Luke 21:20 (“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”), but when the Lord speaks of the trampling underfoot of Jerusalem by the Gentiles in Luke 21:24, He speaks of the actual infiltration and occupation of Jerusalem when Jerusalem “falls by the edge of the sword” and is “led away captive into all nation”.

(3) Thus, the trampling underfoot of Jerusalem in Luke 21:24 (which refers to many being slain and led into captivity after the city was occupied) says something quite different from the Preterist’s interpretation of Revelation 11:2 (wherein they interpret Revelation 11:2 to mean that Jerusalem will be besieged for 42 months). Again, I submit

the interpretation of the Preterist falls short in seeking to demonstrate by way of internal evidence that the Book of Revelation was penned by John before 70 a.d.

Dear ones, from our study of Revelation 11:1-2, it should be clear to us how carefully we must watch over our hearts that we be not misled or deceived into false doctrine, corrupt worship, or tyrannical Church government. There are many who presently pushing the Manhattan Declaration which seeks to seduce Protestants into joining with Rome in promoting common causes, but does so at the expense of declaring that these Protestants and Rome share the same “gospel”. Likewise, dear ones, when Protestant Churches embrace the holy days of Rome, the worship of Rome, the Arminian doctrines of Rome in regard to justification by faith alone, the tradition of Rome as equal to Scripture, those Churches have headed down the path that leads to Rome and have in varying degrees drunk of the wine of Rome’s fornication. Let us be therefore be faithful unto death.

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