

Revelation 11:1-19

It is very clear that at this point in Revelation things dramatically turn toward Israel. This chapter contains three main themes: 1) The Temple in Jerusalem in the Tribulation (**11:1-2**); 2) The two prophets in Jerusalem in the Tribulation (**11:3-14**); 3) The seventh trumpet judgment in the Tribulation (**11:15-19**).

The first 14 verses of Revelation 11 are still part of the parenthesis between the second “woe” judgment and the third “woe” judgment. It is right at this point when the primary focal point of the Tribulation targets Israel and a key part of the events will be in Israel’s Temple.

Revelation 11:1-2

The Jerusalem Temple in the Tribulation

The most volatile, most valuable, and most vibrant acreage on the face of this earth is the 35 acres of land which comprise a rectangular platform in East Jerusalem on which the ancient Jewish Temple once stood.

It is predicted in both the O.T. and the N.T. that the Temple will once again stand and eventually occupy this amazing piece of property (Isaiah 2:2-3; Ezekiel 37:26-28, 40-48; Daniel 9:27; Micah 4:1-2; Haggai 2:7-9; Zechariah 6:12-15; 14:20; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; II Thessalonians 2:4).

I. The History of the Temple in Jerusalem

Fact #1 - In 996 B.C., King David made Jerusalem the capital of Israel and moved the ark of the covenant to a place near the Temple site (II Samuel 5:6-12; 6:1-17; I Chronicles 11:4-9; 15:1-16:38). By moving the ark to this spot means this spot was to be a place that was known to reverence God’s Word.

Fact #2 - In 993 B.C., King David desired to build a Temple for God in Jerusalem but was informed by God that his son, Solomon, would build the Temple (II Samuel 7:1-13; I Chron. 17:1-14).

Fact #3 - In 990 B.C., King David purchased the property for the first Temple site, which means Israel does legally own the land (II Sam. 24:18-25; I Chron. 21:18-26). David paid 600 shekels of gold for the property (I Chron. 21:25), which is about 240 ounces or 15 pounds of gold. At \$400 per ounce the value is \$96,000. **What this means is that Israel literally and legally owns this Temple acreage.**

Fact #4 - In 960 B.C., King David made complete preparations for the building of the Temple, prior to his death (I Chron. 22:14-16). He challenged the leaders to set their heart and soul on getting this project completed (I Chron. 22:17-19).

Fact #5 - In 950 B.C., King Solomon built the first Temple in Jerusalem (I Kings 5-8). He followed through on exactly what his father wanted him to do.

Fact #6 - In 586 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, invaded Jerusalem for the third time and destroyed the Temple via the Chaldeans who were servants of Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25:8-10; II Chron. 36:10,14-20; Jer. 18:5-12; 39:1-10). This occurred about 100 years after Isaiah was dead, and the reason why God allowed the Temple to be destroyed was because of Israel's disobedience to God's Word (Jer. 34:2-3, 17; 35:15).

Fact #7 - In 515 B.C., King Darius, the king of Persia, in harmony with a decree made by his forefather King Cyrus, allowed Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David, to rebuild the Temple, **thus establishing a second Temple in Jerusalem** (Ezra 1:1-4, 7; 4:1-2; 6:1-15 also see Nehemiah).

Fact #8 - In 20 B.C., King Herod (Herod the Great) oversaw a project to refurbish and expand the second Temple, due to the destruction that had been caused primarily by Antiochus Epiphanes in 169-167 B.C.. This was the Syrian who slaughtered a pig on the altar. This critical part of this reconstruction took 46 years until about A.D. 27 (John 2:20); however, the work of the Temple complex continued until about the year A.D. 63 (Matt. 24:1; Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5).

Fact #9 - In A.D. 29, Jesus Christ predicted that the second Temple would be destroyed . (Matt. 23:37-24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6, 20-24).

Fact #10 - In A.D. 70, Titus, the Roman General and son of Vespasian, literally and completely destroyed the second Temple. This was just 40 years after Christ's prediction and **to this very day a third Temple has not yet been rebuilt**. The only thing left of the second Temple is the western wall that surrounded the Temple and some tunnels which have been discovered underground.

II. The Measurement of the Temple in Revelation 11:1-2

It is very clear that by the time the Tribulation reaches this point, a third Temple is standing and is able to be measured. In these two verses, John obviously actually sees the Temple. There are two Temple actions to see in these verses:

Temple Action #1 - John is given a measuring rod. **11:1a-2**

The Greek word "measuring rod" (καλαμος) is one that refers to a surveyor's rule or a surveyor's measuring rod. It was a reed which grew in the Jordan valley in swampy areas and reached a height of 12-20 feet. This was a literal measuring object which, any living in John's time, would have been familiar.

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Temple Action #2 - John is given specific measurement commands . **11:1b-2**

There are two commands that John is given:

(Command #1) - John is commanded what he is to measure. **11:1b-d**

Measurement #1 - John is told to measure the Temple of God. **11:1b**

Measurement #2 - John is told to measure the sacrificial altar . **11:1c**

Measurement #3 - John is told to measure the people who worship. **11:1d**

(Command #2) - John is commanded what he is not to measure. **11:2**

John was not to measure the court outside the Temple because for 42 months or 3½ years this part and the “holy city” will be trampled. The “holy city” is Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:1; Isaiah 48:2; 52:1; Daniel 9:24-25; Matthew 27:53).

This measurement shows us that during the Tribulation, God lays claim to what is His and He is still in sovereign control even when His sacred property is under siege.

III. Contemporary Indications the Rebuilding of the Third Temple in Jerusalem is Near

This third Temple that John measures is not the same as the final New Jerusalem that will be built by Jesus Christ after the Millennium (Rev. 21:10-22). We believe that a third Temple will be rebuilt and will be standing during the Tribulation and we also believe this is very near. There are sixteen events which have occurred in our lifetime that would certainly lead us to this conclusion:

Event #1 - On June 8, 1967, during the “Six Day War,” the Israelis recaptured the Temple area and shortly after this a team of Jewish scholars carefully measured the dimensions of the spot where the Temple should be located.

Event #2 - On February 29, 1968, the original entrance to the Temple was discovered and tunnels used by Temple priests were found, making precise location possible.

Event #3 - On October 16, 1989, two priests dressed in priestly garments attempted to lay the cornerstone for the third Temple but were stopped due to protests. On the same day, *Time Magazine* ran an article which describes current preparations for rebuilding the third Temple titled “Time for a New Temple.” In this article two rabbis told *Time* that the third Temple could not be rebuilt until they could complete the sacrifice that would offer the ashes of a red heifer (Numbers 19:2).

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Event #4 - On October 8, 1990, twenty-thousand Jews assembled to lay a cornerstone for the third Temple a second time and were prevented by Arab protests.

Event #5 - On September 24, 1991, many Jews gathered for a third time to lay the cornerstone for the third Temple and were again prevented by Arab protests.

Event #6 - On March 1992, the exact location of the Temple is discovered by Temple Mount excavations indicating the time for rebuilding could be very near.

Event #7 - On February 11, 1996, “The Temple Mount” and “The Land of Israel Faithful Movement” conducted an international poll of Israelis of all ages to determine how many Jewish people all over the world were in favor of rebuilding a third Temple and 60 % believed the Temple should be built now.

Event #8 - Beginning in 1997, more Jews have migrated to Jerusalem than ever before in history and the majority have come from the United States where Jews have been living because they feel safe.

Event #9 - In the last years, detailed blueprints for the third Temple have been drawn by a team of rabbinical researchers, designers and craftsmen under the direction of Rabbi Yisrael Ariel. These blueprints have been computerized and computer visualizations of a third Temple have been produced. It has been estimated that this Temple could be completely rebuilt in 1½ to 2 years.

Event #10 - In March of 1997, Yassar Arafat was shown in a photograph which was distributed internationally by the Associated Press, holding an artists concept of the third rebuilt Temple and he told his people to “get ready for the next battle.”

Event #11 - In 1997, a red heifer was born in Israel for the first time in 2000 years. Ashes from a red heifer are needed for Temple worship (Numbers 19). Furthermore, other red heifers have been secured from Clyde Lott, a rancher from Mississippi. These have been approved by Israeli authorities for Temple use.

Event #12 - In the late 1990s, Israeli divers discovered a hillazon snail in the Red Sea that produces from its glands a rich blue color that meets the exact color requirements for the priestly garments (Exodus 28:31). Today in Jerusalem young Levite women are weaving priestly garments for the third Temple.

Event #13 - It has recently been discovered that Jewish men who claim to be descendants of Aaron, the priestly line for Temple ministry, carry an aberration of the “Y” chromosome which makes it possible to identify and separate these priests by DNA trace. It is now possible to physically genetically establish the priestly line needed for Temple worship.

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Event #14 - On October 13, 2004, a special ordination took place that ordained a new Sanhedrin of 71 of the most respected rabbis in Israel. This group will specifically oversee the rebuilding of the Temple.

Event #15 - On January 20, 2005, this new Sanhedrin specifically met to discuss the rebuilding of the third Temple. This reconvening of the Sanhedrin was the first time since A.D. 425 and was for the sole purpose of discussing this topic. Priests are being trained right now for Temple service.

Event #16 - In Qumran Cave #11, a clay vessel was found that contained oil that had solidified into a gelatin substance like molasses. It was wrapped in palm leaves and buried three feet deep in the ground. A scientific analysis of the contents revealed that it precisely matches the formula given by God to Moses in Exodus 30:23-26, 30-31. This oil is critical to anointing the Messiah in the Temple (Daniel 9:24). Two rabbis now have this in their possession and are ready to use it at Temple services.

All of these events indicate that the third Temple is on the verge of being rebuilt, which means things are taking shape for the events described here in **Revelation 11**.

Revelation 11:3-14

During the Great Tribulation many will come to faith in Jesus Christ. We know that 144,000 Jews will be sealed by God and no one will be able to harm them (Rev. 7:3-4). We also know that there will be two Jewish prophets who will be greatly used by God. These prophets will confront the world, these prophets will be killed, and these prophets will rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. **When these two ascend, the second “woe” judgment will be over and the worst “woe” judgment of all will eventually begin.** This will begin the time of Jacob’s Trouble, the time of the Antichrist, the time of worldwide Jewish persecution, and the time of Armageddon. These two prophets will operate during the first 3½ years of the Tribulation and when they are gone it signals a major emphasis on Israel.

We may draw a parallel from the visible rapture of these two prophets, to the Rapture of the Church. Both the Rapture of the Church and the rapture of these two Jewish prophets signal to the world that it is entering the time when God will pour out His worst judgments.

God will permit these two prophets to prophesy as His special witnesses just before the world is turned over to Satan and the Antichrist. There are eleven observations we may make about this:

Observation #1 - These two prophets are given authority from God. **11:3a**

The verb “I will grant” is future tense, which means when the Tribulation is underway God will grant them great authority. We know from 11:1-2 that the Temple will be in existence, either shortly before the Tribulation or shortly after the Rapture, and these two will play a prominent authoritative role in these events.

Observation #2 - The two prophets are God’s witnesses. **11:3b**

There are two sets of Jewish witnesses that operate during the Tribulation. The 144,000 take the Kingdom Gospel to the whole world and these two maintain their witness in the Temple of Jerusalem. It is very clear that God’s reason for their existence during this time is they are His witnesses. They will be proclaiming a clear Kingdom Gospel, not the Grace Age Gospel. The word “witness” (μαρτυρία) is one that means their job is to witness, testify, and give evidence of the truth pertaining to Jesus Christ and the work of God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 273).

Observation #3 - These two prophets have a time controlled ministry. **11:3c**

It is specifically stated that their prophetic ministry of proclaiming God’s truth will last for 1260 days or 3½ years. It is not specifically stated which 3½ year period of the Tribulation is in view. We believe their ministry is probably in the first 3½ year period. God will give these two prophets 3½ years to effectively minister for Him and then they will be killed.

- 1) After God saves someone they only have a certain amount of time to live.
- 2) No one dies until God ordains it.

Observation #4 - These two prophets have a humble ministry. **11:3d**

The idea of being “clothed in sackcloth” was critical Israeli imagery, especially in the O.T. economy. Sackcloth was made from goat or camel’s hair. It was used as a symbol of humility and mourning, especially in view of pending judgment. In Jonah’s day, when he preached to Nineveh that God was going to destroy it, the whole city humbled themselves before God and mourned being clothed in sackcloth (Jonah 3:5).

By these two prophets wearing this clothing there are at least three things we learn:

- 1) These prophets will not fit in with the affluent power-crazed leadership of the world.
- 2) These prophets will signal to the world and Israel that the Tribulation is a time of mourning and judgment.
- 3) These prophets illustrate that a powerful ministry is a very humble ministry.

Observation #5 - These two prophets stand out and shine out to this world. **11:4**

We may recall that during the Church Age the churches are the lampstands (Rev. 1:20). However, during the Tribulation these two prophets are the lampstands. Keep in mind that the Temple has been rebuilt and worship at the Temple has been restored, so these prophets will be a brilliant light reflection of God at this time. They will stand tall and shine bright for God.

In Zechariah 4:3-6, this imagery refers to two who are empowered by God’s Spirit, who represent God to this world (Zechariah 4:12-14). These two were critical in establishing Temple worship. They encourage the people to rebuild the Temple on the foundation laid in 536 B.C. some 15 years before by Zerubbabel (Zech. 4:9). Zechariah says it is time to finish this project. In the immediate context of Zechariah, the two witnesses were Joshua, the high priest (Zech. 3:8) and Zerubbabel, the governor. **These two in Zechariah are a prophetic prototype of the two prophets in Revelation.** Their prophetic ministry will also be connected to Temple matters.

One thing that we do not want to overlook is that these two witnesses are empowered by God, and are shining bright for God, and are accurately communicating the Truth of God, and they are hated by almost all the people in the world.

Observation #6 - These two prophets have Divine power to execute people. **11:5**

These two prophets have a unique power given to them by God to pronounce an instant death penalty on any who even desire to harm them. They actually are able to kill their enemies by unleashing a fire that instantly executes them.

This is a major contrast to the Age of Grace mindset in which God’s people are to turn the cheek and pray for those who spitefully use them and leave vengeance to God. During the first 3½ years many believers will be martyred, but not these two.

Observation #7 - These two prophets have Divine power to give cosmological judgments.
11:6

It is noteworthy to remember that John was an apostle and he recognizes the unique ability these two prophets would have. The ability to stop the rain, or turn water into blood, or smite the earth with plagues was not an ability John had or any in the Church Age have; it is a special power and authority that God will give to these two prophets during the Tribulation.

The power is such that they can smite the earth “as often as they desire.” These two are so empowered by God that God would let them pour out judgment whenever and wherever they desire. He will grant them this privilege “during the days of their prophesying.”

These signs they will perform will prove that their prophetic predictions about what is going to happen in the future are true. They will lay out the entire future program of God from the Tribulation, to the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem. They will prove they are telling the truth by these signs.

Observation #8 - These two prophets will be killed by the Antichrist . **11:7**

We are now introduced to a person identified as “the beast” (το θηριον). The word actually refers to one who is vicious, cunning, violent, who has an appetite to rip people to shreds. This beast, who we will fully meet in Revelation 13, comes out of the “abyss,” which means he is a special satanic and demonic person who has come right out of hell, the place where demons exist (Luke 8:31). This person is none other than the Antichrist (13:1; 14:9, 11). What I understand this to mean is that this is the point when a special Antichrist demon is released and takes up residency in the Antichrist, and when he does, things immediately begin to turn against Israel.

There are three facts brought out in this verse about what he will do to these two prophets:

(Fact #1) - He will make war with the prophets.

(Fact #2) - He will overcome the prophets.

(Fact #3) - He will kill the prophets.

All of this is under the sovereign control of the sovereign God. God does not permit any to touch these two prophets until this point, and He has a reason for this when He permits it. This becomes a key turning point in the Tribulation. Prior to this moment the Antichrist has been an ally of Israel, but this is the moment when everything changes.

Every believer is immortal until the work on earth is done.

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Observation #9 - These two prophets will not be buried. **11:8-10**

These two prophets will not receive a nice lavish funeral. In the aftermath of their death, there are four facts revealed:

(Fact #1) - Their dead bodies will lie in the street of Jerusalem. **11:8**

Now Jerusalem is often given metaphorical names to describe how sinful and corrupt the city is (i.e. Isaiah 1:1, 10). In this text, Jerusalem is given a metaphorical name of Sodom, which refers to perverted sex, and Egypt, which refers to idolatry and persecution of God's people, Israel.

At this point in the Tribulation the takeover of the Antichrist will turn the city into a headquarters of immorality and a headquarters of idolatry and persecution of God's people, Israel.

It is possible, in view of Daniel 11:37, that the Antichrist is in fact a homosexual, which would explain the reference to Sodom, and we know he will persecute Israel, which would explain the reference to Egypt.

(Fact #2) - Their dead bodies will be viewed by people all over the world. **11:9a**

For years this prediction baffled people because they did not know how it would be possible to actually view these dead bodies from various nations of the world. However, with the development of satellite TV and the Internet, this is no longer a baffling matter. People from all over the world will be able to tune in and see the dead bodies of these two prophets lying in the street of Jerusalem.

It could be that part of the prediction that these two prophets made was that they would rise up three days after they died. This would certainly prompt people all over the world to want to tune in and see if it would happen.

(Fact #3) - Their dead bodies will be viewed for 3½ days. **11:9b**

Obviously this is time controlled by God and the 3½ days are a prelude to the 3½ years in which God will permit the Antichrist to send his death judgment against Israel just before God raises up and restores the nation.

(Fact #4) - The world will have a party because these two prophets are dead. **11:10**

These two prophets heralded the truth of God and demonstrated it with power, and when they are killed the world will have almost a Christmas holiday and will exchange gifts and hold parties all over the world.

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This Christmas holiday, called by J. Vernon McGee “the Devil’s Christmas,” is not designed to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ but the death of two prophets related to Jesus Christ. This holiday shows the utter depravity of the Tribulation and the hatred that the world has for Israel, Jesus Christ, and any believer.

Dr. John Walvoord said, “A righteous prophet is always a torment to a wicked generation.” When one is accurately communicating God’s Truth, that one will be an offense to those who are not right with God.

We may expect that the closer we get to the Tribulation, the more the world and even Christmas will move toward party paganism.

Observation #10 - The two prophets will be raised and raptured . **11:11-12**

This will be a very impressive scene. God will give these two martyrs life again and they will stand up on their feet and a loud voice will utter the words, “Come up here,” which are the exact words John heard in Revelation 4:1. In front of everyone, these two will immediately ascend into heaven and all of their enemies will see it. This is slightly different than the Rapture of the Church that occurred “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (I Corinthians 15:52). This will be more of a gradual rapture.

Now we would naturally think that this would make the world a happier place because these two are now gone. But notice what happens in **verse 11**, “great fear fell upon those.” When the people of this world saw this happen they became greatly afraid.

This event will obviously remind the world of an event that occurred some 3½ years before this, the Rapture of the Church. Those who are left will remember that as soon as the Christians were raptured some very negative and judgmental things started happening.

It is obvious that these people are sensing this again. They are faced with the reality that God will do something terrible and horrible and they are afraid.

Observation #11 - The departure of the two prophets signals great destruction . **11:13-14**

At the time, in the same hour, that the two prophets ascend, a great “earthquake” from God will destroy one tenth of the city of Jerusalem and will kill 7000 people. What is prophetically interesting about this is that when John wrote Revelation, Jerusalem had been leveled by Titus in A.D. 70 and wasn’t even standing. So John was seeing the rebuilt Jerusalem, the very one you and I see today. This earthquake will inaugurate the destruction about to come upon Jerusalem. It is at this point, when Jewish people need to flee this part of the world.

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Now when these two prophets ascend via a voice from heaven and the earthquake hits Jerusalem, there will be a very positive effect in that the rest of the people in Jerusalem will glorify God. The noun “rest” has the article “the” with it which refers to the rest of the Jews in Jerusalem.

This will produce an evangelistic effect on Israel and, in my opinion, will be part of the process of regathering Israel. Many in Israel, at this point, realize the validity of what those two prophets have been proclaiming and at this 3½ point they glorify God.

Verse 14 ends by saying, this is the completion of the second “woe” and the third “woe,” which is the final and worst “woe,” is coming very quickly.

There have been two main views concerning the identity of the two prophets of Revelation 11.

(View #1) - These two are Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (II Kings 2:11), both of whom were raptured and did not die.

Tertullian, Irenaeus and Hippolytus took this position based on the fact that they believed it was necessary for all men to die (Hebrews 9:27) and so this would require that these two prophets who did not die return to earth to die.

One big problem with this is that it is not warranted to conclude that all must die. Obviously those alive at the Rapture will not die.

(View #2) - These two prophets are Moses and Elijah, both of whom appeared with Jesus Christ at His Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3).

This view is supported by the fact that these two prophets did these kinds of things. Elijah called down fire from heaven and shut off rain (II Kings 1:10; I Kings 17:1; James 5:17). Moses turned water into blood and struck the earth with plagues (Exodus 7:14–11:10). Elijah was raptured and there was something mysterious about Moses’ body (Deuteronomy 34:5-6; Jude 9). Based on this, plus the fact that these two showed up at the Transfiguration, many take the position that this is who they are.

The truth is we do not know because God does not name them in Revelation. We can assume that if God actually wanted us to know their names, He would have revealed them to us.