

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 11:1-14

Topic

The whole world celebrates the antichrist's killing of God's two witnesses by watching the events live from Jerusalem

Title

"BeastTube"

Introduction

I'm terrible at measuring things. No matter how many times I take a measurement, I'm off by a significant amount.

I sometimes confuse measurements. Like tablespoons and teaspoons.

Like the weekend Pam was gone on a women's retreat, and the kids were little - probably around 4 and 2. They had colds, and I was giving them their liquid meds every six hours.

Supposed to be a teaspoon - *not* a tablespoon.

Did you know that one tablespoon converts to three teaspoons? / *do now*. I thought, "Man, this medicine is really effective."

When I discovered my mistake, I called our pediatrician. He reassured me I had not killed them - not yet, anyway.

God properly employs a unit of measure in our text - a "reed like a measuring rod."

Must be quite a reed, because it gives the Lord both a physical **and** a spiritual measurement.

John is instructed to "measure the temple of God, the altar," but especially "those who worship there."

We might use the word *evaluate* in place of measure. God is going to evaluate the worshippers.

Do you ever think God evaluates your worship? He does; and it's a good thing.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 God Takes Your Measure As A Worshipper, and #2 God Takes Measures To Woo Your Worship.

#1 God Takes Your Measure As A Worshipper

(v1-10)

Wait a minute... *Where is this Temple John is told to measure?*

It is in Jerusalem, on the ancient site of the previous temples. At least, it's going to be there.

We are certain that there will be a Temple during the Tribulation:

- Daniel, in his prophecies regarding the Tribulation, often refers to a Temple, and to events that will take place there.
- Jesus, quoting Daniel, spoke of the Temple in the Tribulation.

Here is one thing Daniel said:

Dan 9:27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

Daniel was talking about the final seven years before the Second Coming of Jesus - what we call the Tribulation. Notice during that period there will be "sacrifice and offering." The Jews can't have sacrifice and offering unless they have their Temple.

"He" is the world leader we commonly call the antichrist. He will enter into a "covenant," a treaty, with "the many," the leaders of Israel, for "one week." It's a week of years, seven years, corresponding to the length of the Tribulation.

In the "middle of the week" the antichrist stops the Jews from worshipping and does something to desecrate the Temple. Jesus referred to this event as "the abomination of desolation."

Then Jesus said, in Matthew twenty-four, Jews will need to flee immediately for their lives as the antichrist mounts a satanically empowered campaign of attempted genocide against them.

Our verses in the Revelation give us a look at the worshippers in the Tribulation Temple prior to antichrist's campaign of carnage against them and the treading down of Jerusalem.

Rev 11:1 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.

When the Jews were delivered from four hundred years of bondage in Egypt, God instructed them to construct a moveable Tabernacle - a tent, really, the Tent of Meeting. It was a representation on earth of things that exist in the Temple in Heaven.

Since the Tabernacle there have been three permanent Temples:

1. Solomon built a magnificent Temple using his dad's blueprints. After Solomon's Temple was completed (First Kings 5-8), the Tabernacle was dismantled. It may have been stored in a room under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. There is some evidence that it may still lie there to this day. Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in the sixth century BC.
2. Upon their return to Jerusalem following seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the Jews built a modest Temple. It is called Zerubbabel's Temple after the governor of Israel at the time.
3. King Herod the Great transformed Zerubbabel's Temple into the huge structure we've all seen models of. It was the Temple that stood when Jesus was on the earth. It is sometimes called the second Temple, because it was a remodel. But because it was so elaborate, many label it the third Temple. It was destroyed by the Romans around 70AD.

As we've reported many times in our weekly prophecy segment, the Temple Institute in Israel is planning for the construction and the operation of a third (or fourth) Temple.

Most of the furniture and implements needed to get the Temple up and running are already available.

Rev 11:2 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.

The Jewish calendar is based on a thirty-day month. Forty-two months equals 1260 days, and is the same as three and one-half years.

This verse seems to be saying that Gentiles and Jews will have *kumbaya* for a time, co-existing in peace, but it will be followed by three and one-half years of Gentile persecution against Jews as Jerusalem is "tread... underfoot."

Daniel said the Jews would bring their sacrifices and offerings to this Temple. As they do, God will "measure... those who worship there."

They won't quite measure-up. How can I say that? When Jesus died on the Cross, God tore the veil that was hanging between the holy place and the holy of holies in Herod's Temple. He tore it from top to bottom to signify that the way to worship Him was by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.

Sacrifices and offerings in the Tribulation Temple give God no pleasure, and they do nothing for the Jew who offers them.

The rebuilt Temple will exert a powerful influence on ethnic Jews. So God sends them something even more powerful: the two witnesses.

Rev 11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

This must be the **first** three and one-half years of the Tribulation, because we're going to see the two witnesses killed, in Jerusalem, before the antichrist begins treading upon Jerusalem in a mad frenzy to exterminate the Jews.

For three and one-half years, the two witnesses are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world - but especially the Jews who are worshipping in the Temple.

Why do I say they have a special emphasis on the Jews?
Because of how their ministry is described in the next verse.

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

The description of the two witnesses as olive trees and lampstands has an Old Testament background. When Zerubbabel's Temple was built, God called Joshua (the high priest at the time) and Zerubbabel (the governor) His two olive trees and His two lampstands.

The Tribulation Temple will have a Menorah, with priests keeping its bowls of oil filled, and its wicks trimmed. It may be the one that is ready, at the Temple Institute, that you can see photos of on their website.

But the Tribulation Temple is not where God's presence will be.

This verse says to Jews, "You won't find YHWH in the Tribulation Temple, but you will find Him in Jesus, Whom My two olive trees, My two lampstands, are proclaiming."

God will validate the Jesus-message of the two witnesses:

Rev 11:5 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.

Rev 11:6 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.

These guys are definitely old school, reminiscent of the prophets in the Old Testament whom God sent to Israel.

Let's get into speculating as to who they are.

Zerubbabel and Joshua are sometimes suggested, since they were referred to in verse four. Not likely, however; there's no other reason to think it's them.

These may not be re-entry prophets at all. These could be two men alive as the Tribulation begins whom God calls and empowers as prophets.

The leading candidates among scholars are Elijah, Moses, and Enoch.

The main reason for thinking Enoch is one of the witnesses is that he never physically died. He prophesied before the global flood and was taken directly to Heaven in a rapture.

The argument for Enoch is that whoever the witnesses are, they cannot have died previously, because in Hebrews 9:27 we're told it is appointed unto men to die only once.

The words in Hebrews are a general principle, not a law. Lots of people died more than once. Everyone Jesus raised from the dead, during His ministry, died twice.

There is no compelling reason to think Enoch is one of the two witnesses.

Most commentators think Elijah is definitely one of them for the following reasons:

- His ministry was a great deal like the ministry of the two witnesses. He caused the rain to cease for a period of three and one-half years, and he called fire down from Heaven.
- It is specifically prophesied that Elijah will return before the end of the age (Malachi 4:5-6).
- Elijah had a unique conference with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17).

Some commentators think Moses is definitely one of the two witnesses for the following reasons:

- His ministry was a great deal like the ministry of these two witnesses. He could command plagues.
- God seemed to have a special purpose for the body of Moses that Satan wanted to defeat. In Jude verse nine you learn that Satan demanded Moses' body but God had Michael the archangel intervene.
- The enemies of Moses were destroyed by fire (Numbers 16:35).

- Moses was the other guy, with Elijah, at the unique conference with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The fact that, during the conference, Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about the future and the kingdom gives them the edge.

Rev 11:7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

Not exactly the retirement party the two witnesses might have had in mind.

This is the first mention of "the beast" in the Revelation. We'll see a lot more of him. He's the antichrist.

If he "ascends out of the bottomless pit," *how did he get there?*

Later in the Revelation we will see that the antichrist suffers a mortal wound, but returns to life. One commentary puts it like this:

... this incident will happen after his resurrection from the dead... he will come back from the Abyss by means of his resurrection by Satan. Along with his resurrection, the act of killing the two witnesses will provide another reason why mankind will worship him.

"Make war," "overcome," and "kill" indicate a prolonged campaign. He tries to kill them in various ways, but can't, until it's their time.

Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

It's Jerusalem, because that is "where... our Lord was crucified." But God, you recall, is measuring the Jews; He is evaluating them. Spiritually speaking, when He looks at them, He sees Sodom; He sees Egypt.

The rebuilt Temple, with its renewed sacrifices, is already an abomination to God before antichrist defiles it.

Imagine if God were to evaluate us and say we were Calvary Sodom; or Calvary Egypt.

Rev 11:9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

We've been talking mostly about the Jews. "Peoples, tongues, tribes, and nations" describe the rest of the world.

Don't overlook that people all over the world will "see their dead bodies." It's only been within my lifetime that the technology existed for everyone in the world to, potentially, see a live event at the same time. This is a tremendous prophecy that would have seemed ludicrous when John first uttered it.

Rev 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

It's a global holiday, a time of merriment rather than mourning. People all over the earth exchange gifts.

I wonder what the celebration will be called? I wonder what the Google banner will be those few days? #deadprophetsociety.

Did the two prophets really "torment those who dwell on the earth?" It seemed like torment to nonbelievers who refused to repent, and tried to harm them.

How sad that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, based as it is upon the love of God proven at the Cross of Calvary, could be considered torment.

God measures worshippers. That means He measures **you**. He measures **me**. He measures **us**.

What is His standard? I suggest it is what Jesus called the great commandment:

Mat 22:37 ... 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Mat 22:39 And the second is like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Before you feel bad, because you don't measure-up, *remember that no one measures up.*

Only one person, in the whole history of our race, has been able to measure-up. Jesus loved the Lord His God with all His heart, with all His soul, and with all His mind. Jesus loved His neighbor as Himself.

Should we throw in the towel? Hardly. Jesus gifted us with the Holy Spirit, to live inside of us, to empower us, to do with God what is impossible for us as men and women without Him.

God doesn't measure us to show us how far short we fall. He measures us to show us where we are going, because He that has begun this good work in us - of making us more like Jesus - will complete it.

#2 God Takes Measures To Woo Your Worship

(v11-14)

In the concluding film to the Lord of the Rings Trilogy, *The Return of the King*, when Aragorn suggests that the armies of men march against the gates of Mordor, Gimli utters his famous line, "Certainty of death, small chance of success - *What are we waiting for?!*"

It could be the battle cry for most of God's prophets. It only goes to show the incredible lengths God will go to in order to woo worshippers.

Rev 11:11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

For three-and-one-half years the two witnesses had been preaching about the resurrected Savior of the world and Messiah of Israel. Just as He had been raised from the dead after three-and-one-half days, so were they.

"Those who saw them" were the whole world. **The whole world was watching.**

What's the most incredible, mind-blowing thing you've ever seen happen live, on TV?

For me it would have to be the second plane flying into the South Tower, World Trade Center 2. It was unforgettable; incredible; almost surreal, yet only too disturbingly real.

The resurrection of the two witnesses will reverberate around the globe. It will produce "great fear."

Rev 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

It's just my own speculation, but I think they hear the voice **audibly**, coming from Heaven - *not* through their TV's or smart phones or tablets. God leaves no doubt that the two are His witnesses, and that they have ascended alive into Heaven, having been miraculously raised from the dead.

"Their enemies saw them." Some men fear, but remain "enemies" of the two witnesses and, therefore, enemies of God.

Rev 11:13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

When disasters strike, we expect statistics. We want to know the damage in billions of dollars. We want to know what percentage of the fire is contained.

This great earthquake will claim "a tenth of the city." The tenth, or the *tithe*, was what God had received from His people going all the way back to Abraham.

A Jew, hearing that a "tenth" had fallen, would think God had taken what was due Him.

Having said that, we want to be careful ascribing disasters to God. I'm not saying God can't, won't, or doesn't bring certain tragedies to bear.

I'm saying **our** response ought to be compassion upon the survivors in order to share Christ with them.

Commentators are split on whether or not the "rest" who were "afraid" get saved.

I lean towards, "*Yeah, sure they do!*", mostly because the phrase, "and gave glory to God," is pretty strong. It's way more than an acknowledgement that God exists. Other places it is used, this phrase definitely means that the people giving God the glory were believers.

God goes to extreme measures in order to woo His enemies on the earth - both Jews and Gentiles. He permits the antichrist to overcome and kill His two witnesses, in order that their resurrection from the dead might be the thing that opens blind eyes and draws men by grace to faith in Jesus Christ.

Rev 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

The "third woe" is the blowing of the seventh trumpet. It will reveal the pouring out, upon the earth, of seven bowls of the wrath of God, in rapid succession, covering the final three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation.

As the Tribulation intensifies, so do God's efforts to save the Jews, and the inhabitants of the earth.

Yes, the judgments of the seventh trumpet will be severe - like the world has never known.

But in His wrath, God remembers mercy. The Tribulation is the grace of wrath.

God has always been, and will continue to, seek worshippers. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

If you are a believer, He sought you out. He saved you. Let Him measure your worship. Repent of any regress. Be refilled and refreshed by His Spirit to make progress.

If you're not a believer, **today you can be saved.** God's grace is showing you Jesus, lifted up on the Cross to draw you to salvation.

Decide if you will remain God's enemy; or give Him glory.