The Book of Revelation

Zanesville, OH | Wednesday/Sunday Bible Study

**Chapter 11**

* **11:1-2– Measuring the Temple**
  + **Verse 1**– John, conducting his prophetic role, is told to measure the temple of God. John’s commission at the end of chapter 10 was essentially identical to that of Ezekiel in Ezek. 2:8-3:3. Continuing the Ezekiel allusions, John does something similar like that which unfolds in Ezek. 40-48 which is the primary background for the understanding of 11:1-2.
  + In that latter portion of Ezekiel, Ezekiel observes a man with a measuring rod similar to what John is wielding and he is measuring the temple of God, the walls and all its entities. Many people understand this as the physical Herodian temple of Jesus’ day but that does not fit with the context of Revelation nor the message of Ezekiel.
  + The temple prophesied in that latter part of Ezekiel is clearly a spiritual temple to be established during the days of the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom. Thus the temple here is none other than Christ’s body, that is, the church which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22-23).
  + In the OT, the temple was always understood as the place where God’s presence dwelt in order that He could be among His people (1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chron. 5:11-14). The same is also true for its predecessor, the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38).
  + In keeping with that very idea, the temple here refers to God’s presence among His people and accordingly in the NT, the temple was the church (Ezek. 43:1-9; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5).
  + This conclusion is rooted in the reality that Christ Himself is the true temple and everyone who follows Him faithfully becomes a part of the temple of God (Jn. 1:14; 2:19-22; Rev. 21:22). God dwells among men in the church because of Christ’s sacrifice (5:9-10).
  + The altar is also supposed to be measured by John as well. This is the same altar of 6:9-11 and 8:3-4. Given that in these instances the saints are said to be associated with the altar, this is further support that the temple is the church and not a literal structure.
  + But its importance deals with the fact that Christ’s sacrifice has made people to become a kingdom and priests to God forever (cf. Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Borrowing illustrations from the OT priests, Christians are pictured in a metaphorical way as ministering and testifying on behalf of God with the altar imagery.
  + Having understood what the temple and the altar represent, what does it means that John must measure it? In Ezekiel’s use of the term, it referred to God’s spiritual protection against evil and wicked forces but in particular wicked priests and idol worship (cf. Ezek. 44:6-10).
  + Thus, John’s measuring is similar. To measure the temple and the altar is to connote God’s spiritual protection for His faithful disciples who worship Him and are persevering witnesses in the midst of evil and idolatry. It is essentially one and the same as the sealing of 7:1-8 (cf. Rev. 3:10).
  + **Verse 2**– The court outside the temple which is not measured is best understood as God’s people who will be persecuted and killed by God’s enemies (cf. Rev. 2:10, 13; 13:7, 16-17). The outer court is directly related to the “holy city” which is another way of describing God’s people (Heb. 12:18-23; Rev. 21:2, 10, 23).
  + The word “nations” is indicative of the enemies of God and “outsiders” who hate God and His people and they seek to rid themselves of anything associated with holiness at all costs. This is seen in the sixth seal as well as later in chapter 13 where all the earth is pictured as worshipping the beast.
  + The holy city will be trod underfoot for a period of 42 months. This seems to be the identical to the phrase: “time, times and half a time” and also the “1,260 days” which occur later in the book (11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5-6). These descriptions are taken from Daniel which speak of tribulation to come (Dan. 7:25; 12:7, 11-12).
  + With that in mind, this figurative time period relates to an extended but finite period of physical suffering and persecution for the people of God but they are spiritually protected (cf. Rev. 3:10; 7:1-8; 11:1). It is best to think of vv. 1-2 in the words of Jesus in Matt. 10:28. The body (outer court) may be affected but He is in control of the soul (temple, altar).
  + These 42 months are still relatable to the time we are now living in. As long as God wills that human history keeps going, so too the church must continue to persevere and suffer at the same time. This time will come to an end when Jesus returns.
  + Additionally the 42-month figure may be used here as a reference to Elijah’s ministry (1 Kings 17; 18:1; Lk. 4:25; Jam. 5:17) but more so of Jesus’ ministry which lasted approximately the same time.
  + Like Christ, the saints are to minister and proclaim the word but they will be persecuted and even killed like their Lord (Jn. 15:20). But just as Jesus was raised from the dead to life and the glorious seat in Heaven, so too will the persevering saints be kept from eternal punishment (Jn. 11:25-26).