

The Book of Revelation
Revelation 11:1-14 (NIV)
“The Measurement, Messengers, and The Miraculous”

Introduction

Then I was given a measuring reed like a rod, with these words: “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count those who worship there. But exclude the courtyard outside the temple. Don’t measure it, because it is given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for 1,260 days, dressed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone wants to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and consumes their enemies; if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. They have authority to close up the sky so that it does not rain during the days of their prophecy. They also have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every plague whenever they want.

When they finish their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war on them, conquer them, and kill them. Their dead bodies will lie in the main street of the great city, which figuratively is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And some of the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will view their bodies for three and a half days and not permit their bodies to be put into a tomb. Those who live on the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and send gifts to one another because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.”

But after three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet. Great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” They went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies watched them. At that moment a violent earthquake took place, a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake. The survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe has passed. Take note: The third woe is coming soon.

Many have attempted to explain the events that occur in this the **Eleventh Chapter of Revelation** as symbolic, rather than literal in nature. I believe that to be a mistake. The happenings that are described here are meant to portray actual literal events that will take place during the Great Tribulation period. The text here is far too specific to allow us to presume otherwise. It should also be noted that these things are a continuation of the narrative of **Chapter Ten** and are also placed within the context of the “great pause” between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgment.

Also as a continuation of **Chapter Ten**, John is being included as a participant in the events that are taking place. First he was given the scroll by the “might angel” and here in this portion of the text, we see him being given a measuring rod with instructions to go and measure the temple in Jerusalem.

After John is given the little scroll in **Revelation 10:10**, even more of the things that are to take place during three three and one half year period known as the “Great Tribulation” are revealed to him. He is instructed to measure the temple in **vs. 1**. This is possibly why the scroll tasted so sweet to John when he ate it. It would have been great news to John to find out that the temple had been rebuilt, (It had been destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, approximately 20 years prior to John writing *Revelation*.) but the events that are set to follow the reconstruction of the temple would also explain why the scroll upset his stomach in **Revelation 10:10**. When we learn of all that will take place during the tribulation period it is unsettling to us as well. But the sweetness of knowing that in the end, God will set all things right is most definitely an encouragement for the Believer. So let us take a look at what John saw as we study the events of **the first 14 verses of Revelation 11**: the *Measure*, the *Messengers*, and the *Miraculous*.

The Measurement (vs. 1-2)

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers." **Rev. 11:1**

Since John is told to measure the temple, but no measurements are given, we assume it is not its size that God was interested in, but rather its content. The word used here for temple is referring to the inner parts of the structure, where only Jews were allowed to go. For thousands of years, the nation of Israel has been trampled on by Gentiles. Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and even now Muslims occupy the very site of the temple with their abominable Dome of the Rock, the place where they claim Mohammad ascended into heaven. None of these Gentiles have any place on the hill where Abraham offered up his son, Isaac, to God in **Genesis 22**. They are trespassers.

John was given instruction to measure the portion of the temple where only Jews belong as a symbolic gesture from God to declare that the times of the Gentiles that Jesus spoke of in **Luke 21:24** are finally at an end. At this time God will turn His attention to the salvation of the remnant of Israel as He has promised to do throughout scripture (**Zechariah 13:8-9; Romans 11:25-26**). This passage is also proof of the rapture of the church, because the Jews are being singled out. In the church, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (**Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 2:14-16**). There are many Gentiles who will be saved during the tribulation, but in this passage God is focused solely on the nation of Israel.

There is, of course, more than one interpretation as to why John was given a rod to measure out the Jewish portion of the temple. Some say that the use of a "rod" in Scripture refers to God's judgment, and therefore, in this context, it is meant to convey God's displeasure upon the nation of Israel. I however do not see it this way.

I believe that the reason for this measurement is to separate out the remnant of Israel that will turn to Christ and be saved. The word for "rod" in the text describes a kind of reed that grew long and straight making it a perfect specimen for measuring. But the fragile nature of this material would not serve well as a chastening rod. I also believe that the separation of the remnant of Israel is in view here, for at the end of this chapter, we see many who will "give glory to God" while other non-believers are destroyed.

The Apostle Paul has told us that when the times of the Gentiles have ended, the nation of Israel will in fact turn to Christ and be saved.

I don't want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Romans 11:25-27

So in context with both this Scripture, as well as, the writings of Paul (and **Zechariah 12**), I am convinced that John's prophetic "measuring" is to mark those who will reject the anti-christ and turn from their sin to embrace Jesus Christ!

As I stated earlier in the introduction, it must have pleased John to learn that his beloved temple would be rebuilt, as it had been destroyed some 20 years prior. There are five temples listed in scripture: Solomon's temple, which was destroyed by the Babylonians; Zerubbabel's temple, which was destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes; and Herod's temple, which was destroyed by Emperor Titus during John's lifetime. The fourth temple is the one John was commanded to measure. This fourth temple will be built by the Jews under the protection of the anti-christ. But after this, He will then break his deal with Israel at the midpoint of the Tribulation when he sets up an image of himself to be worshipped (**Daniel 9:27**). The fifth and final temple will be built by Christ Himself, when He comes to establish His millennial kingdom (**Ezekiel 40-48; Zechariah 6:12-14**), but for now John is compelled to tell us about the horrific events that will transpire during the last 42 months (3 1/5 years) of the fourth temple.

The Messengers (vs. 3-10)

“And I will appoint My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days (3 1/5 years), clothed in sackcloth.” **Rev. 11:3**

During the days of the great Tribulation God will raise up two special prophets to proclaim His truth and judgment. They will be dressed in sackcloth, a scratchy, heavy, material which is symbolic of mourning and great despair. They will be full of the Holy Spirit, which is referenced by the olive trees and lamp stands. Oil (olive oil) and fire are symbolic of the Holy Spirit. This reference in **vs. 4** is very similar to the descriptions given of Zerubbabel and Joshua in **Zechariah 4:2-6**, when they were commissioned to rebuild the temple after the Babylonian exile.

Oil from the olive tree was used as fuel for the lamps of God’s Tabernacle. So the image here is a perpetual burning of God’s glory and truth. These witnesses are “fueled” by The Spirit and will become a burning beacon for the hope of the gospel during these treacherous times. And as such, they will be unrelenting in their preaching. Some have even speculated that the 144,000 Jewish evangelists mentioned in Revelation Chapter 7 will come to Christ as a result of the preaching of these two witnesses.

Many scholars have speculated on the identity of these two men. Mostly because of the prophesy given in **Malachi 4:5** which says Elijah will return to earth in the last days before the coming of the Messiah. Many thought that John the Baptist was Elijah (**John 1:21**), when he came as the forerunner of Christ. In holding with this tradition, many people believe that the 2 prophets in *Revelation* are Moses and Elijah. Some of the arguments made for this claim are: They both appeared with Jesus together at His transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-3**); and the miracles which they perform (i.e.-fire consuming their enemies, stopping the rain, and various plagues) are all things Moses and Elijah did. Yet another reason is from the Passover meal, when Jews always set a place for Elijah to come and prepare the way for the Messiah.

I personally believe that Elijah is definitely one of these witnesses, but the passage of scripture in **Hebrews 9:27 (KJV), and as it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment**, leads me to believe that second messenger could “possibly” be Enoch (**Genesis 5:24**). We know Enoch was a prophet, (**Jude 14**) and like Elijah, he is the only other man in history who never died. God miraculously transported both Enoch and Elijah to heaven. According to **Hebrews 9:27**, they both are owed a visit from the death angel. This is just my own personal theory, for what it’s worth. Either way, I feel that this is not a hill worth dying. If God had wanted to know the answer, He would have simply revealed it to us.

Those who believe that the second messenger is Moses also point to the fact that when Moses died, His body was taken and secretly hidden away by God Himself (**Deuteronomy 34:5-6**). And according to the book of **Jude**, Satan desired to possess Moses’ body in the worst way for some reason that is presently unknown to us (**Jude vs.9**). So I must concede that Moses *could* very well be the second messenger. But since we have not been given the exact identification of these witnesses, all we can do at this point is to speculate as to their identity. The important thing to remember is that God will send two powerful preachers to the nation of Israel, and their unrelenting message will have an effect upon the entire world. Many will believe and turn to Christ, while the majority of this world will despise these men with a hatred that can only be described as demonic.

These two preachers will be immortal on this earth, until their foreordained task has been fully accomplished. Many will try to assassinate them, but all who try will be consumed by fire until they will finally be martyred by the anti-christ as the the world cheers him on. The wicked of this earth will declare a worldwide celebration, when these prophets of God are slain. They will celebrate their deaths as we would normally celebrate Christmas, sending gifts to one another in honor of these preachers’ demise. How wicked this world has, and shall continue to, become under the influence of the evil deceiver! But as the famous author, Mark Twain, once said, when it was rumored that he had died, “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.”

The Miraculous (vs. 11-14)

But after three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Revelation 11:11

The two witnesses will be despised by the world for exposing this world's sin and demanding repentance. Can you imagine in our modern society of political correctness what will happen when these two prophets begin to condemn the world and then consume with fire any who try to stop them? A fallen world will watch with fury on world wide television, reviling these men for the message they bring. After all, we live in the so called "enlightened times", when good is called evil, and evil is honored. Most people these days tend to gravitate toward preachers like Joel Osteen, who regularly hand out "feel good talks" designed to sooth the listeners' itching ears. But the world isn't very tolerant of hellfire and brimstone sermons that warn of the need for repentance. God, however, is unchanging. There can be no salvation apart from repentance. And just as the world hated Christ, it will despise these two prophets of God.

After their appointed time has ended, God will allow these men to be martyred by the anti-christ (**vs.7**). The world so despises these men that they will be left to rot in the streets as everyone celebrates and sends gifts to each other to commemorate the death of God's prophets. Talk about depravity! Some have called this a Hell's Christmas. But the celebration will not last long. God will miraculously bring these men back to life and lift them up to heaven as a terrified world looks on.

When this particular Scripture was written, it would have been impossible for the "whole world" to witness such an event simultaneously. In fact, many early skeptics used verses such as these to try and discredit *The Bible*. They were wrong, for we serve a God Who knows all that is going to happen in the future. And now, thanks to modern technological advances, we know firsthand that this is not only possible, but likely. News agencies world-wide will cover the death of these men in real time. They will have remote reporters on location in Jerusalem to report on the people's reaction. The slaughter of these men will be a hot news story with ratings going through the roof. And then, to the shock of everyone, these men will stand to their feet and be called up to heaven, in full view of the entire world at once!

The ground will begin to shake violently as these men rise from the dead, and seven thousand "rejoicing partiers" will be slain simultaneously. The literal Greek reads "*seven thousand names of men were killed*". I believe that this is a reference to world political leaders who are loyal to the anti-christ, thus their distinction as "named individuals". The anti-christ will murder two of God's men, and God will retaliate with the deaths of seven thousand of the anti-christ's men. I am reminded here of the Scripture in ***Psalms 116:15. "Precious in the sight of The LORD is the death of His faithful servants."***

Upon the resurrection of these mighty servants of The Holy One of Israel, the gift-giving festivities will cease. But many will tremble in fear of The LORD and receive the gift of salvation (**vs. 13b**). And I am convinced that it is these believers, whom John had measured out at the beginning of the chapter! They represent The Remnant of Israel that shall be saved out of the Great Tribulation. It is worth mentioning that the only time the word "rejoicing" is used in this entire book is in this passage upon the death of these two holy men! But the world's rejoicing will be turned to terror, when they see first hand that death is by no means the end for the child of God. But some shall come to faith, and for them this will be a time of deliverance. The Prophet Jeremiah tells us of this terrible time of both judgment and redemption.

"How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but He will be saved out of it." ***Jeremiah 30:7***

For those who turn to faith in Christ shall overcome, just as these two faithful martyrs. For The LORD Himself has said:

"I AM the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" ***John 11:25-26***

Truth!!!