

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

# 2020

## DECEMBER

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## INTERPRETATION TOOLS FOR THE BOOK OF REVELATION

It may be timely to remind ourselves of the brief guidelines set out in the 2020 syllabus when we began our study in October 2019, and amplify them to suit the specific challenges of this book that is like no other in the world—even within Biblical prophecy.

One aspect is John's unique grammar, word order, word choice, and style, used e.g. for emphasis, or to allude to Old Testament expressions; or it may be, as some scholars have thought, registering the effect on himself of such a succession of unearthly scenes, fearful judgements, and heavenly joys; and to impress the importance of those revelations upon his readers.

1. What did the text mean to the author, and his first readers, in the political and church conditions of their times?
2. Where does other Scripture shed light on its themes?
3. Are Bible-wide truths expressed differently in some passages because world conditions have radically changed; or because the new earth and heavens are in view?

4. In this year's study we have observed that there are series of judgements that overlap, because the events of the seals, trumpets, 'woes', and bowls or cups are related (as also in Matthew 24-25); with interludes that pictorially summarise earlier ages or future events, yielding insights not found elsewhere in Scripture—and mercifully, some that are, which are like keys to unlock the others.

5. Are we maintaining consistency in distinguishing symbolic, or pictorial description from literal?

6. Let's personally keep an eye on any application to our own spiritual and practical service today. Our aim in this magazine, however, is mainly to work out what the Bible actually says and means, rather than exhort one another.

May God bless our fellow-students for encouraging us in searching the living Word, Paul and Betty Whitehouse for preparing scripts, publisher Kevin and helpers at Hayes Press, and agents who take orders and distribute in the churches and beyond.

*M.A.*

## *From Study Groups . . .*

### THE TWO WITNESSES AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET (Revelation 11)

**From Aberkenfig:** *The temple measured, but not the outer court* John continues this interlude of his vision by recording that he was handed a measuring rod and ordered to measure the temple. We might ask, 'Which temple?' The temple in Jerusalem had been levelled to the ground some 25 years earlier (in AD 70) by the Romans. We can get some help from the words of the Lord spoken in Matthew 24:15-26 and elaborated by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. The man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, who opposes God and exalts himself above every object of worship, takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Thus we conclude that the temple will be rebuilt during the first half of the seven-year period, and worship will have recommenced before the antichrist exalts himself. The rod—with which John was to measure the temple—was an implement used in construction, and the temple will be built during a time of unparalleled global tension, i.e. the Tribulation. [Cp. Mount Forest paper and Comment 7.]

The reason that he was told to leave the outer court out of his measurements is that this area was the closest, allowed by law, that the non-Jew could get within the temple building. (See Acts 21:28 where Paul was set upon by a mob seeking to kill him.) The outer court (the Court of the Gentiles) was of larger dimensions than the inner court, because there would be more worshippers here than in the inner. John could count a smaller number more easily, but this does not give a viable solution to the question, 'Why are the Gentiles segregated in this way?' Perhaps in the purposes of God, He could have been demonstrating His sovereign will. Plaques may have been displayed showing certain death for those non-Jews who violated this rule. God can and does work out His plan with fewer numbers [Comment 1].

*The two witnesses' purpose* Scripture is silent as to who exactly were the two witnesses seen by John. It is more important to understand their purpose. They witnessed for forty-two months clothed in sackcloth—the garb of mourning. Warnings are given with terrifying consequences to anyone seeking to harm them. Their mission is God-given, so invulnerable and unstoppable were they for their ministries. God then permits the Beast from the abyss to kill them. They have accomplished their work, God lifting His protecting hand. However, they are not allowed a decent burial, but utter contempt is demonstrated by the whole world: their bodies left in the street in revenge for the torment by these two witnesses. This is an utter affront to the Jewish culture which demands a quick yet dignified burial. The mockery, merriment and gift-giving is brought to a swift end. God is in

control and raises them to life again after the three and a half days (11:11). Dread will fill the mockers as the dead prophets leap to their feet, then answering the invitation to ascend to heaven. Would their enemies have heard that loud voice giving that invitation? They would have heard the great earthquake and witnessed the devastation of the city and the 7,000 killed. Interestingly, we read of no enemies seeing the Lord ascend to heaven, whilst this ascension of the two prophets is a public event. We are told that the rest were affrighted and gave glory to God.

*Seventh trumpet and seventh bowl* There will be an even greater earthquake when the seventh bowl is poured out, as revealed in 16:18-20. Prior to this, the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and we are at the time of the third woe. This is the most serious time in all the judgements leading to the culmination of God's wrath (v.18) to avenge Himself and His people. To be angry with the Almighty is the ultimate insult and tragedy of human arrogance. We are reminded of the words in Psalm 2: 4-5, 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.' The reverse of this is the praise that ascends to God from the 'great voices in heaven' together with the worship of the prostrating elders. Revelation 11:14-19 reflects the various aspects of Chapters 12-19.

*Bill Paterson*

**From Buckhaven:** John was given a reed like a rod and told to measure the temple of God, the sanctuary (*naos*), the altar and the worshippers [cp. Comment 7]. The altar—the place of sacrifice—is central to the house of God. A literal temple will be rebuilt by devout Jews, who will reinstate sacrificial worship and the Aaronic priesthood.

From Tabernacle to Millennial Temple God always gives the exact dimensions of His dwelling place. It is an open question, however, whether God will fully own this house, since Israel will not yet have repented for crucifying the Lord of glory. The dimensions of His spiritual house today are given in Acts 2:41-42.

The two witnesses come upon the scene suddenly as preachers of righteousness, having great spiritual gift. Their ministry takes place in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. Their designation as 'the two olive trees' and 'two lampstands' (v. 4) speaks of the Holy Spirit (cp. Zech. 4:3). They are clothed in sackcloth—suggestive of mourning for the solemn message of coming judgement. From Malachi 4:4-5 we learn that one of the witnesses is the prophet Elijah [Comment 2]. The other is very possibly Moses, representing the law, who with the rod of God laid Egypt low [Comment 3]. They have power to bring down judgement, withhold rain and turn water into blood. For the duration of their brief ministry no-one can stop them. When their work is done, the Beast makes war

against them, and their bodies lie dead in the city 'where also their Lord was crucified' (RV). (Jerusalem's designation as 'Sodom and Egypt' in verse 8 describes extensive depravity.)

There will be no Jewish burial. Their bodies are left lying in the street and cause great rejoicing because the Beast's devotees are rid of their powerful ministry. This will be seen worldwide. At the end of three and half days God breathes life into them again, causing terror among men. A great voice is heard: 'Come up hither' (v. 12), and they ascend in a cloud seen by all mankind. A great earthquake then destroys 7,000 people—a tenth of the population, the only mention of one tenth in Revelation [Comment 4]. This event brings such fear upon men that they give glory to the God of heaven (v.13).

There is an interval between the sixth and the seventh trumpet. With the sounding of the seventh, loud voices (the heavenly host? [—it would seem so—*Eds.*]) give glory to God saying, 'the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ' (v.15). The Beast's world domination is destroyed. The twenty-four elders (7:11) worship Almighty God, who 'is' and who always 'was'. The eternal God takes power by sovereign decree. The anger of the nations (v.18) shows how grave things truly are. God's righteous anger is kindled in vengeance against His enemies. It is also a time of reward for prophets, saints and those who reverence God.

The heavenly sanctuary (v.19) is a wonderful backcloth for the revelation of the Lord of glory, who returns to establish His kingdom and bring Israel back into favour. God is a covenant-keeping God and will fulfil His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

*Martin Notman*

**From Cromer:** *Measuring the temple* In Revelation 11:1-2 John the apostle is given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple, but not the outer court, because it has been given to the Gentiles. Recent studies of the temple mound have suggested that the present Islamic shrine called the Dome of the Rock is sited on the outer court, and not on the original temple site, which is a short distance away. So in theory it would be possible for the temple to be rebuilt today, without the destruction of the Dome of the Rock. What we do know is that the temple will be rebuilt and sacrifices will be resumed by the time Daniel's seventieth week commences.

*The two witnesses* These two witnesses appear suddenly on the page of Scripture. Their task is to prophesy to the people in Jerusalem for 1260 days or three and a half years, which is the second half of Daniel's 70th week. They are reminiscent of the two olive trees in Zechariah 4 who are Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. These two men were Spirit-enabled to carry out their tasks at that time.

In Revelation 11 the two witnesses are also Spirit-enabled. If anyone tries to harm them fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies, and they are able to shut up the sky so it will not rain during the time they are prophesying. They can turn the waters to blood and strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they desire (Rev. 11:5-6). The eyes of the world's media will be upon them (Rev. 11:9-10). The miracles the witnesses perform remind us of Moses and Elijah, and such they could be, although Scripture does not say that [cp. Comments 2 and 3].

*The seventh angel sounds the trumpet* This marks the beginning of the third woe, which will be inflicted upon those living on earth. There are voices in heaven which say 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever' (v.15, ESV). Upon this announcement the twenty-four elders bow down and worship God, God's temple is opened, and the ark of the covenant is visible. The ark in heaven, like the ark that was placed in the tabernacle and later the temple, is a reminder of the presence and power of God, and that He keeps covenant with His people. Verses 15-19 announce the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ on earth. It is the fulfilment of the prayer the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Mat. 6:10).

*John Parker*

**From Greenock:** At the beginning of 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ', the author calls himself 'His servant, John' (1:1 NKJV), and we have reason to believe this was the apostle. How much nearer to the apocalyptic events of which he wrote are we today, which may be fulfilled in the not-too-distant future? If those times appear to be near at hand then the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Rapture is nearer still. It is evident to Bible students that current events in the world today are leading ever onward to God's appointed time for His climactic purposes to be fulfilled. God is watching over His word to fulfil it; the zeal of the LORD of hosts will prove that all His word is true and will be accomplished.

How precise God is in all His works—in creation, in the garden of Eden, in the measurements of Noah's ark (which experts agree are the correct proportions for such a vessel), in the measurements of the tabernacle, and in the crowning glory of His creation of man and woman made in His own image! The garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, the Temple, Mount Zion were all copies and shadows of heavenly things. John saw the temple of God opened in heaven and the ark of the covenant is seen in it (11:19). When God created the earth, He used heaven as a template, a pattern, to make a 'heaven' upon earth. Nor is the eternal God limited by time. He patiently waits till the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to earth. If Moses is one of the two witnesses, he will see the city of Jerusalem for the first time, in the country that he journeyed towards for 40 years through the

wilderness. (Crossing the Jordan, he ascended Mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah on the other side of the river, from which vantage point he was permitted to glimpse the promised land before he died) [Comment 5]. Moses and Elijah (probably the other witness) knew the evil which was latent in the hearts of some of the people of Israel. Yet if Moses is the second witness, neither would ever have experienced the depths of depravity and evil that they will encounter in the Tribulation.

Jude 14-15 give a clue to the identity of the second witness. Enoch prophesied, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgement ...' The supernatural miracles and the message of the everlasting gospel will reach and touch the hearts of some people who will believe and be saved, but the majority will plumb the depths of lust and evil. Even the miracles the two witnesses are given ability to perform will not impress the drug-fuelled or alcohol-crazed insanity of some people who will try to exceed the debauchery of their fellows. How thankful we should be to our great God and Saviour that He has saved us from that terrible time that will soon be coming on the earth!

*John Peddie*

**From Halifax:** *Two witnesses* The King James Version indicates that John was instructed by 'the angel' (Rev. 11:1) to measure the temple of God [Comment 6]. That voice which spoke to John, however, is the heavenly voice of Revelation 10:8—the voice of Him who identified the witnesses as 'my two witnesses' (11:3). These two were clothed with sackcloth, appearing poor, mean, and abject in a poverty befitting the sorrowful circumstance of their testimony.

There are so many variant views as to their identification and we may not be dogmatic, but they are presented as 'the two olive trees, and the two lampstands, that stand before the Lord of the earth' (v.4 NAS), an allusion to Joshua and Zerubbabel in Zechariah's vision (Zech. 4:14). Elijah-like, the witnesses 'have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy' (Rev. 11:6 RV; cp. 1 Kin. 17:1; James 5:17). Moses-like, they 'have power over the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with every plague' (cp. Ex. 7:17). Larkin asks, 'As Moses and Elijah appeared together on the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ ... what more probable than that they are the "Two Witnesses ...?"' (*Dispensational Truth*, pp.135-6). [see Comments 2 and 3]

The time of the testimony of these two witnesses in Jerusalem— 'a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days' (Rev. 11:3)—is coeval with the Beast's persecuting power (13:5). Walter Scott observes: 'Theirs is not an intermittent testimony, but is continued daily till the allotted period is exhausted, not, however, a day longer' (*Exposition of the Revelation*, p.222). Slain in the great city, where their Lord was crucified (11:8), and being raised from the dead, they were called to heaven in 'the cloud' (RV). Then there was a great earthquake!

Now, the second woe was passed and the third was quickly to follow.

*Robert J. Butler*

**From Mount Forest:** *Why measure?* Perhaps to emphasize a need to appreciate in detail God's precious things, and preserve this knowledge for future generations (as in Ps. 48; Ezek. 40:4). But why then is John not required to record or pass on the resulting measurement data, which is not highlighted? Perhaps the point was to measure out a divine inheritance receiving God's protection (cp. Num. 35:1-5), i.e., to note the sanctuary is initially excluded from Gentile incursion. But why then 'measure' the worshippers? Perhaps it was to provide forewarning that present allotments are going to be redistributed in judgement (cp. Amos 7:7,17).

As the same rod is used to 'measure' not only the temple and the (golden) altar, but also the worshippers, some versions insert 'count' in relation to the worshippers, presumably like Leviticus 27:32. John, however, used other words meaning counting (e.g. as in Rev. 7:9; 9:16; 13:18). If it is not merely measurement of quantity, then perhaps it is intended as a dramatic visual metaphor for assessment against an appropriate standard (cp. 2 Cor.10:12,18), as in assessing if all building is 'according to the pattern' (Heb. 8:5).

The Greek word (*naos*) for the temple measured here references the sanctuary proper, not the extended surrounding structures termed in the HCSB version: 'temple complex' (Gk. *hieron*) in Mark 13:1-2. (It is helpful to note this difference when considering *naos* in Eph. 2:21.) For this reason, the altar mentioned in Revelation 11:1 is most likely the one inside the sanctuary, not the altar of burnt offering, which would be 'outside the *naos* /sanctuary' (v.2; Mat. 23:35). And applying the same rule, the worshippers 'in it' should be only those priests who have access to the sanctuary, not worshippers generally (though 'worship' may be grossly false: see Ezek. 8:16).

The measuring rod is likened to a 'staff' and in the three other places where that is mentioned in Revelation (2:27; 12:5; 19:15) it is a 'rod' of iron, emphasizing rule as in Hebrews 1:8-9 (the righteous 'sceptre'), all implying righteous assessment.

We suggestively propose for contemplation that the main thrust of these verses is most likely measurement that exposes degrees of failure in meeting divine requirements, and therefore justifies judgement. Certainly, the passage concludes by contrasting the despised witnesses testifying righteously and Gentiles irreverently trampling the city, for the same period [Comment 7].

The viewpoint is from a divine centre outwards, as in 1 Peter 4:17. This could include failure even in the earthly sanctuary (which noticeably bears the description 'of God'), and failure of the earthly altar of incense corresponding to

the heavenly (Rev. 8:3), and inadequacy in priestly worship, let alone obviously negative aspects (hence unmeasured) of Gentile action in the surrendered courts outside, and their trampling of the city. The sequel is God's provision of clear authoritative witness to all, presumably declaring the truth about Christ, as it is He who is 'their Lord' who was crucified there (Rev. 11:8). Whatever form of presumably Aaronic-style worship (see Dan. 9:27) then temporarily occurs in an earthly sanctuary, it must be assessed by adherence to the divine standard. As must ours (cp. Eph. 4:13).

*Geoff Hydon*

**From Podagatlapalli:** The temple here mentioned is no doubt the temple which will be built after the rapture of saints when the newly risen dictator takes power among the nations remaining out of the old Roman Empire, and makes a treaty with a remnant group of Jews then to be in Palestine to restore their worship (see Dan. 9:27).

John measured the temple to show that God is building walls of protection around His people to stay them from spiritual harm, and that there is a place reserved for all believers who remain faithful to God. Those worshipping inside the temple (inner court) will be protected spiritually, but those outside (outer court) will face great suffering [Comment 8]. The measuring rod symbolizes either preservation or destruction (see Zech. 2:1, 5:11; Ezek. 40:3; 42:26). The context indicates preservation [cp. Mount Forest paper, and Comment 7].

During the days of the Tribulation God will cause two mighty prophets (two witnesses) to arise. These two will give a worldwide testimony to God's salvation and denounce the wickedness of the day. Their dress of sackcloth shows them to be prophets in an evil age, calling not for rejoicing, but rather for repentance and judgement. The span of their ministry is clearly delineated as three and a half years (1260 days at 30 days to the month). The time of the ministry of these two witnesses may be during the first half of the Tribulation seven years. The three and a half years' ministry surely must coincide with one of the two clearly defined three and a half year periods of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 11:2-5; 12:6-14; 13:5; Dan. 7:25). If the time of the Beast's persecution is placed in the second half of the seven-year week as it surely is (Dan. 9:27; Mat. 24:15f.; Rev. 13:5 and 19:20) then the two witnesses must prophesy in the first half.

*The two witnesses* represent the adequate and complete testimony presented by the godly remnant during the final tribulation. They appear with the characteristics of Elijah and Moses, both of whom had been witnesses for God in dark times during Israel's history, when Elijah prayed and heaven was shut for three and a half years (v.6; James 5:17; cp. v.5 with 2 Kin. 1:10-12), Moses received power to change water into blood (life unto death, Ex. 7:19) and to inflict upon the earth all

kinds of plagues [see Comments 2 and 3]. These faithful witnesses will be killed in Jerusalem by the 'beast' but consoled by the thought that their Lord was crucified (Luke 13:33-34) before them in that very place. Their martyrdom will be followed by a spectacular public resurrection, much to the dismay of their persecutors. Finally, the last woe is sounded. The kingdom of the world has become the Lord's (v.15).

In Revelation 6:17 the terrified people learn that the wrath of the Lamb has come and ushers in the events that lead to the moment when Christ takes over the government of the world. Then heaven bursts into shouts of triumph. The saints bow down and worship the One Who was crucified (v.8) but now reigns forever and ever.

*B.V. Prasada Rao*

**From Ravulapalem:** *Importance of the temple measurements (Rev. 11:1)*

Generally measurements are taken to demolish a place by destruction, or protection of a site for construction. In the Hebrew Scripture prophecies such measuring provided a guarantee that justice, tempered with mercy, would be rendered on the basis of the Lord's perfect standards. In the days of the King Manasseh, the prophetic measuring of Jerusalem testified to an unalterable judgement of destruction on that city (2 Kin. 21:13; Lam. 2:8; Zech. 2:1-5). God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos and the plumbline of desolation (Is. 34:11). Later, when Jeremiah saw Jerusalem being measured, it is confirmed that the city would be rebuilt (Jer. 31:39). Likewise, the measuring of the visionary temple witnessed by Ezekiel was a guarantee to the Jewish exiles in Babylon that true worship would be restored in their homeland. It was also a reminder that in view of their errors, Israel henceforth had to measure up to God's holy standards (Ezek. 40:3-4; 43:10). God uses a plumbline to judge whether Israel is 'straight' by His standards (Amos 7:7). The plumbline in the hands of Zerubbabel in the day of small things denotes careful construction (Zech. 4:11).

This temple (Rev. 11:1) is not in heaven, as in 7:1, but on earth only. Measuring inside the temple and the altar, excluding the outer court and counting the worshippers, gives us a sense of the spiritual standard in worship required by God. In the middle of Daniel's week there will be the doing away with the altar and its sacrifices (Dan. 9:27; Mat. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4). [Cp. Mount Forest paper and Comment 7, paras. 3-4.]

In Psalm 48:11-12 there is encouragement to go round Zion and check the towers surrounded by it, to measure and count the ramparts and citadels, and tell the future generations. The scene of earthly Jerusalem shook the mind of the Psalmist. What great cause we have to be joyful and content when we think of the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22)!

*S.J.M. Edward*

**From Surulere:** *The declaration of the seventh trumpet* Against the sad and sickening backdrop of the assassination of the two witnesses (11:7), the morbid celebration of the peoples of all nations at the grisly spectacle (v.10) and the unprecedented horror of the third and final woe (v.14), the seventh trumpet is sounded to usher in the prelude to an indescribable fusion of earthly and celestial bliss.

The declaration at the sounding of the seventh trumpet includes a restatement of an earlier appreciated truth: 'The earth *is* the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters' (Ps. 24:1-2 NKJV). The reverent utterance of David is breathtaking: 'When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained' (Ps. 8:3). Indeed, 'The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever' (Rev. 11:15) [Comment 9].

The Lord Jesus is both the cause of and possessor of all creation, whether visible or invisible: 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things consist' (Col. 1:15-17).

Yet, strangely, the arch-enemy of mankind and usurper, had presumptuously proposed to the Lord of heaven and earth a deal for the kingdoms of the world: 'And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours"' (Luke 4:6-7). The kingdoms of the world will return to their rightful sovereign, the one of whom Daniel declared: 'The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will and sets over it the lowest of men' (Dan. 4:17). The unfettered outburst of the twenty-four elders takes a panoramic sweep over world affairs and the inevitability of the rule of Christ—

- The nations were angry (Rev. 11:18)
- And your wrath has come
- The time for judging the dead
- And for rewarding your servants the prophets and the saints
- And those who fear Your name, small and great
- And for destroying those who destroy the earth.

When the Lord Jesus commences His millennial reign in Jerusalem and His promise to Nathanael is fulfilled: 'And He said to him, "Most assuredly I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"' (John 1: 51). We suggest all those entering the millennial reign, including nations surviving the judgement of the living nations, will be privileged to witness this unique spectacle. The temple of God in its splendour and majesty will be in the full view of mortals, as will the ark of the covenant. This is not the ark of the covenant that hallowed the tabernacle and temples of Israel, but the authentic ark of which the earthly was symbolic [Comment 10]. Little wonder considering that at that time, 'A king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in justice' (Is. 32:1).

*Frederick F. Ntido*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Aberkenfig):** *The character of the re-built temple (Rev. 11:2)* We agree this future temple will most probably continue the segregation of Gentiles, since the purpose of its building would be for worship by devout Jews, as well as those who at least had respect for religious Judaism, whatever further motives other investors might have in doing so. While it was required by the Law that the offering of foreigners be subject to the same regulations as the native-born (Num. 9:14; 15:12-16), and the spirit of the developing Law was to welcome them in due course 'to the assembly of the LORD' (Deut. 23:8; cp.10:18-19), there were varying degrees of commitment by those of other nations, and the customs of Herod's temple accommodated this.

It does not follow that God was satisfied with this, either then or in the temple of the 70th week. As other papers also note, however, this structure is called 'the temple of God' in Revelation 11:2 and in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (ESV, NASU, RV). God valued the devotion of faithful ones in the temple which the Lord called His house though the leaders then had mostly departed from the spirit of the Law, and likewise the temple John saw may yet represent faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Cp. *B.S.* 1972, p.175, Comment 5. ([www.churchesofgod.info> Publications> Bible Studies>B.S. Archive.](http://www.churchesofgod.info/Publications/Bible%20Studies/B.S.%20Archive.)) *M.A.*

**2. (Buckhaven):** *The Two Witnesses* John Miller also is certain of this in his *Notes on the Epistles* (p.677) but not all feel able to be dogmatic on that. The ministry of the Elijah of Malachi 4 as stated in verse 6 of that chapter bears no resemblance to the ministry of the two witnesses. *P.D.*

Some would not have difficulty with the ministry of Malachi 4:6 as fulfilled rather in that of John the Baptist, though in those of Israel wavering in faith and inert through fear of the Beast's adherents the two witnesses' preaching also may

have that effect. In *The Finger of Prophecy* as quoted under (3.) below, 'the great and terrible day of the LORD' (RV) would be understood as the climax of the judgements we have been studying, rather than the period (from just after the Rapture to the post-Millennial final judgements) P.D. suggested in June issue, p.95, Comment 10. M.A.

**3. (Buckhaven):** On the other hand, Enoch could be the other witness, having been, like Elijah, transported to the heavenly paradise without experiencing physical death (Heb. 11:5). R.B.F.

The following review by J.L. Ferguson, of the evidence for or against the identification of these notable individuals, is worth considering:

'Some conclude that the identity of the two witnesses is uncertain and leave it at that. Others think that the number two is a symbolic reference to an unmeasured company. The views of the early Fathers expressed over 1,600 years ago are still extant on the subject and many considered that Elijah would be one of the two. This may well be so, in fulfilment of God's last promise to Israel, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD come" (Malachi 4.5). Indeed, were it not for this reference to Elijah there would seem to be no reason for assuming that the two witnesses have had a previous existence. It would be difficult to assign the sending of Elijah (confirmed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 17.11) to any other period in the prophetic word. In keeping with this it has been noted that both Elijah and the two witnesses control the rain in judgement, each in their own time, for the identical period of 3½ years. Further, so extraordinary a happening as a living man to go "up by a whirlwind into heaven", and centuries later to appear personally on the holy mount with Moses and the Lord, certainly encourages the view.

As to the identity of the other witness, Scripture is completely silent. Some think Enoch, since he too was a prophet of judgement (Jude verse 14). Also he was translated without seeing death, so he may well have to return and pass through that experience—a weighty consideration. Others think Moses. This they base on the similarity of the miracles of turning water into blood and smiting the earth generally with plagues, a somewhat flimsy premise. On the other hand they point also to the strange fact of the contest between Michael and Satan over his body in death (Jude verse 9) and his appearance centuries later with Elijah on the mount. Should Moses prove to be the second witness, then the two men who symbolized the law and the prophets will appear again to Israel as God's final appeal to the nation. There we must leave it, for the reader to consider, and the day to declare.' (J.L. Ferguson, *The Finger of Prophecy*, 1976, pp.36-37) See also *B.S.* 1972, Comments 2, 3 and 6, pp.173-175 ([www.churchesofgod.info](http://www.churchesofgod.info)> Publications>Bible Studies>B.S. Archive.) J.J.

**4. (Buckhaven):** The words ‘tenth part’ in Revised Version is actually one Greek word *dekatos*, simply meaning ‘tenth’. It is the more likely that this refers to material buildings of the city crumbling from the effects of the earthquake, and falling fatally upon the number of people mentioned, rather than a percentage of the population. R.B.F.

**5. (Greenock):** The suggestion that Moses crossed the Jordan into the land to climb Nebo or Pisgah is in conflict with his record of God’s judgement, ‘You also shall not go in there’ (Deut. 1:37 ESV; cp. Num. 20:12). Nebo, a peak in the Abarim range, and ‘the Pisgah’ (always so written), a ridge on Nebo (*New Bible Dictionary*, IVP, 3rd ed., 1996, pp.931-932) is still located at the NE corner of the Dead Sea by *Oxford Bible Atlas*, 4th ed., 2007. Thus Moses saw across the Jordan, or northwards to Hermon, from the *east* bank, since Israel were told by God to detour round Edom’s borders.

**6. (Halifax):** *Who gives the reed, and who speaks in 11:1?* The more reliable earlier text, followed by RV, NASU, NIV and ESV, is literally ‘And was given to me (a) reed like (a) rod, saying ...’

Since ‘saying’ is singular, we agree it is quite possibly the unidentified voice of 10:8 and 10:11. This earlier Greek text, with its strange grammar, is also in keeping with John’s freedom from expected patterns of narrative language of his time. Omission of *who* does the giving suggests John is capturing the wonder and tension of each fresh scene, eye focused on taking the reed, and ear on the meaning of what he’s told to do. As he wrote, his long-practised memory of Scripture might reflect on Psalm 48: ‘Walk about Zion, go round her, number her towers ...’ (v.12), as mentioned by Mount Forest and Ravulapalem papers.

**7. (Mount Forest):** *The sanctuary and the court* This interesting approach depends on the distinction (made familiar by W.E. Vine) that *hieron* is used of the temple with its courts and lesser buildings, but *naos* is mainly used in the New Testament of a sanctuary or temple itself, and is the word favoured in the Letters and Revelation, though Hebrews uses *hagion*, ‘holy (place)’. This is strikingly true, and very few examples are debatable. The Jews who challenged the Lord in John 2:19-20 used *naos* of the temple, and perhaps meant all that the 46 years included, while the Lord had used it figuratively of His body; or they just echoed His word, or used it in indignation. When Judas returned to the chief priests and elders and threw the silver ‘into the *naos*’ (Mat. 27:5), the area he accessed is not certain.

Yet there are alternatives to some of the deductions drawn about Revelation 11. We agree that judgement repeatedly strikes in this chapter, implied or explicit in verses 3,5-6,13-14, and 18-19, so it may have a part in the measuring of those who worshipped, along the lines of Mount Forest’s last paragraph; and the assessment is not merely counting numbers. The following paragraphs commend

the view that the theme of judgement does not in this chapter outweigh appreciation (noted by friends in para. 1) that reminds John and his readers of future hope.

One of the uses of a measuring rod is in construction, as Aberkenfig paper says. There is good reason to see the measuring of the temple as literal, as in Ezekiel 40:3, and Revelation 21:15-17 with its emphasis on human measurement (cp. *B.S.* 1972, p.173, Comment 1). The glories of the millennial temple, despite the need to purify its servants, stand in contrast to the corruption exposed in the last months of the first temple, while the glory of God departed from His beloved house. Eclipsing this, and the temple John saw as the final effort by Israel and her sympathisers to honour their knowledge of God from the oracles of the Old Covenant, are the pure glories of the city in the world to come. Surely in all three measurings there is a call to the faithful visionary (and his readers) to reflect on the beautiful design of the Lord's dwelling-place among His people, to give relief and hope beyond those scenes of corruption and judgement. Into the ages of the ages, the temple of approach to Deity has become 'the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' themselves in very truth—the wonderful down-dwelling of Creator and Saviour in the city on the new earth.

It is also possible that the antichrist, identified with the ruler who arises from the blaspheming beast of 13:1, the head with a mortal wound, after 3½ years breaks the covenant with Israel, and erects his image in the sanctuary (13:14), 'the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place' (*hagion*—Mat. 24:15-16), but then wishes it to be publicly seen, so it is placed in the outer court. Why then do his Gentile associates not 'trample' the sanctuary as well? It may be that in select numbers they do defile the holy place, but his sacrilege and that of his assistant, the image-creating prophet (cp. the foreshadowing in Dan. 11:30-35), cause loyalists in Israel to rise in armed opposition, by which they defend the sanctuary, but have to yield the outer court to Gentile forces, an early phase of the divinely heartened resistance Zechariah foresaw (12:4-9). Challenge from the south and then north (Dan. 11:40), and troubling news from the east (11:44), preoccupy the 'king who shall do as he wills', until his last effort to control the gathering of the nations against the city and temple. *M.A.*

**8. (Podagatlapalli):** Linking Daniel 9:27, 11:41, Zechariah 13:9 and Matthew 24:15-16, the following sequence of events seems likely: the Beast breaks his seven-year covenant with Israel in the middle of the 70th week of years, causing 'the sacrifice and the oblation to cease' (Dan.9:27). When the 'abomination of desolation' (the image of the Beast) is seen standing in the holy place, the faithful, ultra-orthodox Jewish worshippers flee to Edom, Moab and Ammon (present-day Jordan) where they will be 'nourished for a time, and times, and half a time' (Rev 12:14)—the second 3½ years. *J.J.*

**9. (Surulere):** Might the study-group's enjoyment of the heralding of the outcome of this series of judgements have omitted the link between Psalm 8 and the victory song—that man's failure and sin in the kingdoms of the world, 'the enemy' (v.2), work against God's overrule among them? Of course the links *are* made in para. 4.

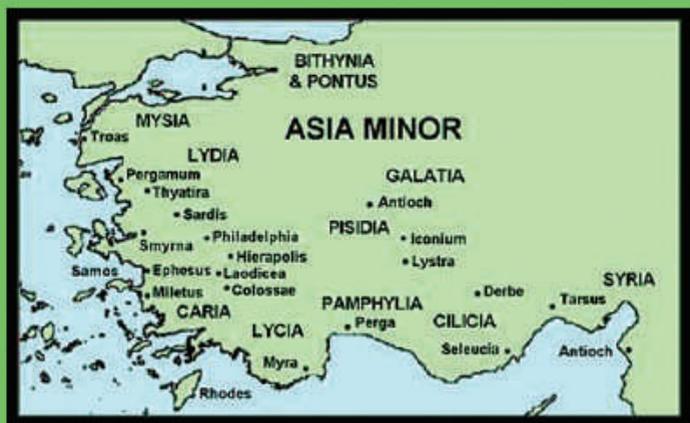
*M.A.*

**10. (Surulere):** The writer to the Hebrews lends weight to this statement, observing that the tabernacle was 'a copy and shadow of the heavenly things' (Hebrews. 8:5). This is why God insisted that Moses 'make all things according to the pattern' showed him in the mount. Whether God's house was material (then) or spiritual (now), we concur with the thought in para. 2 of Greenock's paper: the God-given pattern for His dwelling place on earth has an archetypal counterpart in heaven. The divine arrangement of present-day Churches of God, in line with scriptures such as Ephesians 2:19-22 and Hebrews 12:22-24, corresponds to the *authentic* original in heaven. We glory in 'the beautiful design of the Lord's dwelling-place among His people', which ultimately has its fulfilment 'in the city on the new earth' (Comment 7 para 3). Such mysteries fill our hearts with reverence and awe.

*J.J.*







*New Testament churches in Asia Minor*

Published by and obtainable from  
Hayes Press, The Barn, Flaxlands, Royal Wootton Bassett,  
Wiltshire, England SN4 8DY