

## “Preserved & Persecuted Prophets Prevail” (Rev. 11)

We are taking an excursus from *John* to another book of John viz. *Revelation*. This stems from a question I got from a parishioner and it made me look back into Revelation 11 and go deeper to get more understanding and hopefully provide more clarity. So we will focus on the first two verses this evening and then see where the interest lies before committing to exegete the entire chapter.

Not surprisingly, Revelation takes up the building motif which had its beginnings in Exodus. God’s end time priests are pictured throughout the OT and confirmed in the NT. They are seen as a kingdom of priests who offer their own bodies and those who are living stones which make up the temple of the Lord. Such an end time temple is vulnerable to persecution yet perfectly measured and fitted so as never lose its standing. As Christ’s end time priests, we are charged not with building a physical Temple for which to come and worship. Rather, we are commissioned with building a living Temple which is the body of Christ. True worship of the true God is found in that body *and* in building that body and nowhere else!

We live in an increasingly wicked society. God’s purpose for us is to know and trust Him so much that we can welcome all circumstances as opportunities to glorify Him – to be faithful and compassionate even to our persecutors so that they too will repent. We can stand confident in opposition to this world’s self-worshipping, intolerant, and persecuting actions without acting in kind because we will be vindicated by the perfect Judge who is our heavenly Father. He will lift us up for the world to see – not because we are innately great but because we trusted Him. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death (Rev. 12:11). It is extremely encouraging to know the war is won. That victory, however; will mean the most to those who fought in the battle with love, humility, and obedience to sacrifice.

### “Preserved & Persecuted Prophets” Part 1 (Rev. 11)

1. **Their Identity (we the Church) (1)**
2. **Their Security (saved) (1)**
3. **Their Phony (apostates of God) (2)**
4. Their Duty
  - a. Purpose (share truth)
  - b. Power (transforming/condemning truth)
5. Their Destiny (we win)
  - a. Persecution
  - b. Vindication
  - c. Celebration

#### 1. Their Identity

- a. This highly apocalyptic chapter is rich with symbolism, hyperbole, and OT references. Every verse is soaked and dripping with OT prophetic apocalyptic metaphors. There are no short cuts to interpreting it and thus we must achieve great familiarity with the Law & Prophets to begin to understand the intended meaning. I have read hundreds of pages on this chapter alone and each page has dozens of direct OT references, allusions, and concepts which aid in understanding the chapter. John and his Jewish converts would have immediately recognized the intent but today we have lazy proponents of newspaper eschatology which miserably fail to do the laborious leg work in catching up with the first century Jew’s understanding of the

- prolific metaphors which John employed.
- b. This ch. continues the theme of ch. 10 viz. God’s eschatological agents of the Gospel.
  - c. They are seen as having both a sweet position yet bitter conditions.
  - d. They are assoc. w/ the temple of God and its altar (1).
  - e. The measuring is best understood against the background of the temple prophecy in Ezekiel 40–48. Though initially those chapters can be a bit difficult to understand, the big picture is that of the eschatological Temple of Christ’s body – His advent, work, sacrifice, and priesthood – which now continues in His Temple (the body of Christ - Church) on earth in these last days.
  - f. Like Ezekiel’s vision where “measuring” the temple is used 49 times in that section, Zechariah saw one going to measure Jerusalem in his own vision. However, the man was told not to measure it as it would be a city without walls. Now in John’s vision we see the same measuring here. God’s people are marked, possessed, and known by Him yet they are not a national ethnic group with an earthly city (Jerusalem) but rather a holy, chosen, nation of priests who have no earthly borders, king, culture, tongue, tribe, etc. This is a major key (as well as ‘no respecter of persons’) to understanding all of Scripture! The “New Jerusalem” – the ultimate Jerusalem exists w/o need of a temple building!
  - g. Jesus called His body the Temple of God (John 2:21) and Paul and Peter would later affirm such e.g. “You are the temple of God” 1 Cor. 3:16 and Peter referred to the OC and pointed out that the Church is the Temple made of living stones (2 Pet. 2:5). Also cf.: 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:21 “as well as in early Judaism (cf. 1Q<sup>s</sup> V, 5–6; VIII, 4–10; IX, 3–6; XI, 7–8; CD-<sup>A</sup> III, 19–IV, 6; 4Q17<sup>4</sup> 1 I, 2–9) (so Gärtner 1965: 16–44; McKelvey 1969: 45–53), and it fits well with the generally symbolic nature of the images in Revelation.”<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Their Security (1)

Following this line of interpretation then, the temple and altar represent the spiritual security of the believers’ souls. They are marked and measured to be God’s preserved people.

## 3. Their Phony (2)

- a. Firstly, the term translated Temple is naos, which refers to the Holy of Holies – where the presence of God resides not outside it.
- b. Though they (the Holy of Holies/Altar/People) are measured and preserved, the outer courts were left unmeasured i.e. exposed to trampling with that of the holy city (2).
- c. Furthermore, measuring, some point out, is a symbolic action used to divide between holy and profane.
- d. Further still, just as there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals preserving the set apart saints of God, we see the same interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets here serving the same purpose viz. setting apart (i.e. measuring) the saints (true Temple of God) whilst judging the unbelieving Jews viz. the outer court which is also seen as the whole city of Jerusalem.

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<sup>S</sup> 1QS 1QRule of the Community

<sup>A</sup> CD-A Damascus Documenta

<sup>4</sup> Q174 4QFlorilegium

<sup>1</sup> Beale, G. K., & McDonough, S. M. (2007). Revelation. In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (p. 1118). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos.

- e. Finally, 11:2b parallels Luke 21:24, which predicts the punishment of the Jews: “Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the nations until the times of the nations be fulfilled.” In contrast, our analysis could see John transforming this into a prophecy of the persecution of the church.<sup>284</sup> But both Luke’s context (and the Synoptic parallels) and Rev. 11:2 are developing the prophecy about end-time tribulation from Daniel 7–12.<sup>285</sup> In the Synoptic contexts the oppression of Jerusalem comes because of Jewish unbelief. But genuine believers suffer together with unbelieving Jews, as in the Babylonian invasion and captivity. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the Synoptic accounts is to prepare Christ’s followers for imminent suffering so they will not stumble because of it. Rev. 11:2 develops this particular theme of the Synoptic narrative instead of the idea of punishment.” ***Bauckham*** recently has lent further support to the idea that Daniel is a significant background for both the “casting out” of the outer court and for the “trampling” of the city.<sup>286</sup> 11:1–2 continues where 10:7 left off. There John alluded to Dan. 12:7 concerning “how long” it would be to the end of history. The angel told Daniel that the end would not come until the enemy would “finish shattering the power of the holy people,” and a typical Danielic time period is given for the duration until the end (Dan. 12:11). In Rev. 11:1–2 John interprets Dan. 12:7 with the aid of a similar passage, Dan. 8:13–14, which also begins with a “how long?” that is answered by a standard Danielic time period. Whereas what leads up to the end in Daniel 12 is the “shattering” of the saints, in Dan. 8:13b what leads up to the end is “concerning the regular burned offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled” (NRSV). In particular, the conclusion of Dan. 8:11, usually translated “the place of his sanctuary [the court outside the temple building] was cast down,” could viably be rendered “the place of his sanctuary was cast out.” →
- f. → This implies that the inner sanctuary and the priests in it are preserved in some way from defilement and trampling of the outer court by the Gentile powers. This specifically lies behind John’s “cast out the court outside the temple.” Therefore, John alludes to Dan. 8:11–13 to refer to the same reality as Dan. 12:7, which for him refers to the physical suffering of the church as the temple, but also suggests the spiritual protection of Christians as priests of God, serving in a spiritual temple.<sup>2</sup>
- g. **Further Consideration:** “cast outside” can also refer to what happens to God’s true people as they are rejected and persecuted by the unbelieving world (Matt. 21:39; Mark 12:8; Luke 4:29; 20:15; John 9:34–35; Acts 7:58; cf. 1 Macc. 7:16–17; Jos. War 4.316–17; Heb. 13:11–12). The significance of the measuring means that their salvation is secured, despite physical harm that they suffer. This is a further development of the “sealing” in 7:2–8 and is consistent with *I En.* 61:1–5, where the angelic “measuring” of the righteous elect ensures that their faith will be strengthened and not destroyed, despite the destruction of their bodies. In the OT “measuring” is

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<sup>4</sup> 284 Which Feuillet, *Johannine Studies*, 236–37, judges improbable.

<sup>5</sup> 285 For the argument in the Synoptic eschatological discourses see Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 145–77.

<sup>6</sup> 286 *Climax of Prophecy*, 267–73.

<sup>v</sup> NRSV New Revised Standard Version

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Beale. 570.

- used as a metaphor for a decree of protection (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:2; Isa. 28:16–17; Jer. 31:38–40; Ezek. 29:6 LXX Zech. 1:16) or of judgment (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:2; 2 Kgs. 21:13; Lam. 2:8; Amos 7:7–9). Interestingly, Mic. 2:5 refers to Israelites who will not be protected from God’s coming judgment by saying that “you will have no one casting *a measuring line* for you by lot *in the assembly of the Lord*.”<sup>3</sup>
- h. Immediate context of ch. 10: The close proximity of believers to the altar in 6:9–10 implies that both in that passage and here they are not only worshipers but also priests who have brought themselves to be sacrificed on the altar of the gospel, to which they have been called to testify. The portrayal of Christians as both temple and priests worshiping in the temple is found also in 1 Pet. 2:5. Indeed, Rev. 1:6 and 5:10 allude to the same OT text (Exod. 19:6) as 1 Pet. 2:5 in identifying Christians as priests. How this living temple on earth in 11:1–2 relates to the other references in Revelation to the heavenly temple must be clarified in later chapters. In brief, however, Christians are members of a heavenly community dwelling on earth. This view of θυσιαστήριον [“altar”] is corroborated by its use elsewhere. In Heb. 13:9–16 believers have an altar (i.e., Christ) where they offer up sacrifices to God. They are exhorted not to be deceived by false doctrine and not to place their hope in the impermanent “city” of Jerusalem, but to “seek the city that is to come” and is already here (cf. Heb. 11:22). They are to heed this exhortation by focusing on the spiritual altar and by being willing to “go out to him **outside the camp** [the camp = the temple and Jerusalem] bearing his reproach” (so Heb. 8:1ff. and 10:19–20 speak of Christ in the true temple and say that believers enter it in the present through him).<sup>4</sup>
- i. Though we are vulnerable like Jesus who died and secured atonement outside of Jerusalem (**outside the camp** Heb. 13:11-13) we too die and serve as priests who sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2) our bodies outside and exposed – yet we are secure from His wrath and sealed as His special treasured, chosen, possession.
- j. Furthermore, going outside the camp is a counterintuitive reversal not unlike the tragic irony of the Jews and Jerusalem – and the Temple complex being destroyed yet the measured Temple Holy of Holies, altar, and people are secure albeit persecuted by both Jews and the beast of Rome. See 1 Kings 8:41-43 cf. Mk. 11:17 re: the outer court of the Gentiles prescribed by God. See also Lu. 21:20-24; 19:41-44! How is that for literal? Siege of Jerusalem would last for 42 months!
- k. What does this mean for us? We are heavenly citizen’s yet earthly aliens whose message and methods are opposed by the world. He has left us in the world but we are not of the world. Therefore, we do not act like the world. Rather than vie for position, pleasure, power; we are priests who sacrifice our fleshly prerogatives in order to be agents of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Beale. 558–559.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Beale. *Revelation*. 563–564.