

MEASURING GOD'S TEMPLE

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Revelation chapter 11 begins with John being given a reed like a rod, *“and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.”* In a vision in Ezekiel chapters 40-48, the prophet Ezekiel was told to do something similar to what John was instructed to do in Revelation 11:1. Ezekiel 40:1-5 says, *“In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel. And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and a hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.”* For the remainder of this vision, Ezekiel recorded the angel's measurements of the temple. The Apostle John was told to measure God's temple and the worshipers within it.

Measuring the temple of God

But the Apostle John would not be measuring the physical temple (which was destroyed in 70 A.D., long before Revelation was ever written). Rather, John would measure God's temple of the New Testament, which is a spiritual temple, His church. For example, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”* Ephesians 2:20-22 says, *“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”* Similarly, 1 Peter 2:4-5 says, *“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”* Ezekiel's recording of the measurement of the temple in his vision was designed to encourage Israel of old to be faithful and holy, as God was in their midst. *“And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that*

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(continued)

they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house" (Ezek 43:7-12). In a similar manner, John's measurement of the temple in Revelation 11, which is the Lord's church, serves as a great encouragement to the "Israel of God" today, i.e. Christians (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16). God "measures" and discerns between the righteous and the wicked (see 1 Sam 8:1-2), and He protects what He measures (see Zech 2:1-5). One of the great messages of Revelation chapter 11 is that the Lord's church will overcome all her enemies and inherit eternal life. But we, the worshippers, must be measured and found to be faithful, righteous, and holy.

The work of the Gentiles

In Revelation 11:2, John was told to omit the outer court of the temple and not measure it "*for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*" The Gentiles had not been allowed to enter into the physical temple or its inner court, but could only enter the outer court. The New Testament describes the world, the unbelievers, as spiritual Gentiles. Ephesians 4:17-20 says, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye *henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk*, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ." Also, 1 Peter 2:12 says, "*Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles:* that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Spiritual Gentiles cannot actually be within the spiritual temple itself, as one must first repent before being added to the church (Acts 2:38-41,47). But these Gentiles certainly do persecute the church (John 15:18-21). In this vain, Revelation 11:2 says that the Gentiles were going to tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. At the time of writing, Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans. Therefore, as noted previously, this is without question a reference to the *spiritual* holy city, which is the church (Heb 12:22-23). Thus, the "Gentiles" would tread the church under foot for "42 months." The period of time, 42 months, is equivalent to 3½ years. That is exactly half of seven, seven being the complete number. Thus, 3½ typically symbolizes something that is incomplete. In this case, the Gentiles would tread upon the church but the period of time that is mentioned suggests that the persecution would not be complete. That is, it would last for a temporary period and would not be successful in destroying the church. The church is eternal (Dan 2:44; Matt 16:18), and will prevail in the end over all the persecutions of the Gentiles. What a beautiful and encouraging message we have to endure persecution and follow holiness! This will enable us to one day see God (Matt 10:22; Heb 12:14).