

## Bible Study Revelation 10-11

*“<sup>1</sup>I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.”*

Some early Church commentators say this angel is Christ: “*And by this ‘mighty angel’ he signifies our Lord*” (Victorinus of Petovium). “*In this angel the person of Christ is indicated*” (Tyconius).

This is supported by similar descriptions of Christ we have already seen in the book of Revelation: “*Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne... and there was a rainbow around the throne*” (Revelation 4:2-3). “*He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength*” (Revelation 1:16).

Andrew of Caesarea says this about the angel: “*The cloud and the rainbow and the light like the sun show how we are to understand this holy angel. For through these symbols the manifold character of its virtue and the brightness of the angelic nature and understanding is revealed.*”

*“<sup>2</sup> He had a little book open in his hand...”*

“*The ‘open book’ is the revelation that John had received*” (Victorinus of Petovium).

“*It was the little scroll*” in which were written the names and transgressions of the severely wicked who are going to be punished” (Oecumenius).

*“... and he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, <sup>3</sup> and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.”*

“*That he stands on both sea and land signifies that all things have been placed under His feet*” (Victorinus of Petovium).

*“<sup>4</sup> Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.’*

This may be a reference from the book of Daniel, an Old Testament book similar to Revelation. “*But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase... And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end’*” (Daniel 12:4, 9).

Christ sometimes instructed his followers not to reveal to others what He had done: “*Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ*” (Matthew 16:20). “*Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead’*” (Matthew 17:9). Of course, these

instructions were temporary in their effect. Later these restrictions were lifted and became important parts of the Gospel.

*“<sup>5</sup> The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven <sup>6</sup> and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, <sup>7</sup> but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”*

*“This shows that what is now undisclosed is to be explained through experience and the course of the events themselves... the final understanding and the clear interpretation of them are reserved for the last times” (Andrew of Caesarea).*

*“<sup>8</sup> Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, ‘Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.’ <sup>9</sup> So I went to the angel and said to him, ‘Give me the little book.’ And he said to me, ‘Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.’ <sup>10</sup> Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*

**“This means that, when you [John] receive it, you will be delighted by the divine speech and by the hope of the promised salvation and by the sweetness of the divine justice. However, you will then sense bitterness when you begin to preach this to the pious and impious... The preacher takes in bitterness from either of these two persons. For he either sheds tears with the penitents out of a feeling of compassion, or by the bitterness of their failure” (Primasius).**

**“He says that, although the knowledge of future things will be sweet to you, at the same time it will bitter to your stomach, for you will have compassion on those who will receive punishments according to God’s judgement” (Andrew of Caesarea).**

*“<sup>11</sup> And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”*

**Despite the sweetness and bitterness inherent in preaching about the end times, John must still do so to all people.**

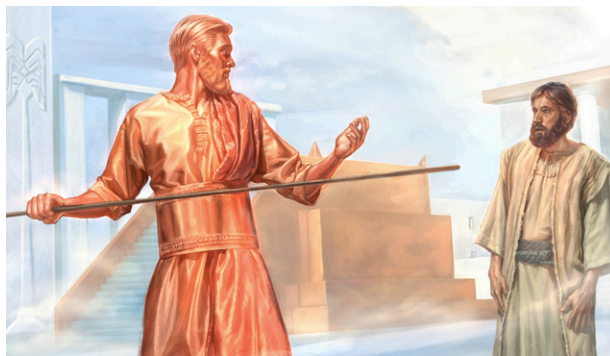
**When you see surveying crews, taking measurements, you know a building is about to be built:**



***“11:1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.”***

**This is not the first time God commanded a prophet to measure the Temple. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel had the following vision:**

***“<sup>2</sup> In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city. <sup>3</sup> He took me there, and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.”***



***“<sup>4</sup> And the man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.” <sup>5</sup> Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man’s hand was a measuring rod six cubits long, each being a cubit and a handbreadth; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod; and the height, one rod (Ezekiel 40:4-5).***

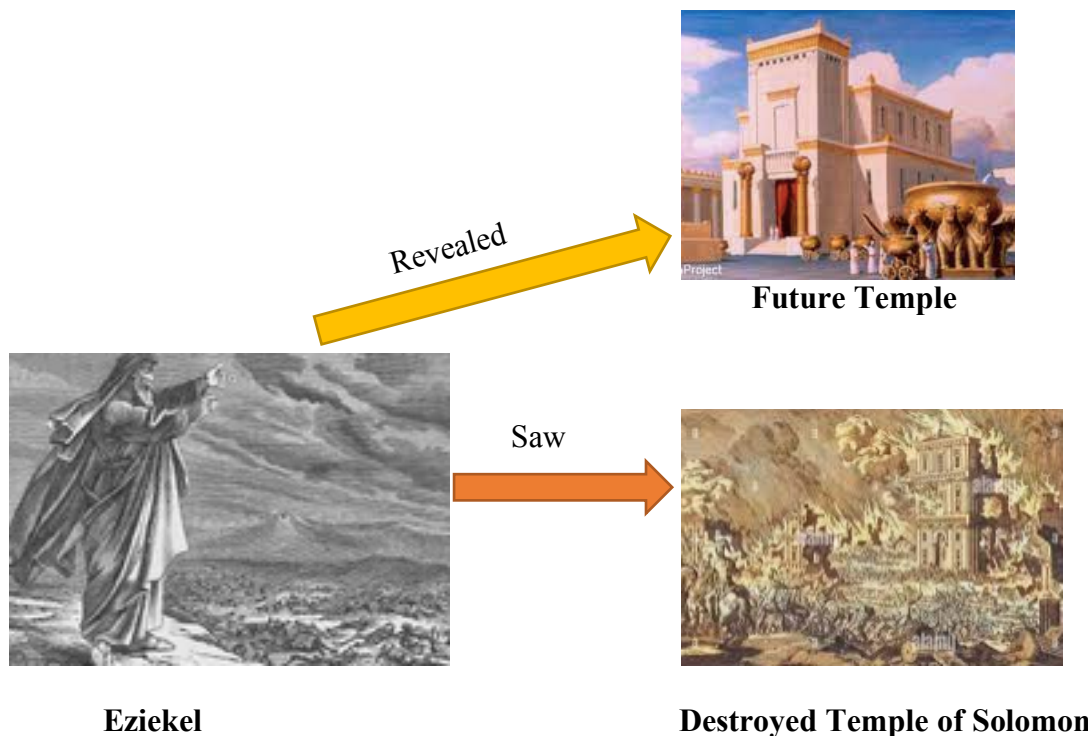
**Clearly, God’s commandment for John to measure the heavenly temple was based on His commandment for Ezekiel to witness an angel measuring the earthly temple. What do these related measurements of God’s temple mean? The key is to understand the original context of Ezekiel’s vision. The beginning of that passage gives us the vital context:**

*“40:1 In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there.”*

Ezekiel was writing his prophecy from captivity in Babylon. He and all his fellow Jews had been conquered and deported to Babylon as slaves. Their Temple had been destroyed.

*“Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the LORD and the king’s house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire” (Jeremiah 52:12-13).*

This means that the Jewish Temple that Ezekiel saw being measured in his vision was not the Temple as it existed at the time. When Ezekiel received his vision, Solomon’s once-great Temple was merely rubble and ashes. But the Temple Ezekiel saw being measured was a future temple. It was a promise that God would rebuild it. The message to the Jews was one of immense hope. Although they were enslaved in a foreign country, God would someday rescue them, bring them back to their promised land, and their Temple worship would be restored. God fulfilled that promise.



This back story of Ezekiel’s vision of the measuring of the Temple explains John’s vision of measuring the Temple in Revelation. In 70 AD, the Romans conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the Jewish Temple, and sent the Jewish people into exile. John was alive when this happened, and as a Jew, would have been devastated by that tragic event. When God gave John the

vision of measuring the Temple in Revelation, the Jewish Temple had been destroyed, and was just like the Temple in Ezekiel's vision – ashes and rubble.



John

Saw



Destroyed Temple of Herod

Just as Ezekiel's witnessing the measuring of the Temple was a promise of God to rebuild it someday and to give hope to His Old Testament people, John's vision of measuring the Temple was also a promise to rebuild it. John knew his Hebrew Bible, so when he was commanded to measure the Temple in Revelation, he certainly realized he was re-enacting Ezekiel's vision.

But what kind of Temple was God promising John, and the readers of Revelation, that He would rebuild? Many Protestants believe this will be an actual, literal Temple that will be rebuilt on the original Mount in Jerusalem.

<https://templeinstitute.org/>

Orthodoxy does not anticipate a future, physical, literal, rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem for Jews to re-start Jewish worship. To Orthodoxy, the Church is the new Israel. There is overwhelming biblical evidence for this. They have lost their former place as the people of God:

*"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it....Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them" (Matthew 21:46).*

Their place is now given to the Church:

*"... as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel..." (Ephesians 3:5-6)*

Jew-Gentile distinction has been abolished:

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).*

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*“.. there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11).*

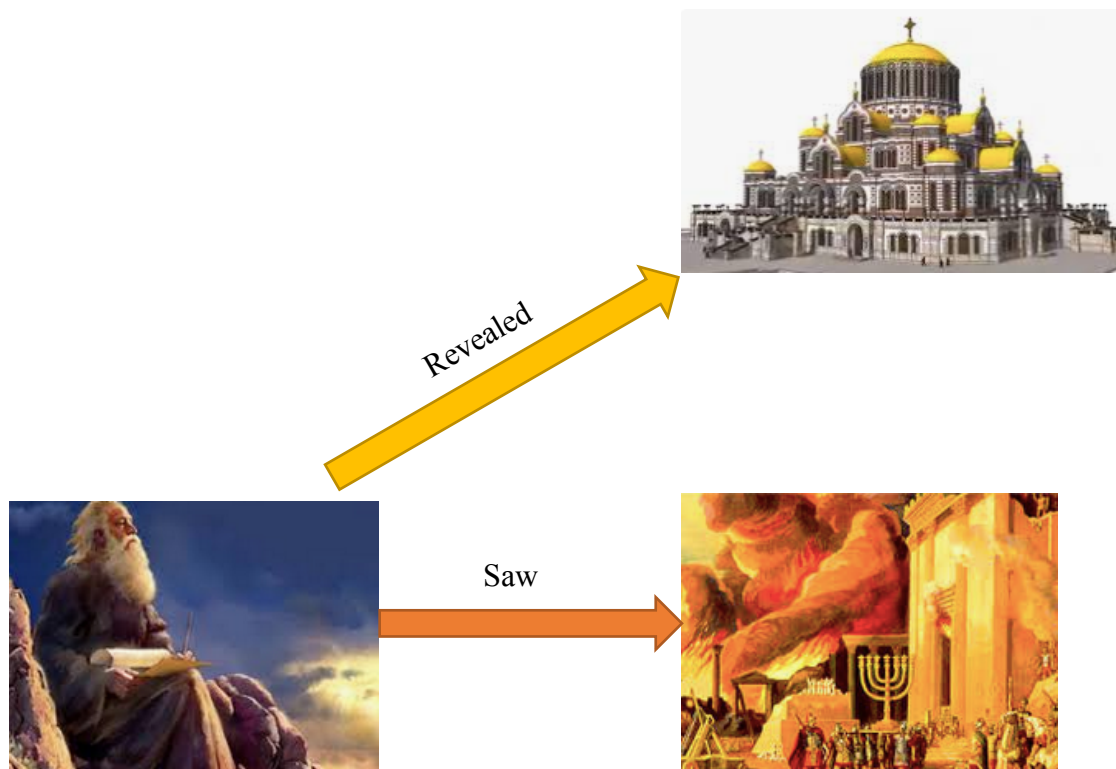
*“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).*

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups [Jew and Gentile] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace...” (Ephesians 2)*

Being ethnically Jewish no longer has any advantage in one’s standing with God. Ethnic Jews can certainly be saved, but in order to do so, they need to become Christians like every other ethnic group.

*“Because of unbelief they [the Jews] were broken off, and you stand by faith... And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree” (Romans 11:20, 23).*

The Temple that John measured in Revelation is a symbol of the Church.



The New Testament often calls the Church and its members “Temples.”

**“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).**

**“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).**

***“For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:9-11).***

***“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).***

***“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:***

***“I will dwell in them***

***And walk among them.***

***I will be their God,***

***And they shall be My people.” (2 Corinthians 6:16).***

**It may be symbolically significant that Ezekiel watched an angel measure the Old Testament Temple, but God commanded John to do the measuring himself. This may mean that John, as an apostle, was already and personally active in building the Church as the new Temple.**

### **The Two Witnesses**

***“<sup>3</sup> And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”***

***“<sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.***

***“In the lampstands he signifies the church, which is fortified by the two Testaments... the two olive trees are the two Testaments, which pour out the oil of knowledge into the lampstand” (Tyconius).***

***<sup>5</sup> And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. <sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”***

**Who are these two witnesses? There are several opinions among early Church commentators:**

*“In the two witnesses he means the two Testaments, by which His Church is governed and ruled” (Tyconius).*

*“Many think it one of the witnesses is either Elisha or Moses or Elijah. Our ancients held the opinion that the other witness was in every respect Jeremiah” (Victorinus).*

*“And old, traditional saying in the Church is that Elijah the Tishbite and also Enoch will come as a forerunner of the second coming of Christ... Malachi said, ‘I will send you Elijah the Tishbite before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.’ And in Matthew, the Lord said of the Baptist, ‘And if you are willing to accept it, this is Elijah which is to come’ (Oecumenius).*

The text says, *“<sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy.”* This recalls the Old Testament and the Prophet Elijah: *“A prophet named Elijah, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to King Ahab, “In the name of the LORD, the living God of Israel, whom I serve, I tell you that there will be no dew or rain for the next two or three years until I say so” (1 Kings 17:1).*

Pseudo-Hippolytus gives the reason for appearance of the two witnesses:

*“Behold too the Lord’s kindness to mankind; how even in the last times he shows his care for mortals and pities them. For even then He will not leave us without prophets but will send them to us for our instruction and assurance.”*

We saw that the early Church writers saw the two witnesses as the End Times equivalent of John the Baptist. And just as John the Baptist was martyred, and body desecrated by beheading, the two witnesses are also eventually killed, and their bodies desecrated by public display without burial.

### The Witnesses Killed

*“<sup>7</sup> When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup> And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup> Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. <sup>10</sup> And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.*

Where the witnesses are killed, and how that place is described, is also significant. They are killed in *“the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.”* Of course, Christ was crucified in Jerusalem. But the text calls Jerusalem “Sodom and Egypt” – two places that were considered unholy to Jews, specially Sodom. By calling Jerusalem “Sodom and Egypt,” Revelation is portraying that city negatively. It appears that in the eyes of God, the Jerusalem has lost its former glorious standing by this time.

### The Witnesses Resurrected



*“<sup>11</sup> Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup> And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.”*

The reason some of the Fathers thought that the two witnesses would be either Elijah or Enoch was because these Old Testament prophets did not die. Elijah: *“Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”* (2 Kings 2:11). Enoch: *“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”* (Genesis 5:24). Everyone else in human history died, so if any other saint had been brought back to life in the end times and martyred, they would have died twice. If the two witnesses were Elijah and Enoch, this would have been their first and only death.

Despite these depictions of horrors in earth, this chapter ends with a renewed and sublime vision of heaven. Christ is ruling on His throne, worshiped by the angelic and human hosts, preparing to come again to judge the earth.

*“<sup>15</sup> Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” <sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup> saying:*

*“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,  
The One who is and who was and who is to come,  
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.  
<sup>18</sup> The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,  
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,  
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,  
And those who fear Your name, small and great,  
And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”*

Despite the miseries of earth, God is still in control.