

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- *We are still in the interlude between the blowing of the 6th and 7th Trumpets (blown at the end of this chapter, to introduce the final judgments – the bowl judgments).*
- *Some think this refers to the 1st half of the tribulation, other think 2nd half. That is unclear. Either way, it must include a 3 ½ year period of time, which may be the beginning, the middle, or the end of the tribulation.*
- *We now see John go on a little errand in regard to the Temple, which most believe will be restored in Jerusalem. God will make a point through this measuring process.*
- *This chapter has two scenes. One scene involves the Temple, the other the Two Witnesses. It begins on earth at what appears to be a rebuilt Jewish Temple, and concludes in heaven.*
- *It is very helpful to have some basic knowledge about the Temple PRIOR to reading and understanding this chapter.*
- *The focus returns squarely to Israel in this chapter.*
- *Both the earthly temple and the heavenly temple are seen in this chapter.*
- *In order to fulfill these prophecies, this entire vision, it appears that such a temple will need to be built.*
- *The other section in this chapter deals with two strange figures referenced as “two witnesses” and “two olive trees and two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.”*
- *We are not told much more about their identities, but there is much speculation about them.*

Background information

HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE: GOD’S DWELLING PLACE WITH MAN

It has always been God’s desire to fellowship, to dwell among His people. This was evidenced first in the Garden of Eden when Adam walked with God. Following the introduction of sin through the Fall, God could not walk any more with His creation (mankind) since it was tainted with sin. God is a Holy God, who cannot be in the presence of sin. But He still desired to be with His people. Throughout man’s history, God has made a way for this fellowship to happen, for Himself to dwell among us, even through the millennia of sinfulness. Ultimately, God has made a way for us to spend eternity together without sin. The Tabernacle and The Temple are symbols of God’s Presence with us. He is indeed Immanuel (God with Us).

THE TABERNACLE

As soon as the Israelites were led into the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt, away from distractions and other people, God gave instructions (and provided the materials through the hospitality of Egypt!) for the people to build a structure wherein He could dwell in their midst. The people built this dwelling place around 1450 BC, under the supervision of Moses. This was not just any house, but had very specific details and processes, all of which were a huge visual aid and graphic object lesson of His ultimate plan of redemption and restored fellowship with Him.

Entering the place of His Presence, the inner room called the Most Holy Place (what we call the Holy of Holies) required sacrifice (atonement) and sanctification (separation and holiness through cleansing). God appeared in the form of the Shekinah glory (*the cloud and pillar of fire, literally "glory in the tent"*) and dwelled on the lid (atonement cover, mercy seat) of the Ark of the Covenant in this room.

It was clear, however, that God could not be confined to a tent or even to a grand structure like the Temple. This was His provision for dwelling in their midst until the ultimate renewal of all things. (*see Exodus and Leviticus for details of construction, requirements to proceed into His Presence.*) Only the High Priest was allowed into this special inner room, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement. Others could (and were required) to bring sacrifices into the courtyard around the Tabernacle that were offered to God as atonement for their sins. Priests ministered inside the Tabernacle and the outer courtyard where the brazen altar for burnt sacrifice sat, all day, every day. God prescribed a definite method and requirements for sinful man to be in His Presence.

As the people moved around in the wilderness, the Tabernacle was taken down, packed up and put up again in the new location, all the time following very specific instructions from God. Only the Levites were allowed to do this. When they moved into the land God promised (Canaan), the tabernacle was not set up much and the various pieces of furniture (like the Ark of the Covenant) were packed up and stored in various people's tents over the years.

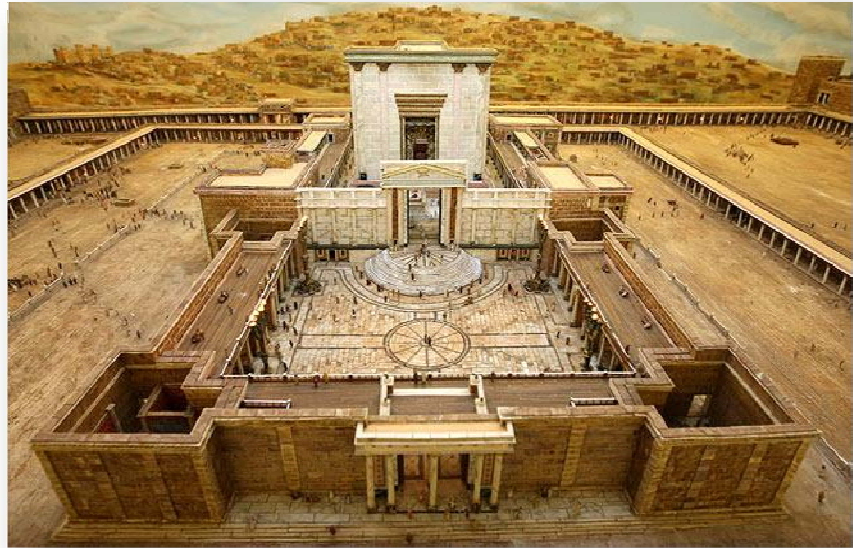
THE FIRST TEMPLE: SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

When David became king of Israel, it was his desire to build a house for God to dwell in. But God told David He never asked for such a house, and it was not His desire, but David's. God told David he had "too much blood on his hands" to build Him such a house, but He would allow David's son Solomon to build a Temple. (*see 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles*) David drew up the plans and gathered most of the materials. This first "permanent" Temple was built by Solomon after David's death, and dedicated around 953 BC. It essentially followed the blueprint for the Tabernacle, but the dimensions were doubled and much "artistic license" was taken in its construction and appointments. In some respects this grandiose structure was not at all what God had in mind originally.

The original Tabernacle was an object lesson where every detail pointed to Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice. The Temple became an issue of pride for the Jews, not one of holiness, pointing to the One who would be their salvation, as it was designed to be. Solomon's temple was so grand that people from all over the world came to see it and marvel at it. God did bless it, however, and dwelled inside the Most Holy Place in the form of His Shekinah glory, just as He did in the Tabernacle. After the reign of Solomon, however, and under the reign of his son Rehoboam, the kingdom split into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. A succession of wicked kings in the north led to their downfall in 722 BC when Israel (north) was conquered by the Assyrians and taken into captivity. They did not return. The southern kingdom of Judah didn't do too much better, but they had a few good kings who restored the Temple, which had fallen into disuse and disrepair. But this was too late for them. In 606 BC Nebuchadnezzar took the first wave of captives to Babylon (Daniel was in this group), and 19 years later after the Jews continued to rebel against him, came and destroyed the city and the Temple in 586 BC, taking the remaining Jews back to Babylon for their 70-year captivity, which He had prophesied years earlier. The Temple was destroyed on the 9th day of the month of Av on the Jewish calendar. The Jews remained in captivity in Babylon until 539 BC. (*Remember that a year in God's Word is the original 360 days, not 365 days.*)

THE SECOND TEMPLE: EZRA'S OR ZERUBBABEL'S TEMPLE

After the 70-year captivity, God moved the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia (Babylon conquered by him, Persia is now the world power) to return the Jews to their land, and help them rebuild their Temple. Under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel, reconstruction of the Temple began in 538 BC. There were many starts and stops, due to outside influences, as well as the people's own priorities. It was finally completed and rededicated in 516 BC (under the priestly leadership of Ezra), but this version was much smaller and much less grand than Solomon's Temple. Some who were alive to see Solomon's Temple wept when this one was dedicated because it was so much less grand. (See Ezra, Haggai). Ezra continued to lead the captives home, but only about 50,000 Jews returned to the land. The rest stayed in Babylon, comfortable there after 70 years (book of Esther). Nehemiah was instrumental in getting the city walls rebuilt, around 444 BC.



(This photo is of an incredible model of Herod's Temple which has been built over a period of 30 years by one English farmer. He says it will not be finished in his lifetime. Scholars say it is "the best representation in the world of what the Jewish Temple looked like..." For more information on this model go to: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/religion/4837608/Farmer-builds-model-of-Biblical-temple.html>)

ZERUBBABEL'S TEMPLE REBUILT: HEROD'S TEMPLE

This is still considered the "second" Temple. Beginning about 18-19 BC, the "butcher king" Herod needed a building project to make a name for himself, so he undertook one of the biggest renovations in history – the rebuilding of the second Jewish Temple. It was under construction until about 63 AD. Even in Jesus' day (still uncompleted) it was considered an architectural masterpiece, quite an achievement. It was again a source of pride for all Jews, even though they were under Roman occupation at this time. But once again, it was not what God had in mind. God sent the ultimate sacrifice during the construction of this Temple, and the Lamb of God was slain around 30-32 AD. Jesus foretold the destruction of this Temple—that every stone would be removed from atop another.

And so it was in 70 AD, and again on the 9th day of the month of Av (no coincidence!), as the Jews continued to rebel against Rome, Titus and the Roman army marched through Jerusalem, killing and kidnapping the Jews who remained there, and destroying the Temple. It is said by some that this was an accident and Titus never intended to destroy it. Nonetheless, it was destroyed, and they took it apart stone by stone in order to retrieve the gold that had melted in the great fire that burned it. This began the great "diaspora" or scattering of the Jews throughout the world. There has been no Temple in Jerusalem since this time.

THE CURRENT TEMPLE

No, there is no physical Temple in Jerusalem...at the moment of this writing (2009), nor has there been since 70 AD. Prior to the destruction of Herod's temple, however, God sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in all believers. Paul tells us that **we are the temple of the Holy Spirit**. This is the current Temple (dwelling place) of God.

- ***“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*** (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- ***“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 Cor. 6:16)
- ***“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)

THE INTERIM BETWEEN THE 2ND AND 3RD JEWISH TEMPLES

From 70 A.D. until 1948, the Jewish people had no homeland. In 1948 the nation of Israel was reborn. However, the Temple Mount was still held by Jordan. When the temple area was recaptured in the 1967 war, the Jews wept with joy. However, this joy soon disappeared. A few hours after the recapture, Moshe Dayan, the Defense Minister of Israel, announced that the Temple Mount would remain under Arab control. Rejoicing turned to sorrow.

Religious Jews and many others felt this action was completely incomprehensible. After so many years, how could Israel return control of their sacred temple mount back to the Arabs? Simple. It was not in God's timing. Jews still cannot go to the Temple Mount area to pray, to offer sacrifices, and, above all, to build their Third Temple.



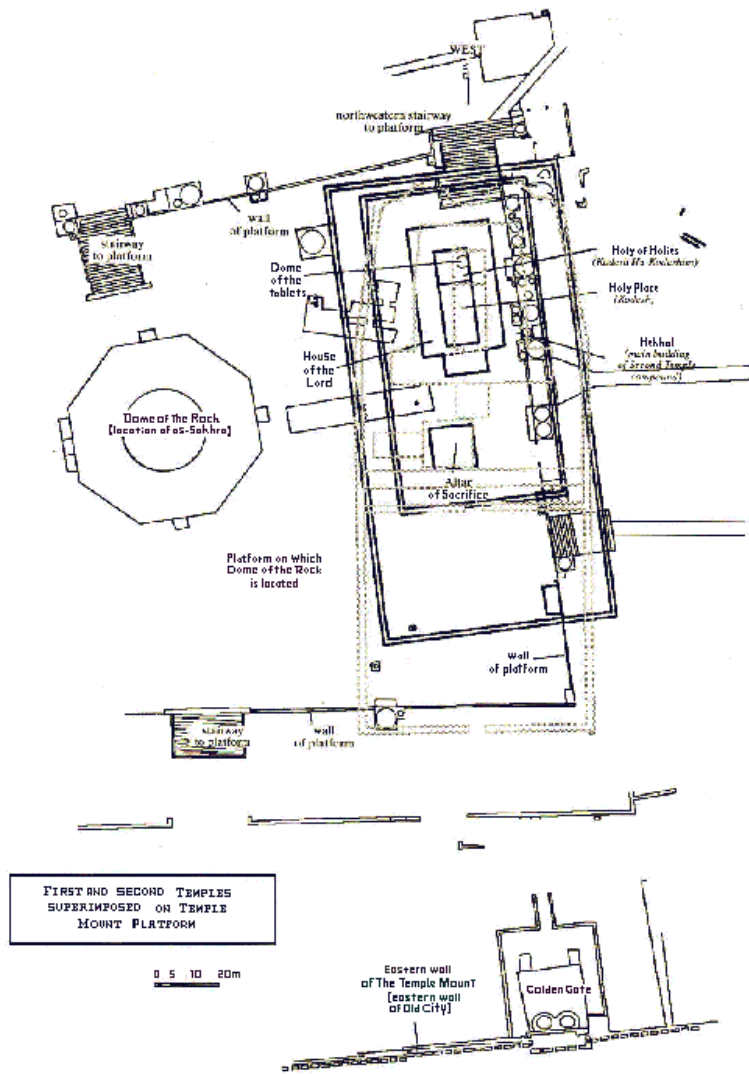
The ark of the covenant is the only object that is placed within the Holy of Holies. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the high priest enters the Holy of Holies, asking G-d to forgive the transgressions of the entire house of Israel. Made of wood covered with gold, it contained within it, during the period of the First Temple, the Two Tablets of the Law brought down from Mount Sinai by Moses, as well as a vessel containing mannah, and the staff of Aharon. Fearing its capture by the invading Babylonians, King Josiah had it removed from the Holy of Holies, and hidden in a chamber deep beneath the Temple Mount. A tradition of its exact location is maintained to this day. ***(The above picture depicts a mock-up made by the Temple Institute for purposes of research and instruction. (This is from the website of The Temple Institute. They are dedicated to rebuilding the Temple and have prepared extensively for it, including making the furnishings. The text above regarding the Ark is from their website. The idea that King Josiah had the Ark hidden is by tradition only. We do not have any scriptural evidence of this. You can visit this site at <http://www.templeinstitute.org/main.htm>)***

THE THIRD TEMPLE: TRIBULATION TEMPLE

In order to literally fulfill various prophecies regarding the tribulation and the antichrist, who defiles the Temple and brings the “abomination that causes desolation” (Daniel and Jesus predicted, also see Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:4), most scholars who interpret prophecy literally believe that another Temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem. At the moment this seems unlikely to many, since the Dome of the Rock (Al Aksa Mosque, built in 691 AD) sits squarely on the Temple Mount. However, we know that nothing is impossible to God. For years now the Jews have been preparing for such a Temple. The priests have been located and trained, the Temple furnishings have been constructed, the musical instruments have been crafted, and the priests’ garments have been made. The money is available to build. In short, everything is ready except for WHERE to build it. There is a move currently underway that indicates that the Islamic mosque does not

actually sit on the spot where the original Temple was, but is rather a bit outside of this area. Some new ideas include building the Jewish temple immediately east of the mosque, lining up directly with the Eastern (golden) Gate. Many speculate that by doing this, the Dome of the Rock would then sit in what was formerly the Court of Gentiles in Herod’s Temple. This is very interesting considering Revelation 11:2 *“But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles...”*

Rabbi Chaim Richman of the Temple Institute has stated that, according to the revered Jewish teacher Mammonides, various treasures from the First Temple are buried beneath the Temple Mount. Rabbi Getz, chief rabbi of the Western Wall, said that they know for sure the location of the ark of the covenant, the candle-sticks made by Moses, and the stone tablets containing the ten commandments. Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the former chief rabbi of Israel, said they were digging towards these items. The Arabs, fearing what would happen if the ark of the covenant and the ten commandments should be recovered, rioted. The Israeli government became fearful and ordered the digging to be stopped.



God knows where everything is, and in the proper time, it will be revealed. Since building of this Third Temple **shows a complete rejection of the Messiah by the Jews**, we cannot expect God to reveal the ark of the covenant or anything else for this Temple. Most likely, the real ark will be installed in the 4th Temple, the Millennial Temple.

There are many different speculations about how and when this tribulation temple might be built. There is even talk now, among *both* Jews and Arabs, that the current temple mount can be shared. It is not widespread yet, but it is public and open. There are current news stories indicating that Netanyahu openly wishes to rebuild the temple. Is this just more speculation? We don't know. Some "experts" have even said that the western wall and the temple mount itself, including the mosque, are in danger of collapsing as bulges have been noted there. With the weight of 100s of 1,000s of pilgrims on Islamic holy days, it could indeed collapse, taking the mosque with it. Some believe that the building of the 3rd temple will happen as part of a peace agreement made between the antichrist and Israel guaranteeing 7 years of peace (to be broken at the mid-point by AC). We simply don't know the details yet. But if God has ordained it, it will happen in His way, and in His time. No question. AND, we should mention that some also believe that all this talk is not of a literal temple, but of the spiritual temple – us, as believers and temples of the Holy Spirit today. It is difficult, however, to make all the prophecies regarding another temple fit into the spiritual or allegorical concept of a temple.

For more reading about this third temple, see the following sites:

<http://www.templemount.org/tempprep.html>

<http://www.templeinstitute.org/main.htm>

RockofAges.org also has information on the Tabernacle and Temple at the website:

http://www.rockofages.org/topics/Tabernacle_Study.pdf

THE FOURTH TEMPLE: MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

During or after the tribulation, the third Temple will most likely be destroyed. During the 1,000 year reign of Jesus on earth (the Millennium, or Millennial Kingdom) there will be a Temple in Jerusalem, but not the one used during the Tribulation. In the book of Ezekiel, this prophet also has a vision and describes an amazing temple that has never been built. Very specific details and dimensions of this temple are given in chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel. These details show us that this is no ordinary temple. Most scholars believe this is the Millennial Temple which will exist in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus' reign there. Read chapters 40-48 for a detailed description of this temple.



Artist's rendition of Ezekiel's Temple, lifted up above all else, river flowing under the altar...

ETERNITY: NO TEMPLE

AN INTERESTING THOUGHT: The 7 Dwelling Places of God

There are some who believe that there are ultimately seven dwelling places for God with man (Immanuel, God with Us). They suggest these are:

1. The **Garden of Eden**
2. The **Tabernacle** in the Wilderness
3. **Solomon's Temple**
4. **Ezra's/Herod's Temple** (*rebuilt, renovated temple*)
5. **Jesus Himself** (*He was the incarnate dwelling place of God*)
6. The **Millennial Temple**
7. The **Bride of Christ** (*we are the permanent dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God*)

If and when there is a tribulation temple it would not be the dwelling place of God, as it is a rejection of His Son, Jesus, and will be defiled by the antichrist. And, there is no need for a temple in eternity, as the Word specifically states there is no temple because the **“Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”** (Revelation 21:22) Are these seven dwelling places what God had in mind all along? Quite possibly, as we know that fellowship with us is His heart's desire. He desires to dwell among us. He did directly in the garden before the Fall, and He will do so again in eternity. As to how He will fulfill His prophecies regarding His dwelling place, we can only speculate.

REVELATION 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.” ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

- **Reeds were commonly used for measurement.** Measurement in scripture is generally used when something is to be built, restored, or destroyed. Measurement here is **about worth**, not about dimensions. Measurement is often associated with chastisement, falling short of something, and can be a precursor to judgment and/or destruction.
- Notice what is to be measured: **the temple** (which is most likely the restored physical temple in Jerusalem), **the altar** (*We don't know which altar is referenced here, the altar of incense [prayer], or the brazen altar of sacrifice. The word used is thusiastērion, which literally means a place of sacrifice*), and **those who worship** there.



- Was John to measure the height of the people, too? No, he was **measuring their worth, their hearts**. If this is about the restored physical temple, the worshippers have rejected Jesus as Messiah and are most likely here only because of orthodoxy and tradition, not true worship. They do not know that their ultimate sacrifice has already been offered on a cross 2,000 years ago. It is interesting to note that judgment begins at the house of God, with God's people. *(For more information about measurements you can research on your own in Jeremiah 10:16, 51:19, 31:38-39; Lamentations 2:8, 2 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 34:11; Amos 7:8, Ezekiel 40:2-49, and Zechariah 2:1-2)*
- The word for **temple** used here is the Greek *naos*, which implies the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) and not the entire temple. The word *heiron* refers to the entire temple complex. For this reason, some have speculated that this does not refer to the actual physical temple, but to the temple of the Holy Spirit, or believers (measuring believer's hearts, not Jewish hearts). There are details in this passage, however, that make it difficult to justify a strictly spiritual interpretation. Again, the literal translation of prophecy is the best way to view it without getting into the confusing morass of various interpretations of an allegorical approach. The Two Witnesses who appear later here would also indicate God's desire to reach the hearts of the Jews with the good news of the Messiah.
- It is interesting to note that the ***"court which is outside the temple"*** is the Court of Gentiles. If we laid out Herod's Temple over the existing temple mount, the Dome of the Rock would be inside this Court of Gentiles. And the angel tells John that this area has been ***"given to the Gentiles."*** God's Word is so very precise and always accurate to the ⁿth degree! This is another reason for believing that this passage is literal and not allegorical. The Dome of the Rock does indeed sit inside the area which would have been the Court of Gentiles in Jesus' day.
- ***"Given to the Gentiles"*** may also indicate Gentile domination during this tribulation time, as the remainder of this verse says they will ***"tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."*** There is a move currently to divide Jerusalem. We don't know if this is what is referenced here, or something else (like the Al Aqsa Mosque, a Gentile structure on holy Jewish ground). We must also understand that the "Times of the Gentiles" did not end in 1967 with Israel recapturing Jerusalem. These times continue today, and will throughout the tribulation until Jesus returns. Gentiles today, nations all over the world, do indeed tread the holy city (Jerusalem) underfoot. Everyone in the world has an opinion about Jerusalem, and that opinion is usually opposed to Israel's governance of the city. Jerusalem is already being trodden underfoot by Gentiles, and it will get worse.
- Many people try to make all of Revelation symbolic, but it is difficult to justify that approach with the very specific **details regarding time**. Here the term ***"forty-two months"*** is used. In the next verse we are told that the two witnesses will ***"prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days."*** In Daniel 7:25, 12:7 and Revelation 12:14, the phrase "time, times, and half a time" is used. This last phrase, when translated correctly implies that a time = 1 year, times = 2 years and half a time = ½ year. Together, all of these time references yield a time period of 3 ½ years. Daniel 9, the famous "70 weeks," carries the term ***"the middle of the week."*** We know that one week in this reference is 7 years. And how much time is the "middle" of that week? Right, 3 ½ years! It is almost as if God is anticipating these allegorical interpretations and going to great lengths to make us understand this is literal. In other words, how many ways can you say 3 ½ years? We really cannot interpret this as anything but a literal period of time. However, we also must remember that God's years are the prophetic 360 day years.

³ *And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.* ⁴ *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.*

- **“give power...”** God is granting these two witnesses, whoever they are, supernatural power, which we will read about a bit later, and also to prophesy (speak under the inspiration of God).
- **“two witnesses...”** Two is the required number of witnesses called for in the Old Testament (the Law) (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16). These two will be witnessing to the power of God, and against the world ruler.
- **Time period:** In the previous verse 2, we hear that the holy city will be trampled underfoot for a period “42 months.” We must remember that in prophecy, a month is 30 days and a year is 360. 42 months is 3 ½ years. Now we hear the same time period, referenced a different way, “one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” God wants us to know that this is a literal period of time. Today our months have varying days, and our years have 5 more days (due to an unknown astronomical event probably around 700BC). If we here during this tribulation time (don’t think we will be!) we would remember to count the days, not the months and years.
- **“clothed in sackcloth...”** sackcloth is a rough burlap-like cloth designed to be uncomfortable! It was used to express mourning, grief and is related to the Law, rather than grace. We are seeing some familiar Old Testament concepts in this passage.
- **“two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth...”** Now begins the endless speculation about the identity of these two witnesses. This passage is an obvious reference to Zechariah 4:11-14: *Then I answered and said to him, “What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?”*¹² *And I further answered and said to him, “What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?” Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” So he said, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.”* These are difficult passages to interpret, so we must use only scripture to do so. The Lampstand in scripture is the menorah, the 7-branched source of light in the Tabernacle. The lampstand is the symbol of Jesus, who said He was the Light of the World. However, He also said that WE are the light of the world. The olive tree is a symbol for Israel in scripture, and the whole family of God (Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree). More specifically, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. We need to understand the context of this passage in Zechariah. Zechariah was prophesying through visions to the people of Israel who had returned to the land from captivity. They were attempting to rebuild the Temple, and having a hard time of it for many reasons. God gives Zechariah a word to give to Zerubbabel, who was the leader of the people who returned to Israel, and was in charge of helping rebuild. In the first part of this chapter in Zechariah, God tells Zechariah what to say to Zerubbabel: *“So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. ‘Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!””* (4:6-7)



- **In the Zechariah passage, the olive oil, a reference to the Holy Spirit**, is an allusion to the fact that things happen not by the power of man, but by His Holy Spirit. In this same passage, God assures Zerubbabel that he will indeed complete the Temple, but only by God’s provision and hand. By His Spirit. *(Some believe that in the book of Zechariah, these two olive trees are Zerubbabel and Joshua, who brought Israel back to the Land and re-established the true worship of God by Israel. They are not clearly identified here, so this is speculation.)*
- As far as **how these verses relate to the ones here in Revelation**, we know that all of history is in God’s hands, and His plan will be accomplished. He has planned for the salvation of His people the Jews, and these two witnesses are sent to assist in this ultimate goal. By God’s Holy Spirit (the olive trees) His people will see the light (lampstands) of salvation. It is also possible that since the light and the olive tree itself were symbols of God’s people (both Jew and Gentile) that these two “presences” with God are symbolic for that – His people with Him, and the fact that throughout the ages He has worked to save man through the light of many witnesses, including His Son, and always through the power and enabling of the Holy Spirit. **Now these two, whoever they are, will prophesy and speak boldly of God’s plan of salvation.**

⁵ *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.* ⁶ *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.*

- **“fire proceeds from their mouth...”** throughout scripture fire is a symbol for judgment. The earth will be consumed by fire, destroyed to be re-created in perfection. Those who attempt to harm these two witnesses are judged by fire, and die, probably both a physical and a spiritual death. Man cannot interfere with God’s plan. Note that the prophet Elijah was able to bring fire from heaven, by the power of God’s Holy Spirit (confrontation on Mt. Carmel, 1 Kings 18:38 and judgment on some of the king’s soldiers 2 Kings 1:10-14.) Elijah also, through the power of the Holy Spirit, stopped the rain for 3 ½ years. *coincidence???)*
- **“power to shut heaven...”** Once again, a reminder of Elijah’s work. These two witnesses will, through the power of the Holy Spirit (we keep emphasizing that because it is God’s emphasis [*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit...*], and God’s work, not the prophets) do the same things Elijah did: bring fire of judgment, and stop the rainfall for the entire time of their prophesying – 3 ½ years.
- **No rain for 3 ½ years:** We do not know if this drought will be strictly upon Israel, or the entire earth. These witnesses seem to be in Israel, specifically in Jerusalem (see later verses), so there is speculation it only applies to Israel. We don’t really know. If it is a world-wide drought, world-wide agricultural failures will also occur, leading to world-wide famines. Many, many people will die as a result.
- **“power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues....”** Obviously one Bible character comes immediately to mind: Moses, as he delivered the plagues brought upon Egypt, again, through the power of God’s Holy Spirit.



- **Can we know the identities of these “two witnesses?”** This has been the subject of constant and continued speculation.
 - 1) We believe **these are humans**, though they have been given supernatural powers. We are told that people try to kill them since they don’t like their message, so we assume they are human.
 - 2) The most obvious conclusion (speculation) of their identities, based on what they are able to do, are **Elijah** (fire, no rain) and **Moses** (water into blood and other plagues) *and* based on the fact that these two appeared with Jesus at His transfiguration: *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.”* (Matthew 17:1-3).
 - 3) Others speculate they might be **Elijah and Enoch**, as these are the two characters in scripture who apparently did not die natural deaths (God took them, they were “snatched away” in other words “raptured”), and in order to make the scripture in Hebrews literally accurate that states *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...”* (Hebrews 9:27). Some refute this by indicating that although this is the “basic” or “common” rule of thumb, so to speak, God can override this for His purpose. They indicate that perhaps this is why God Himself buried Moses, instead of allowing the people to do it. We simply don’t know.
 - 4) And even others speculate **entirely different identities** (like Zerubbabel and Joshua from Zechariah, or even others, including John the Baptist).
 - 5) **Bottom line: IT SIMPLY DOES NOT MATTER WHO THEY ARE!** We know what they will do, and that they are given divine powers and protection for 3 ½ years, during which time there will be no rain. Remember they are empowered by God. It is not by the power of these prophets, but by His Spirit.

COMMENTARY: There is a great deal of difference of opinion as to the identity of the two witnesses. They are introduced to us without any suggestion as to who they are. Godet makes this comment: "They are one of the most startling features of the book." If the identity of these two was essential for the understanding of this book, I think there would have been some indication given about their persons. It is always in these areas that the sensational preachers concentrate. They can tell you what the seven thunders said (John was told not to write it down, and he didn't), and they can tell you the names of these two witnesses. Those who have espoused the historical view of Revelation have named such men as John Huss, Pope Sylvester, Waldenson, and the two Testaments. You can see that you could come up with almost anything from that viewpoint. Men who hold the futurist view—which is the view I hold—are not in complete agreement as to who they are. Seiss and Govett say that they are Enoch and Elijah.Dean Alford, Walter Scott, and Donald Grey Barnhouse state that they are Moses and Elijah. William Newell does a very smart thing—he does not even attempt to identify them. There is also the possibility that they are two unknown witnesses—that is, they have had no previous existence, and they have not yet appeared on the scene. (McGee)

⁷ *When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ 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.*

- *“When they finish their testimony...”* GOOD REMINDER: These two witnesses are immortal, until their work for God is finished. And so are we.
- *“the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit...”* Who is this? Chapter 13 references two beasts: one from the sea, and one from the land. The beast from the sea is the antichrist and the beast out of the land is the false prophet. What about the beast out of the pit? That would be the Enemy himself, who will most likely indwell the AC and enable him to kill these prophets, but only with God’s permission, and in the due time, in order to fulfill His prophecy.
- Jewish law requires that a body is buried within 24 hours. Jews generally don’t embalm, so it is critical to get bodies buried quickly, especially in hot climates.
- *“The great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.”* If the reader was a bit confused by the Sodom and Egypt references, John provides the ultimate clue to the identity of this city: it is Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified. Both Sodom and Egypt were judged as wicked places, and are symbolic of the world. Sodom was known for its immorality, Egypt for its paganism, worldliness and opposition to God. Both are used as scriptural symbolism for the entire world in opposition to God. This is a sad piece of information here. Jerusalem has become as sinful and opposed to God as the rest of the world. It already has today, and will be more so during the tribulation period.
- Some people also speculate that this death of the witnesses may also symbolize the fact that perhaps the preaching of the Word, the Gospel in particular, is over.

⁹ *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. ¹⁰ 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.*

- *“Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days...”* Apparently everyone, all over the world (peoples, tribes, tongues and nations) will SEE these bodies. How could that be, when they are in Jerusalem? Satellite TV, another reason the prophecies of Revelation could not have been fulfilled at any other time in history, until now.
- *“...not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.”* This statement about letting the bodies of these two witnesses lie in the street, refusing them burial, and the resulting party that ensues, is a **testimony to the evil in mankind’s heart**. Newell (early 20th century commentator) said: *“Now comes the real revelation of the heart of man: glee – horrid, insane, inhuman, hellish, ghoulisg glee!”*
- *“those who dwell on the earth...”* another use of this phrase that indicates unbelievers. Used twice in this verse. Perhaps the believers were not affected by this judgment? In Egypt, the plagues did not affect the Israelites in Goshen. Again, speculation.

- *“rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another....”* This is the only mention in the New Testament of a celebration and sending gifts to “one another.” The witnesses kept the “inhabitants of the earth” or “those who dwell on the earth” from enjoying their sin. At their death, the sinful world celebrates because they believe they don’t have to fear them or their message any longer. Throughout history it has been possible to silence the witness of God’s Word, but it is NOT possible to silence the Word.
- **There is a very interesting Old Testament passage that may have predicted this event:** *“O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; They have laid Jerusalem in heaps. The dead bodies of Your servants they have given as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. Their blood they have shed like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.... Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Let there be known among the nations in our sight the avenging of the blood of Your servants which has been shed. Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You; according to the greatness of Your power Preserve those who are appointed to die...”* (Psalm 79:1-3, 10-11) When first written, this Psalm is prophetic about the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is quite possible that this has a double fulfillment, local and end time. This is very common in prophecy.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

- **These two witnesses are now resurrected.** In this current day, there is never a doubt when someone dies, with all the technology available to certify this. In ancient days, the Jews believed that someone might not be really dead until he was dead for 3 days. This is why Jesus waited until the 4th day to raise Lazarus. There was no question he was dead then, and these witnesses were dead here, before being resurrected. This is a miracle, not some wonder of technology. The passage says the breath of God entered them.
- *“great fear fell on those who saw them...”* Can you imagine the amazement at this? The word for “fear” in this verse means literally exceedingly great terror. Their celebration is over.
- Notice these witnesses hear the same thing John heard at the beginning of chapter 4: **“Come up here!”** These guys are “raptured” (caught up) to heaven. If this is Elijah and Enoch, this is their second such trip!
- This was **not merely a disappearance**. God allowed people to watch this happen right before their eyes.
- Some try to speculate that this is the rapture of the Church, at the mid-point of the tribulation. Your teachers hold the view that the Church will be removed either prior to or at the beginning of the tribulation, and will not experience the wrath of God in these judgments.



- We have spoken that the **purpose of this 7-year period is one of God's grace**, and His desire to bring people to a saving relationship with Him. He desires that none are lost. If this is the purpose, then, the Church would not need to be here. We are already saved. Most likely billions will be saved during this time, who would not otherwise have come to God.

¹³ In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

- **“great earthquake...”** this earthquake seems to be limited to the city of Jerusalem, since the passage tells us a 1/10th of the city fell and 7,000 were killed here. The earth's largest earthquake fault line runs just east of Jerusalem down into Jordan and is called the Great Rift Valley. This is a very seismically active region.
- **“The rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven...”** There is no evidence that these people were saved. They may have glorified God in their moment of fear, and then returned to their evil ways. Or it may indicate that Israel's day of national salvation has come (see Zechariah 13). The phrase **“God of heaven”** is used to distinguish the One True God from false pagan gods.
- **“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”** The first woe was the cloud of demonic locusts from the pit of Chapter 9 (the 5th trumpet), and the second woe is both the herd of demonic horsemen of chapter 9 and this earthquake, which ends the 6th trumpet judgment. The third woe is coming “quickly” which signals that the time of the end is near and things will happen fast now. The 3rd woe is the sounding of the 7th trumpet, which ushers in the **last set of judgments, the bowl plagues**.



7th TRUMPET: Loud Voices, Heavenly Temple Opened, Third Woe Coming (last set of judgments)

¹⁵ 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!” ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ 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.

- **“Loud voices in heaven...”** After the 7th seal was opened there was silence. Now, after the 7th trumpet, there are loud voices. This is a great contrast. As this last trumpet sounds, God's plan is completely revealed, and it seems these “voices” are looking forward to the end!
- The announcement about the **kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdoms of Jesus** sounds as if it has already happened. In God's economy, it already has. There is no turning back, all prophecy will be fulfilled, and every detail of God's plan perfectly completed.
- This is the seventh angel, the 7th Trumpet, not to be confused with the “Trumpet of God” which occurred at Sinai (Exodus 19) and will occur at the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, the “last trump”)

- The word “kingdoms” here is better translated in the singular. **The kingdom of the world, formerly given to the Enemy, is now the kingdom of God.** He has reclaimed what is rightfully His (see Daniel 2).
- The 24 elders here are the same ones we saw in chapters 4 and 5. This is the combined redeemed (Jew and Gentile) in heaven, who are **rejoicing over the completion of God’s plan.** They also speak here as if this has already happened, and in a way, it has, as God inhabits eternity!
- This and the remaining verses of this chapter can be viewed as a **“preview” of the final events** before Jesus returns, and His ultimate victory over evil. It is a mini testament of the overview of the very end events.

18 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.”

- *“The nations were angry...”* The stubborn rebellion of man will continue to the very end. This phrase reminds us of Psalm 2: *“Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.”* (2:1-3)
- *“Your wrath has come...”* perhaps this is a reference to the entire tribulation (remember this section is seen as an overview, including the final end result), or just to Armageddon, the final battle.
- *“And the time of the dead, that they should be judged...”* This judgment may be the one in Chapter 21 at the Great White Throne Judgment of the lost, so this is actually well after the current trumpet and bowl judgments. The same is true for *“you should reward your servants...”* and *“destroy those who destroy the earth.”* In a strict time line, these events come much later, but are spoken of here as complete already. This second phrase is not about non-environmentalists, but about the Enemy, fallen angels and sinful man who destroyed the paradise that God created, and the fellowship between God and man. God will recreate this for us. The earth will be perfect again, as He intended, and sin will be destroyed instead.
- Instead of trying to determine precisely what events are portrayed in these verses, and in what order, we should see them as the overview they are...**the unraveling of the mystery of God.** His plan will be complete once these things are accomplished, and we will enter into an eternity in His Presence.

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

- This **temple of God is in contrast to the temple built on earth that is mentioned** in v 1-2. The earthly temple is woefully inadequate as the way to approach God, and is desecrated by the beast. The heavenly temple reflects true worship, heavenly glory and God’s righteousness. This chapter opened with the non-commissioned temple on earth. It closes with the real temple in heaven, a pattern for the tabernacle.

- The **Ark of the Covenant is a symbol of God’s presence and power**, and contained the tablets of the Law.
- This temple of God may be a **reference to the nation of Israel**, and the fact that many Jews will be coming to salvation through His grace, the profound gift of His Son, not through the tablets of Law (contained in the Ark of the Covenant). The covenants were made with Israel, not with Gentiles. This is the real temple, not the phony one on earth. It may be a reference to true worship of Almighty God by His people, the Jews. We know this is not a reference to any temple in heaven for the church, as we know from Chapter 21 that there is no such temple. God and the Lamb are the temple.
- *“lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail...”* This verse shows something in heaven, but the results are seen and felt on earth. These are indicators of God’s great power, and His continuing wrath (another earthquake, and now hail).
- **Again, this entire section (v15-19) is seen as an overview to the end.** Things will be set right eventually, and the fullness of God’s plan will be known and complete.
- **The blowing of the 7th Trumpet unleashes the last set of judgments, the VIAL or BOWL judgments.** These are the third and final “woe” to come on the world.

