

1. **Introduction:** As seen in the OT story of Israel's relationship to God, spiritual life was centered first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. In both, God was present in the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was in the form of a cube and was the location of God's presence.
 - God was intensely present in Solomon's Temple. When the Ark of the Covenant was brought ***"to its place,"*** beneath the cherubim's wings in the Most Holy Place, ***"the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God"*** (2 Chron. 5:14).
2. **A New Path:** Israel's history in which God's presence was centered in the Temple lasted a long time. Then came John's stunning declaration that ***"the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (John 1:14).
 - This was an astounding departure from God's past dealings with Israel. God's glory dwelt first in the portable tabernacle and eventually in Solomon's and the second Temple. But now, God chose to be present with His people in a person, Jesus of Nazareth. The Word of God became flesh as the God-Man.
 - Jesus is the ultimate, true shekinah glory of God, the complete and perfect manifestation of God's presence among His people. ***"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power"*** (Heb. 1:3).
 - God no longer meets His people in a portable tabernacle, nor an ornate Temple built by human hands. He will not do so again. It is in Jesus, the God-Man ("who saves!"), that we find God.
 - No longer is the Temple of God a structure made by human hands with rules about who can approach God, when and how often. Christ is the Temple of God, always available to everyone.
 - Scripture clearly states believers form the mystical body of Christ (which is all believers) made from living stones. That mystical body is the Temple in which God is pleased to dwell. Through the Holy Spirit, the shekinah of Yahweh dwells permanently in Christ and His people.
 - Paul's description of this truth in Ephesians refers to our Lord Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, ***"in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit"*** (Eph. 2:21-22).
 - The body of Christ (believers), the Temple of God, lives and continually grows as new believers are added. Peter said, the church is "made of living stones," with new stones added regularly. Paul says, ***"Do you not know that you are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple"*** (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
 - In Paul's plea for sexual purity, he asks, ***"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body"*** (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 - 2 Cor. 6:16b says, ***"For we are the temple of the living God,"*** tying together several OT texts (Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 52:11; Ezek. 11:16; 20:34,41; 2 Sam. 7:13) all prophesying an "end-times" temple.
 - In Ezekiel 37:26-27, God declares, ***"I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will***

set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

- The fulfilment of this promise is described in Revelation 21 where the eternal sanctuary promised is our Lord, Christ Jesus, God Himself, set in believer's midst in the New Jerusalem.
- When Jesus was conceived, it was the beginning of God fulfilling His promise of an eschatological temple in which He will forever dwell. The promise advanced through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and will be completed in the New Jerusalem when Christ comes again.
- But what about a literal, physical temple in earthly Jerusalem? Would such a temple have spiritual significance in God's redemptive purposes? The answer is in Jesus' words in Matthew 23-24.
- On Tuesday before His crucifixion, Jesus repeatedly confronted Temple religious leaders, pronouncing woes on the scribes and Pharisees, and then, in the afternoon, leaving the Temple for the last time, He walked with disciples to the Mount of Olives where He taught the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24, Mk. 13).
- As Jesus left the Temple, He said, ***"Your house is left to you desolate"*** (Mt. 23:38). Notice, Jesus refers to it as "your (the Priests and Pharisee's house) being left desolate (Jesus, the Temple's glory is leaving). "A few days later, Jesus died on the cross, and ***"the curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom"*** opening the way to God for all believers apart from Priests in a Temple built by men.
- God ceased to bless the temple with His presence. The Temple was *Icahabod* (the glory has departed). Jesus left the Jerusalem Temple to never return. His departure and taking His seat on the Mount of Olives (Mt. 24:3) is reminiscent of Ezek. 11:23 (***"the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city."***)
- The physical destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 AD was the outward consummation of God's earlier spiritual rejection and repudiation.
- The only temple in which God now and in the future will dwell is Jesus Christ and the Church. Any new physical temple built on the Temple Mount intended as a place for God to meet with His people would seem to have no spiritual or theological significance (*Icahabod*, the glory has departed).
- If God were to approve building a new Temple, reinstating its previous function of sacrificial worship, it would deny that the Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and was the one-time, final and perfect sacrifice for redeeming many. It would mean repudiation of the Church as the body of Christ and temple of God. It would oppose Paul's affirmation in 2 Corinthians 6 and Peter's in 1 Peter 2.
- As the new covenant people of God, the church is the "family of God" united through common identity "in Christ." The church is not simply a cultural institution meeting the needs of neighbors.
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 - Christ is the living corner stone on which the church is built. We "in Christ" are living stones in the building, a building graced forever by the presence of the Lord. John's measuring the temple (11:1-2) is a symbolic act signifying divine ownership, perseverance, and protection of God's redeemed people.
3. **Another Look:** The Revelation passage (chapter 11) we are studying, is universally considered to be "a bit strange" and difficult to interpret. John is commanded to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But he was told to not measure the court outside the temple, since it will be given over to the nations who will trample the holy city for 42 months. During those 42 months, two witnesses clothed in sackcloth, will have authority to prophesy.
4. **Revelation 11:1-6:** *Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, ² but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. ³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. ⁶ They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.*
- Revelation is an unveiling, an uncovering of things previously hidden. From chapter 1 and the letters to the churches, it is clear the entire letter of Revelation, was written to seven churches whose people first received and heard the letter's contents as it was read aloud to them.
 - Revelation is relevant today but must be guarded against interpretations inconsistent with the original intent for the seven churches.
 - To interpret it we must (1.) first understand how a particular passage would have been understood by the original hearers. (2.) Then draw out the "principles involved" and properly apply them to today's world.
 - The images in 11:1-6 are drawn from Zechariah 4 where the witnesses are referred to as two olive trees and two lampstands. The two olive trees symbolize the endless power of the Holy Spirit to anoint and keep the witnesses empowered and shining brightly so that the world can hear the message from God. Both the olive trees and the lampstands stand before the Lord of the earth (Rev. 11:4).
 - In Zechariah's vision, olive trees continuously supplied oil to a lampstand with no human effort, showing God's work is accomplished "*not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit* (Zech. 4:6).
 - The lampstands symbolize churches and signify God's people as beacons of light and truth.
5. **The Dispensationalist View:** I grew up in a dispensationalist environment. The temple, altar, and outer court in this passage were all believed to refer to a future literal physical temple in geographic

Jerusalem to be built just before the second coming of Christ. That temple was to be measured by John.

- The worshipers were a remnant of faithful, believing Jews who survived the “great tribulation,” built a temple and restarted the sacrifices and rituals of Moses. Reinstitution would be ended by the Beast bringing desolation to the temple and subjecting Jerusalem to severe affliction for a final 3 ½ years of the 7-year tribulation period.
 - The two witnesses are either Elijah and Moses in person, or individuals like Elijah and Moses. They will witness for a 3 ½ year period, be martyred by the Beast, and resurrected 3 ½ days later.
 - My family’s community of believers accepted this version as the truth. However, Revelation begins with the statement, ***“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place”*** (Rev. 1:1). If “soon” means “soon” in any usual sense, there is a problem.
 - Events imagined by dispensationalists to be what is meant by 11:1-13 have not occurred in the past almost 2000 years. The account doesn’t seem to fit the picture of ***“things that must soon take place.”***
6. **What Then:** Symbolic language dominates Revelation. It seems more likely the 13 verses symbolically describe the church’s mission and fate during all the present inter-advent age, ending with a final period of opposition and persecution by the Beast.
- As we saw in Lesson 30, the Temple of God is no longer a physical structure made by human hands.
 - Through the Holy Spirit, God dwells in His people and makes manifest His presence. The Church is not merely an institution, it is a living, spiritual extension of Jesus. Christ is the “Head,” believers are interconnected “members” of His mystical body, unified by the Holy Spirit.
 - Since Christ’s resurrection, believers, as the church, are the only temple in which God dwells.
7. **Ephesians 2:19-22:** *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*