

Worship Guide - Lake Mary
WORSHIP SERVICE -
11.21.2021

THE TWO WITNESSES - Part 1

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: The Church is vulnerable in the world as she witnesses for Christ and suffers loss, but also invulnerable, as she is protected by God in the world from spiritual harm.

Revelation 11:1-14

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, 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.

OUTLINE OF THE PASSAGE

- **Two Metaphors – Four Scenes**
- The **First Metaphor** is that of the **Temple of God** and the **Holy City**
- The **Second Metaphor** is that of the **Two Witnesses**.
- **Scene 1** - The **Spiritual Protection** of the Church (1-2)
- **Scene 2** - The **Invincible Proclamation** of the Church (3-6)
- **Scene 3** - The **Satanic Persecution** of the Church (7-10)
- **Scene 4** - The **Inestimable Prize** of the Church (11-13)

II. THE SPIRITUAL PROTECTION OF THE CHURCH

1. MEASURING THE TEMPLE

1 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,

- What is this temple that he is told to measure?
- **Four General views:**
- **Dispensational:** a literal restored temple in Jerusalem at some point immediately preceding the return of Christ.
- **Preterist:** the literal temple that was still standing prior to its destruction in 70 AD.
- **Historicist:** a fulfillment of some time in church history like the Reformation, or the Second Great Awakening. Each of these is a repeated fulfillment of the temple of God being measured in these significant events.
- **Idealist:** symbolically represents the church throughout the entirety of the church age.

- **What is the temple of God?**
- Drawn from Ezekiel's vision found in Ezekiel 40-48.
- **Ezekiel 48:35b** "And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord Is There."
- What distinguishes the true temple of God then is that it is the very place where the presence of God is, where God dwells.
- Now we need to look to the NT to see how it defines the fulfillment of this OT prophecy.

- **NT definition of the Temple.**
- Jesus describes himself as the Temple of God (John 2:18-22).
- Jesus is the temple of God on earth because he is "God with us", tabernacling among us—the very presence of God (John 1:14).

- The NT applies the concept of the temple to the believer whose body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 6:19).
- **1 Cor. 3:16** Do you not know that **you are God's temple** and that **God's Spirit dwells in you**? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and **you are that temple**.
- **2 Cor. 6:16b** For **we are the temple** of the living God
- **Ephesians 2:20-22** 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.
- The Church is God's temple!
- The New Jerusalem, which the angel says is the Bride of the Lamb, is described and measured as a temple (Rev. 21)
- We are that very temple of God!
- The temple is to be interpreted symbolically not literally.
- Measuring in OT prophecy has to do with defining what belongs to God and is kept safe by God.
- Example from Zechariah (Zech. 2:1-5)
- Measuring has to do with defining what belongs to God with a view to God's protecting what is his.
- The measuring of the temple is just another metaphor, another way of showing us what we have already seen—God's seal upon his people's foreheads in Rev. 7.
- Just like with the seals, we see that it does not exempt God's people from persecution but it does ensure their spiritual preservation.
- There is a parallel in the interludes of the 6th trumpet and the 6th seal— John is measuring the church, just like the 144,000 were numbered as the sealed servants of God.
- However, we are not kept from physical harm, oppression, the ongoing hostility in the world to the gospel or from suffering.

2. THE OUTER COURT

V2 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.

- The outer court in the temple complex was for the Gentiles. It was called the Court of the Gentiles.
- It was the farthest a God-fearing Gentile was allowed to go in the temple.
- Why is the outer court not to be measured? God says it is given over to the nations.
- Who are the nations? We saw that last week in the vision of the angel and the little scroll. John is to prophesy to many people and nations and languages and kings. (Rev. 10:11)
- This is shorthand, a formula in Revelation for unbelieving humanity that continues in defiance to God and his gospel and persecutes His people.
- "Nations" refers to these people. They are not included in God's measuring.
- This would also include apostate Christians and visible members of the Church who are unbelieving nominal Christians.
- Only true believers are measured. The visible church is composed of both believers and unbelievers.
- So everything outside the temple belongs to them, they are not protected, but they are the reason God protects his people from spiritual harm.

3. THE HOLY CITY

- Next we're told that the nations are going to trample the holy city.
- What is the holy city?
- In Revelation, the holy city is the New Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:10)
- The holy city as we have already seen is the Bride of the Lamb.
- We are the holy city—the Church.
- The temple is the people of God because that is where God dwells.
- The holy city is the people of God because that is where God dwells.
- Temples and cities are both metaphors for where God is. Both represent the people of God.
- Inside of the temple, God's people are safe, they are secure, God is protecting them.

- Outside of the temple, God's people will be trampled and harmed.
- The nations will abuse God's people, oppose God's people, and harm God's people.
- For the totality of the existence of the church on earth she will face persecution.

4. FORTY-TWO MONTHS

- How long will that period of suffering and persecution and trampling of the holy city last?
- For 42 months.
- There are three references, three numeric symbols or phrases, that refer to the period of time known as the tribulation in Revelation.
- 42 months / 1,260 days / time, times and half a time.
- Time, times and half a time come from Daniel ch 7 and 12.
- **Daniel 12:6-7** And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.
- For John, this is the beginning of the fulfillment of that period of time in Daniel's prophecy—the beginning of the last days.
- What Daniel sees in his vision is now being expanded and elaborated upon in Revelation 11.
- Why use the symbol of 42 months to refer to a period of time that is obviously a much longer timeframe?
- Here are a couple of OT examples and an historical example.
- Numbers 33 -- Israel's wilderness encampments
- Elijah shuts up the rain (1Kings 17:1). Jesus references this event in Luke 4:25 and says that the period of time in which the heavens were shut up in the days of Elijah was 3 1/2 years — or 42 months.
- **Historical example:** The Maccabean revolt in the 2nd century BC.
- This is a partial fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy concerning the abomination which causes desolation. (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11)
- In 167 BC, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, a guerrilla-style revolt sought to liberate the Jewish people. In 164 BC the temple was recaptured, cleansed and rededicated.
- From the time Judas Maccabeus started leading until the recapturing of the temple was 3 1/2 years—42 months.
- 42 months, three and half years, came to be used as a symbolic representation of a period of extreme tribulation and suffering that would be brought to an end.
- In the language of Revelation, that is the time of sustained tribulation between the two advents of Jesus Christ—it is the time that we are living in right now.
- For the length of time that God's people are commissioned to preach the gospel and witness for Jesus Christ they will live in relentless persecution, opposition, suffering, and martyrdom.

III. CONCLUDING APPLICATION

1. Accept and Embrace the Church's vulnerability.

- Faithful gospel proclamation will involve loss of some kind.
- If safety is what we value most then we will not be faithful witnesses.
- We will lose something of value, and that's why most Christians keep their faith private and do not witness.
- By virtue of what the gospel is and what Christ demands, making it known to others will require the loss of something that you value greatly.
- Come to terms with that, embrace that, accept that.
- God is not indifferent to this, that is why he spiritually protects us, why we will be vindicated, even though for time, we will suffer physical loss of some kind.
- Kevin De Young said in a sermon, "The church will be divinely defended in the midst of deadly danger."
- That's the point of this whole interlude. We'll be tested, we'll be trampled, but we will triumph!

2. Rejoice and Rest in the Church's invulnerability

- You have been measured.
 - That's what our confidence is grounded in—God has measured us.
 - What do you have to fear? Loss, that's to be expected.
 - What do you have to gain? Everything! An unimaginable weight of glory yet to be revealed to us.
-
- Are you part of God's temple?
 - Make sure that you are measured in the Temple of God by entering the Temple through Jesus Christ.