

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING

PART I

Foundational Text

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein” (Revelation 11:1).

John’s first task after being “recommissioned” to “prophesy again” (10:11) is to measure the temple. John is frequently asked to participate in his visions (1:12; 5:4; 7:14; 10:9-11; 19:10; 22:8). He is now to perform a symbolic act to demonstrate what God does just before the witnessing/prophesying is to occur (11:3-7). There is precedence for messengers to act out a prophecy! Isaiah walked naked and barefoot as a sign of Egypt’s impending captivity to Assyria (Isaiah 20:2-5). Ezekiel dug through a wall and carried his luggage out in the sight of Israel as a sign of the coming exile (Ezekiel 12:1-7).

“To measure” is prophetically depicted in many narratives. Examples include the temple in Ezekiel (chapters 40–48), the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:15-17), a people – Moabites (II Samuel 8:2) and God’s chosen (Micah 2:5). Measuring characterizes:

1. A metaphor for protection or preservation (Isaiah 28:16-17, Jeremiah 31:38-40, Ezekiel 29:6 LXX, Zechariah 1:16)
2. A metaphor for judgment (II Samuel 8:2, II Kings 21:13, Lamentations 2:8, Ezekiel 40, Amos 7:7-9, Zechariah 2).¹

“It is ... obvious that obtaining physical dimensions was not the purpose of John’s assignment.... The preservation view is hard to support.... Measuring in Zechariah 2 and Ezekiel 40 was a symbol for future judgments and the restoration of Israel.”² A judicial act of “determination” is in view here in Revelation 11.

The **“rod”** that is given to John to measure is a reed of defined length (10 ft. 4 in. likely³). It represents a **“standard.”** Since it appears to have originated from God and Christ in the context of chapter 10 and 11 setting, it is a **“divine standard.”** Since the **remnant** and the **saints** who will be chosen are noted later as “keeping the commandments of God,” this standard must be God’s law (Revelation 12:17, 14:12; cf. Matthew 19:17, John 14:15, I John 2:3, Matthew 2:13). This echoes the temple measurements by the “man in appearance like **bronze**” (Ezekiel 40:3, 5).

A similar “man” imagery is portrayed in Daniel 10 of Jesus – but even more embellished. *“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the **beryl**, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to **polished brass**, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude”* (Daniel 10:5-6).

¹ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 559.

² Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago – 1992), vol. 2, p. 80.

³ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 409.

Jesus is portrayed there as a priest, king and judge on our behalf. He was presented later in a similar way, alluding to His role in the whole book of Revelation (1:13-15). Contextually, we can appeal in 11:1 to a judgment portrayal that Jesus introduced earlier in this Book. A point in time has come where judicial decisions are being made relative to the worshipers – the living.

To measure by a divine standard again is not protection imagery. It is a judicial imperative. A case is to close. God is choosing those who comply with His eternal rules that characterize the kingdom of God. The outcome will be a church, a people with leaders that reflect the ideals presented in Ezekiel's temple vision (40–48), the eternal gospel, the very character of God.

Why is John the one doing the measuring? He is laying out the standard before the church, before the people. There is no record indicating that he is the one interpreting the judicial results or in any way executing a sentence. He is doing what God wants us to do, witnessing to all the standards of righteousness.

This is a compelling contextual theme here in Revelation 11:1! **Before** that final work of the three and a half years (11:2-3), a group of worshipers and leaders – a body – a temple – are measured. Will there be a group of people chosen and ready to finish the work and bring in a great multitude? John has already described that group in the first seal. A horse represents people in military action (Song of Solomon 1:9, Isaiah 63:13, Zechariah 10:3, Joel 2:1-4). A white horse is a pure group of people. They symbolize the 144,000. Before that three and a half years, a “group” is made up (11:1). Then we see them in action going out “conquering and to conquer” (Revelation 6:1-2) as His witnesses.

Before the final work of “giving” the gospel to all the world, the “givers” are to be chosen, measured, set aside and seen in God's eyes as a white horse – a corporate body filled with the righteousness of Christ. A judgment must convene for that group to be God's “special forces,” ready to “go out” on His behalf. This will be the church, made up of saints, active in this final period. “When they are ‘measured’ they are identified as belonging to God and ‘overcoming’ the world ... ‘by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony’” (12:11).⁴

Temple – For John, this could not be a literal building. By the time he wrote this book, Jerusalem had been sacked and the temple destroyed. Thus, the imagery is a metaphor. What might it represent? There are many designations for a “temple” in the New Testament: ourselves (II Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 3:6), Christ (Revelation 21:22) and His church (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

Here, it represents the “Christian community who worship God.”⁵ It is the “body of believers,” the people of God (I Corinthians 3:16-17, II Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22, I Peter 3:5).⁶ The corporate imagery in 11:1 suggests His church – it is being judged – purified – set aside.

The “**altar**” is felt to be representative of the golden altar of incense. Its imagery is directly tied to the worshipers. An inanimate object would not be judged. That is where the priests, the

⁴ Osborne, *op. cit.*, pp. 410-411.

⁵ Boring, M. Eugene; *Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky), 1989, p. 143.

⁶ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 213.

“church leaders” appealed to God on the worshipers behalf. This suggests that the church leaders are being reviewed.

The “**worshipers**” are actively engaged in relating to God in His church. The “chosen” will be the “overcomers” (chapters 2 and 3) and those who “conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (12:11). They are **living saints**. The **judgment of the living** is in view.

Who are these individuals? God is choosing – before the last three and a half years – a special group of individuals He will soon call “my two witnesses” (11:3). Remember that John was to prophesy again. They will fulfill that command! “**They shall prophesy** a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (11:3). The measuring is the choosing, the setting aside of a group of individuals who will finish the work.

The Two Witnesses – The Byproduct of the Measuring

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth” (Revelation 11:3).

“**I will give**” reveals God’s control and support of this chosen group of people. The church, worshipers and leaders that emerge out of the measuring are these witnesses. The word “**power**” is supplied but certainly implied. God is providing special power and authority to these two witnesses.

What kind of “power” is given? “Authority and power” **to prophesy** (10:11). They fulfill what John was ordered to do. Prophecy (*pheteusousin*) means that they will proclaim what God wants to make known, especially regarding pending future events.⁷

They convey urgent prophetic messages. What allusion helps to verify the content of those messages? John ate the unsealed portion of Daniel⁸ (10:10). He is immediately told to “**prophecy again.**” The sealed and now unsealed portions of Daniel are part of the final message of the two witnesses – the 144,000. The 1260 days is their window to operate in at the end of time. To assume an additional 1260 years on top of an end-time message would be out of context. This ties directly to Daniel 12:7. The next verse reveals that power source.

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (14:4).

They are individually depicted as two **olive trees**. Olive oil symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit. This is described more in Zechariah 4:2–14. The Qumran community saw the olive trees as “royal priests” filled with God’s Spirit (1QS9.11). They are part of the redemptive priesthood first announced in Revelation 1:6. This symbolizes Spirit-filled evangelists.

Even more specific is the explanation John gives that the two witnesses are **two lampstands**. Jesus had already notified us that those lampstands or “candlesticks” were the seven churches (1:20). Here, there are only two left! What churches “survive” and become His two witnesses?

⁷ Friberg Lexicon

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 2, p. 105

Smyrna and Philadelphia. The “two” at Christ’s transfiguration – Moses and Elijah – also represent these churches.⁹

These two symbolize the last-day churches of suffering (Smyrna) and triumphant (Philadelphia),¹⁰ who are filled with the Holy Spirit, going out to finish the work.

What happened to the other five? They are now of the “outer court.” The “**two witnesses**” echo the Old Testament requirement for any competent legal testimony to secure a conviction (Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15; Numbers 35:30). This setting does not suggest an issue of criminal intent [the persecution (vs 2) is a parenthetical statement of fact]. Jesus did note that “two” would verify truth (John 8:17). This imagery reveals “two witnesses,” representing the truth as it is in Jesus to the world. How do we know? Later, they will be called “saints” and the “remnant” who hold the “testimony of Jesus” and exhibit the “faith of Jesus” (12:17, 14:12). Is that tied to Daniel’s unsealed vision he just ate? Totally!

These are the 144,000 who will be purified and who will then go out to finish the work. They are the byproduct of the initial phase of the **judgment of the living** (11:1) – again which occurs shortly before the last three and a half years of witnessing. How do we know? The White Horse, first Seal message (Revelation 6:1-2), reveals that there is a body of believers who are pure and white before they go out on their mission to bring victory to the “Lamb.”

“These witnesses ... will prophesy for ‘1,260 days,’ a variant of the ‘forty-two months’ of 11:2.... Their ministry in this sense does not primarily connote the church of the interim period between Jesus’ two ‘comings’ but more the final period of history when the antichrist will both ‘conquer’ the church (13:7) and be ‘conquered’ by the church (12:11). Here, we see that their ‘witness’ is accomplished via a ‘prophetic’ ministry. Since this is closely connected with the command to John to ‘prophesy’ in 10:11, it should be understood in that light. That is more than simply to proclaim the gospel but likely means that they proclaim to the nations God’s message for the last days (cf. 10:10), built on the ‘little scroll’ of chapter 10.”¹¹

The “prophetic voice” of these witnesses defines their priestly function. Their dress of sackcloth reveals that they are sighing and crying for the sins of the world (Joel 1:8, Amos 8:10).

The Inner Court

“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles (Revelation 11:2a).”

The outer court is not to be measured. It is identified with the Gentiles. It **is** part of the temple infrastructure. They represent the ones who have never made a commitment to go all the way with Jesus. They will even trample or persecute the saints (vs 3). Through inference, however, the **inner court** is measured as part of the temple, its worshipers and the altar.

The “**inner court**” is a very important concept that must be defined. The “model” that appears to best illustrate John’s picture comes from Herod’s Temple – Israel’s last. This was a “remake” of the temple decreed by Cyrus the Great. Restoration began in 18 B.C., it was

⁹ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁰ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

finished in ~ 8 B.C. But the court yards were being finished and embellished even in Christ's day. Everything was finally completed around 65 A.D. (Easton's Dictionary – Temple, Herod).

The outer court was entered through eight gates. The eastern gate was called Susa or Golden Gate. **East** and **Susa (Shushan)** both represent "deliverance." From there the first part of the inner court was the court of women. That is where most of the worshipers spent time. Each division is entered by steps upward. The second part of the inner court is the court of Israel. There, the worshipers came with their sacrificial animals. The third part of the inner court was only where the priests worked. There, the altar of sacrifice and laver, in line with the eastern gate was placed. Thus, the inner court included the worshipers and leaders. Those who entered the Holy Place, functioning at the golden altar, were special priests before God.

The Witnesses' Priestly Role

This brings us to a special point. In the first chapter, a "greeting" comes from the trinity (1:4-5a). Jesus is identified in His role as Savior, King and Priest (vs 5).

- Savior – faithful witness, first begotten of dead
- King – the Prince of the kings of the earth
- Priest – loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood

From that authority base (vs 6), He then "made us kings and priests unto God and His father." That is an inner court experience where he can meet the saints. By measuring (selecting) the worshipers, the "corporate body" (temple and the altar), God is "making up" the number that will serve Him in that "inner court." The Zadok priests of Ezekiel represent that same group. These witnesses in Revelation and the Zadok priests represent the 144,000.

What happens when the measuring is complete? Ezekiel helps us to understand:

*"Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is **toward the east**, and measured it round about" (Ezekiel 42:15)*

*"Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh **toward the east**" (Ezekiel 43:1).*

"On reaching Jerusalem the two disciples enter at the **eastern gate**, which is open at night on festal occasions. The houses are dark and silent, but the travelers make their way through the narrow streets by the light of the rising moon."¹² At periods of special worship, the direction of "deliverance" is open to all.

*"And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came **from the way of the east**: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory" (Ezekiel 43:2) – deliverance comes from the east.*

*"And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is **toward the east**. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the **inner court**; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house" (Ezekiel 43:4-5). This is a prophecy of when the Latter Rain comes to His people.*

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 802.

When the “priests” are chosen, glory and deliverance are theirs. The latter rain comes, and the final work on earth is finished. The “measuring” is an *immediate* sequel to understanding the unsealed portion of Daniel. That strongly suggests that *in the era* of increasing light regarding Daniel, the judgment of the “living” begins. This is clearly a symbolic act of God’s favor because the outer court is left out.

God’s favor is being extended towards His church, the worshipers and the altar. His disapproval is in evidence towards the outer court for persecuting the “holy city” (God’s people) during the last half of the 70th week.

Revelation 10 and 11 are partially overlapping chapters representing an “interlude” between the narrative (not the timing) of trumpets 6 and 7. Though not the purpose of this article to discuss the details of those chapters, the location of Revelation 11:1, the judgment within that narrative sequence, is important. This is the sequential outline:

Preface to the Prophecy

<p>Christ – imagery as judge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sealed portion of Daniel opened¹³ – seven thunders – seven judgments begin 	<p>judicial executive</p>	<p>} 10:1-4</p>
<p>Christ – imagery – superintends the world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – last message warning to be given¹⁴ 		<p>} 10:5</p>
<p>Christ – prophecy of pending events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – oath between divine Beings – tied to the Sabbath – tarrying time about to end 		<p>} 10:6</p>

[Break – verse 7 is a commentary insert]

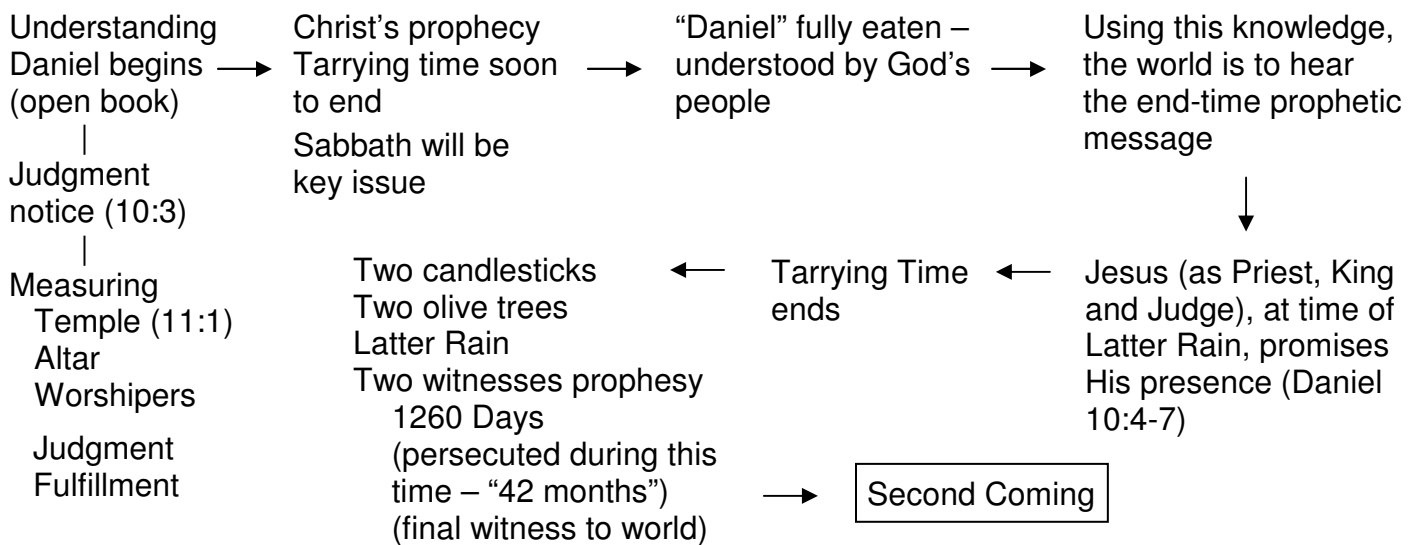
¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 2, p. 105.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Actual Event-Driven, End-Time Prophecy Begins

John – eats unsealed <i>chazown</i> vision – from Daniel	}	10:8-10
John – advised to prophesy again (symbolizes the work of 144,000 at end)	}	10:11
John – told to measure temple and its environs. That is the onset of seven thunders (10:1-4).	}	11:1 (judgment of the living)
Timing prophecies beginning three and a half years	}	11:2-3
Events during the timing prophecies	}	11:4-13
Second Coming	}	11:12

Summary Graph



Note: The unsealed portion of Daniel is understood and to be part of the Loud Cry and three angels' messages (21MR20, 19MR320). This occurs **before** the three and a half years begins right at the end. Intriguingly – that is **when** the onset of the seven thunders is tied to the measuring of the temple (i.e., before the onset of that time period). An amazing picture of judicial discovery is underway. The witnesses are being chosen and prepared before the three and a half years. How much before?

When the Judgment of the Living Begins

There is a dramatic judgment scene earlier in Revelation. It is directly tied to what we have been reviewing. Revelation is built on repeated themes with varied imagery. Judicial review is first introduced in Revelation 4.

1. John sees an open door – it was opened in the past (4:1).
2. A trumpet-like voice talked with him (a key to timing information we'll review shortly (4:1).
3. He was invited to “come up” through that open door to see the “future” (4:1).
4. John then goes into vision (4:2). Apparently the imagery in verse 1 was of a different type of revelation.
5. Now comes the court room scene:

*“And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was **set** in heaven, and one **sat** on the throne” (Revelation 4:2).*

The phrases “a throne was set” means that it had been previously placed in position. Many trace this to Daniel 7:9a when thrones were “set up.” That portrays the onset of a judgment scene. Here in 4:1 John is told that what he will see is associated with a future vision related to the second coming (Revelation 1:1, 3, 7).

- The words “one sat on the throne” allude to God the Father – the Ancient of Days.
- “set” and “sat” are prophetic judgment words (Psalm 9:4, 122:5; Judges 5:10; Revelation 20:4).

God is described as “sitting on the throne” often in the Book (4:2-3, 9-10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5). The imagery here alludes to the supreme Potentate sitting in final judgment upon the world.¹⁵

The sequence of vision missives in chapters 4 to 6 is as follows:

1. Judgment scene – related to the very end of time
2. 24 elders and 4 living creatures preparing for end-time activity in the heavenly courts
3. A scroll with seven seals – Father is author
4. Breaking of seals

The breaking of the seals begins earth’s final drama between good and evil. This, plus the timing, is another study. When the first seal is broken, it begins the three and a half years noted in 11:2-3.

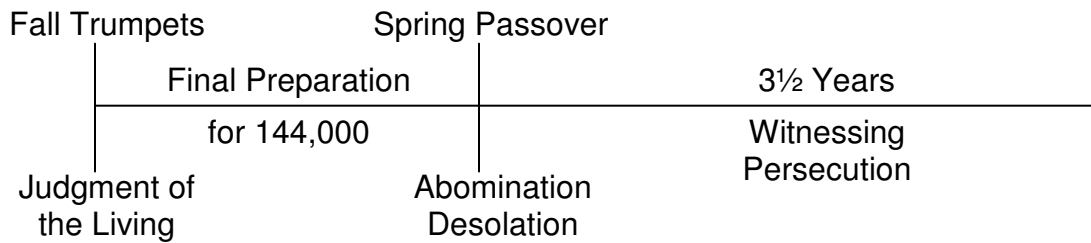
What starts this judicial process related to those living?

- The answer is in the trumpet-like voice in 4:1.
- That **is** a continuation of the voice that was first recorded in 1:10.

John first heard Jesus with a trumpet-like voice on a Sabbath day. The contextual picture – “trumpet like” and “Sabbath” draws on the Feast of Trumpets – a judicial ten days of final preparation. That feast occurred in the fall. Another in-depth study shows that the three and a half years begin in the spring at Passover.

¹⁵ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

It is very clear from many studies beyond this article to discuss, that the Feast of Trumpets, the fall of the year before the following spring Passover is when the judgment of the living begins. There is stunning data to show that shortly before the “abomination that leads to desolation,” this judicial process begins.



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