

## A Critique Of The Preterist View Of The Temple In Revelation 11:1–2

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An argument preterists use to support the Neronian date for Revelation is the mention of the temple in Revelation 11:1–2. For many early-date advocates this is the decisive piece of internal evidence for their position. Torrey says that this is "a most important passage, truly decisive in view of all the other evidence"<sup>1</sup> in establishing the date of the Apocalypse. Briggs says, "Nonetheless, the apparent existence of the Jerusalem temple in Rev. 11:1–2 is a paramount feature in support of the argument that the book was actually written during Nero's earlier reign."<sup>2</sup> The preterists' point is that since John wrote Revelation in Nero's reign (A.D. 54–68), he referred in Revelation 11:1–2 to the temple that was destroyed in A.D. 70 and was not predicting a yet-future, end-time temple.

The apostle John was told to measure the temple and the altar and to count the people worshiping there. "Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, 'Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.'"

There are four views on the identity of this temple.

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### Symbolic Of The Church

The majority view is that the temple in Revelation 11 is symbolic. While there are slight variations within this view, the basic idea is that the temple represents the church and the "court" represents the world and all who have compromised with it.<sup>3</sup> Some view the temple as the Christian community while the court outside refers to the outer life of the church in its vulnerability to suffering and death.<sup>4</sup> It is true that the church is often referred to in the New Testament as a temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5). And the term ναός fits well with this figurative meaning.<sup>5</sup> Beale sees a figurative presentation of the church in Revelation 11:1–2 that he considers similar to the images that are figuratively applied to overcomers in 3:12: pillar, temple, God's name, the name of the city of Jerusalem, and Christ's new name.<sup>6</sup> The difference, however, between 3:12 and 11:1–2 is that in 3:12 the figures are specifically said to refer to the overcomers, whereas in 11:1–2 no correlation is said to exist between the temple and the church.

However, the symbolic view of the temple faces two problems. First, this temple is Jewish, as indicated by the sanctuary, the altar, the court of the Gentiles, and the holy city.<sup>7</sup> As Ladd notes, "The temple is not represented primarily as the dwelling place of

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God but as the Jewish temple in Jerusalem."<sup>8</sup> Also the trampling of the outer court and the entire city of Jerusalem by Gentiles indicates that the temple and the court are Jewish, in contrast to the Gentiles.<sup>9</sup>

Second, the figurative view is unacceptable because the imagery fails to account adequately for the different elements in the text. Revelation 11:1–2 makes a distinction between the temple itself and those who worship in it. If the temple represents the church, then who are the favored worshipers who are measured?<sup>10</sup> Osborne argues that the temple is the church, while the worshipers in it are "the individual believers in the church," since they are described as "in it" and therefore under its protection.<sup>11</sup> However, the church by definition includes those who worship in it. The figurative view seems to merge the two symbols.<sup>12</sup> For these reasons the symbolic view is not a satisfactory interpretation.

### A Heavenly Temple

Recognizing the problems in interpreting Revelation 11:1–2 as a reference to the temple in Jerusalem that was destroyed in A.D. 70, some scholars view the temple as a heavenly one.<sup>13</sup> Kistemaker notes that the word ναός occurs in Revelation sixteen times and then concludes that in 11:1–2 it points to a celestial temple symbolizing the presence of God.<sup>14</sup>

While it is true that ναός in Revelation does normally refer to a celestial temple, there are four difficulties with this view. First, in verse 19 John wrote that he saw "the temple of God which is in heaven" and the "ark of His covenant. . . in His temple." From this heavenly temple there issued forth "flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm."

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However, verses 1–2 make no mention of the temple in heaven or of the ark of the covenant or of the sights and sounds that come from the throne. These differences show that the heavenly temple in verse 19 differs from the earthly temple in verses 1–2.

Second, in 7:15 and 15:5–6 the tabernacle as well as the temple are seen, since the heavenly pattern was the same for both.<sup>15</sup> Third, in what sense could a heavenly temple be trodden under foot by the Gentile nations for forty-two months? This suits an earthly temple much better than a heavenly one.<sup>16</sup>

## The Herodian Temple

According to preterists the temple in 11:1–2 is the Herodian temple in Jerusalem that was still standing when John wrote Revelation. Gentry says the similarity between those verses and Luke 21:24 shows that they describe the same events, that is, the literal occurrences in Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>17</sup> Therefore preterists conclude that Revelation must have been written before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 and was not predicting a yet-future temple.<sup>18</sup> This view, however, has major problems.

### Revelation 11:1–2 And Luke 21:24

Gentry argues that Luke 21:24 prophesies the destruction of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, noting that the reference to the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 is reflective of Luke 21:24. He observes that both texts refer to the Gentiles or nations, the city of Jerusalem, and a trampling of Jerusalem under foot.

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Gentry says, “In Luke 21:24 we read: ‘and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and *Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles* until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ Revelation 11:2b reads: ‘it [i.e., the holy city, Rev. 11:1] has been given to the *nations*; and they will *tread under foot* the *holy city* for forty-two months.’ Here the correspondences are so strong, they bespeak historical identity rather than mere accidental similarity.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore for Gentry both Luke 21:24 and Revelation 11:1–2 prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem and the second Jewish temple in A.D. 70.

True, Luke 21:24 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans, and three linguistic parallels exist between Luke 21:24 and Revelation 11:1–2. However, similarity between two texts does not denote identity. Three significant differences between these two texts and their contexts indicate they are not referring to the same event. First, in Luke 21:24 Jerusalem is trampled under foot by the Gentiles. In A.D. 70 the city was judged by God and reduced to rubble for her unfaithfulness (Luke 21:6). But in Revelation 11:1 the sanctuary and the altar are measured and the worshipers are counted as a sign of God’s approval.

Second, the remainder of Revelation 11 shows that Jerusalem will not be totally destroyed during its forty-two months of treading mentioned in verse 2. Verse 8 cites Jerusalem as the place where the bodies of the two witnesses lie in the street for three and a half days. And a great earthquake in Jerusalem kills seven thousand people (v. 13). If verses 1–2 refer to the total destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, how can the bodies of the two witnesses lie in the street of Jerusalem and how can seven thousand people in Jerusalem be killed and a tenth of it fall if the city no longer exists?

Third, verse 2 states a specific time limit for the trampling of the city—“forty-two months”—whereas Luke 21:24 leaves the time of trampling open-ended and implies that it will endure for a long time (“until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”). The two texts indicate that the events they describe will be similar in that Gentiles will come against the city of Jerusalem in conquest. However, the contrasts demonstrate that they refer to two different acts of judgment by God against Jerusalem, and thus two different Jewish temples. Luke 21:24 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, and Revelation 11:1–2 predicts the Gentile conquest and domination of Jerusalem in the seventieth week of Daniel.

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### Mixed Hermeneutic

A second reason for rejecting Gentry’s view of Revelation 11:1–2 is that it involves an unwarranted, confusing mixture of literal-historical and figurative-symbolic interpretation.<sup>20</sup> Gentry interprets verse 1 figuratively and verse 2 literally. He says that the innermost elements, the sanctuary, altar, and worshipers symbolize the true temple, the church, which will be preserved. But he views the “outer court” of the temple complex, which is not measured, as destined for destruction in A.D. 70.<sup>21</sup> In other words he takes a description that is clearly on Jewish ground and interprets it as partly Jewish and partly Christian.<sup>22</sup>

Gentry justifies this radical shift by appealing to several other Scriptures. He points to verse 8, in which Jerusalem “mystically is called Sodom and Egypt.”<sup>23</sup> However, this verse explicitly indicates that these names are symbolic of Jerusalem, while there is no such textual indicator in verse 1. Gentry also appeals for support to Jesus’ words in John 6:48–51, where there is a mixing of spiritual and literal realities.<sup>24</sup> Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

Obviously Jesus was speaking symbolically of Himself as bread and literally of death. But in Revelation 11:1–2 there is no clear signal of a switch that would call for a change in hermeneutical approaches.<sup>25</sup> Gentry also points to Hebrews 8:5, which mentions both the literal temple and the heavenly temple. But this verse clearly states that one is the earthly copy and the other is the heavenly reality. No such distinction is stated in Revelation 11:1–2.

Next, Gentry states that one symbol may have a twofold referent because the seven heads on the beast represent both seven mountains and seven kings (17:9–10). But again readers know that

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the seven heads have a double referent because the text specifically says so. One does not have the license to create a dual referent or mixed hermeneutic in 11:1–2. Gentry also appeals to the apocalyptic genre of Revelation as allowing a greater flexibility in its exegesis, but he provides no examples from apocalyptic literature of the kind of figurative and literal meaning for essentially the same terminology that he proposes for 11:1–2.<sup>26</sup>

Gentry's mixed hermeneutic continues in his exegesis of verses 3–13 and their reference to the two witnesses. He argues that large, round numbers in Revelation are symbols, but smaller numbers should be taken literally. So he takes the forty-two months in verse 2 and the 1,260 days in verse 3 literally.<sup>27</sup> But then in the same verse (v. 3) he fails to follow his own interpretive method when he says that the two prophets in verses 3–13 “probably represent a small body of Christians who remained in Jerusalem to testify against it. They are portrayed as *two*, in that they are legal witnesses to the covenant curses.”<sup>28</sup> For Gentry the forty-two months in verse 2 are literal and the 1,260 days in verse 3 are literal, but the *two* prophets in verse 3 are not. Thomas likens this to changing the rules in the middle of the game, and he observes, “Any interpretation can win that way.”<sup>29</sup>

Gentry argues that a mixture of literal and figurative interpretation is required in verses 1–2.<sup>30</sup> However, it is required only if one adopts his preterist viewpoint. If, on the other hand, the temple in Revelation is a literal temple in Jerusalem in the end times, then the worshipers who are favored are end-time Jewish worshipers who are acceptable to God because of their humble faith in God's Word. Verse 1 probably alludes to God's house (the temple) and to faithful worshipers as described in Isaiah 66:1–2.<sup>31</sup> “Thus says the Lord, ‘Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these

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things came into being,’ declares the Lord. ‘But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’ ” Verses 3–6 then present God's view toward self-reliant worshipers in the end-time temple and His punishment for their sins. Interpreting Revelation 11:1–2 in light of Isaiah 66 maintains a consistent literal hermeneutic that is in line with the parallel Old Testament background.

### **Revelation 11:1–2 And Ezekiel**

A third reason for rejecting the Herodian temple view is that the Old Testament background for Revelation 11:1–2 is Ezekiel 40–42, where the prophet Ezekiel in a vision watched as an angel measured every part of the temple.<sup>32</sup> In this section Ezekiel saw a temple that did not exist at the time of his vision. With this as the background for Revelation 11:1–2, John could just as easily describe a future temple as well. This point is discussed at length in the following section. In light of these arguments it is unlikely that the verses in Revelation refer to the Herodian temple in Jerusalem.

### **A Future, End-Time Temple**

The fourth view is that the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 is a literal one that will stand in Jerusalem in the end times. In other words it is a temple that is still future even today. Three major facts support this view. First, a literal temple fits the activity of an angel measuring the temple, the altar, and the worshipers (and not measuring the outer court). The purpose of these measurements was not to ascertain the physical dimensions, but to show God's approval of the sanctuary, altar, and worshipers (and His disapproval of all the Gentile enemies who reject Him).<sup>33</sup> This is substantiated by the two witnesses who enjoy God's favor, but not His protection or preservation from every enemy (vv. 5–11).<sup>34</sup> As Thomas observes, “So the measuring is an object lesson of how entities favored by God will fare during the period of Gentile oppression that lies ahead.”<sup>35</sup>

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Second, the relationship between verses 1–2 and verse 3 indicates that the two witnesses will witness and be martyred when the temple is desecrated.<sup>36</sup> (Apparently, the two witnesses are among the approved worshipers in verse 1.) But when the temple is desecrated, as prophesied in Daniel 9:27, the two witnesses will clothe themselves in sackcloth (Rev. 11:3), the proper Jewish response to tragedy, particularly temple desecration (Lam. 2:10).<sup>37</sup> They will enjoy God's favor and their prophetic activity serves to counteract the signs and wonders of the false prophet. However, the two witnesses will eventually be overcome and killed by the beast, but their bodies will be resurrected after three and a half days (Rev. 11:7–11). The desecration of the temple and the murder of the two witnesses form a unit and function as catalysts that bring the hand of God in judgment on His enemies (vv. 13–14).

Third, the primary support for interpreting the temple in verses 1–2 as a future, yet-to-be-built temple is derived from the Old Testament background of the text. Scholars of every conviction recognize that Revelation relies heavily on the Old Testament, especially Daniel and Ezekiel.<sup>38</sup> Gentry strongly supports the notion that Daniel is the Old Testament counterpart to the Book of Revelation. He says, “In several respects Revelation is reminiscent of the Old Testament book of Daniel: (1) Each is a prophetic work. (2) Each was written by a devout, God-fearing Jew in times of the author's personal exile and national Jewish distress. (3) Each shares a frequent and very obvious stylistic similarity. (4) Revelation frequently draws from Daniel. Indeed, Revelation is even recognized as a New Testament Daniel by some scholars.”<sup>39</sup>

### **A Temple In The Prophecies Of Daniel And Ezekiel**

Interestingly both Daniel and Ezekiel mentioned a temple that was not in existence at the time they were writing. Daniel wrote his

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great prophecy after the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. and before the temple was rebuilt in 520–516.<sup>40</sup> When Daniel wrote, no temple was standing in Jerusalem. It had been in ruins for about fifty years. However, he referred to temple sacrifices and temple desecration on several occasions (Dan. 8:11–14; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Thus he must have been referring to a temple that was future to his own day. Moreover, the mention of forty-two months (Rev. 11:2) and 1,260 days (v. 3) is an unmistakable allusion to the second half of Daniel's seventieth week and a literal temple in Daniel 9:24.<sup>41</sup> If John is the New Testament Daniel, as Gentry admits, why could not John have also

referred to a future temple that did not exist at the time he received his vision?

Likewise Ezekiel described a huge temple in his prophecy in chapters 40–48. Ezekiel's temple vision is especially germane to the interpretation of Revelation 11:1–2 because of the close contextual and linguistic relationship between the two texts. Beale says that the measuring of the temple in Revelation “is best understood against the background of the temple prophecy in Ezekiel 40–48.”<sup>42</sup> Johnson writes, “Most agree that the principal OT passage in John's mind was Ezekiel's lengthy description of the measuring of the future kingdom temple (Ezek. 40:3–48:35).”<sup>43</sup> Almost every scholarly commentary or journal article on Revelation 11:1–2 mentions the close connection between Ezekiel 40–48 and Revelation 11:1–2. Yet incredibly Gentry never mentions Ezekiel 40–48 even once in his discussion of Revelation 11:1–2. His only mention of Ezekiel 40–48 in *Before Jerusalem Fell*, according to his own Scripture index, is in a footnote on page 224 that has nothing to do with the passage in Revelation.

The Solomonic temple in Jerusalem was burned by the army of Nebuchadnezzar on August 16, 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:8–12). Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon in the second Jewish deportation in 597 B.C. From 593 to 571 Ezekiel prophesied concerning Judah and the nations. Ezekiel 33, a pivotal chapter in the book, records that on January 9, 585 B.C., Ezekiel received news of the destruction of Jerusalem

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and the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 33:21). All that he had prophesied had come to pass. The city and the temple were in ruins. In chapters 34–48 the message of the prophet changed from judgment and destruction to future blessing and restoration. In 573 B.C., twelve years after Ezekiel received news of the destruction of the temple, he received a vision of a new temple (40:1–4) that, if taken literally, has never yet existed.<sup>44</sup>

## The Temple In Ezekiel 40–48

The temple in Ezekiel 40–48 has been interpreted in three ways: as one of the historic temples in Israel's past, as a symbolic temple, and as the millennial temple.<sup>45</sup>

*Historic temple from Israel's past.* While some writers hold this view, it seems clear that the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 does not look back to the Solomonic temple, because the features of the two temples differ extensively.<sup>46</sup> Nor is it the postexilic temple, since the dimensions are different, and the glory of God never filled the postexilic temple as it will the temple in Ezekiel 43:4–5. The returning glory is the focus of Ezekiel's restoration temple.

*A symbolic temple.* Gentry interprets the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 symbolically; he says it denotes “the covenantal relationship of God with His people.”<sup>47</sup> He states, “That visionary Temple is symbolic of the glorious presence of God in the Kingdom of Christ coming in the New Covenant era. And it is so because even further defined, it is symbolic of Christ Himself. Christ is the true presence of God which could only be hinted at in the temple construction.”<sup>48</sup> The “rebuilding” of the temple according to Gentry speaks of Christ and the building of His church.<sup>49</sup>

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Three key arguments make the symbolic view of chapters 40–48 a faulty interpretation. First, the details of the architecture are too minutely detailed for a symbolic interpretation.<sup>50</sup> If these nine chapters, packed full of minute details, are symbolic, what does each detail symbolize? Taylor, who adopts the symbolic view, summarizes his understanding of the basic ideas in Ezekiel's vision. He says that the “immaculate symmetry of the temple building” expresses “the perfection of God's plan for His people,” that the details in the observances of the rites in the temple express “the centrality of worship in the new age,” that the river refers to “the blessings that will flow from God's presence to the barren places of the earth,” and that the temple duties and the apportioning of the land speak of the “duties and privileges of all God's people.”<sup>51</sup>

But how can one objectively verify Taylor's conclusions? Without any established, governing principles one could make the intricate features of the text mean almost anything.<sup>52</sup>

Second, Ezekiel 40–48 is reminiscent of Exodus 25:9 and 1 Chronicles 28:19, where the Lord showed Moses and David, respectively, the detailed pattern of a tabernacle or temple that the Israelites were to build. Why should the detailed pattern of the Ezekiel temple complex be treated differently?

Third, interpreting this section other than in a normal, literal approach contradicts the interpretive guide (an angel?) who commanded Ezekiel to record all the minute details of the temple and its regulations so that these details might actually be carried out and followed (Ezek. 40:4; 44:5).<sup>53</sup> Ezekiel 43:10–11 is very specific: “As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan. If they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write it in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes, and *do them*” (italics added).

Ezekiel 43:18 also supports this point. “And He said to me, ‘Son of man, thus says the Lord God, ‘These are the statutes for

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the altar on *the day it is built*, to offer burnt offerings on it and to sprinkle blood on it” (italics added). As Levenson notes, “The highly specific nature of the description of the Temple, its liturgy and community bespeaks a practical program, not a vision of pure grace. For example, when the text says that eight steps led up to the vestibule of the inner court (Ezek. 40:31), can this be other than the demand that the new Temple be constructed just so? .. What Ezekiel was shown is the divinely constructed model. .. like the one David showed Solomon (1 Chron. 28:11–19).”<sup>54</sup>

Rooker summarizes the case against the symbolic view and in favor of the literal interpretation of Ezekiel's temple.

Those who disapprove of a literal interpretation of the passage and opt for a spiritualized or symbolic meaning are far from speaking with one voice regarding what the new Temple of Ezekiel does signify. It has been argued, for example, that the temple

represents heaven, the new heavens and new earth, the church, Christ and His community of believers, or Jesus Himself. This lack of unanimity is an argument against the strength of this position. Indeed, the intricate detail in the description of the temple does not seem to mesh with a spiritualized interpretation. . . . If the vision is to be taken symbolically, it must be asked what is the correspondence between the minute details and the symbolized blessings. Satisfactory answers have not been forthcoming. The details are typologically similar to those given for the Tabernacle in the wilderness as well as Solomon's Temple—both being built after the layout was presented in detailed and descriptive design. Similar references to a temple in the messianic kingdom include Isaiah 2:2–4 and Haggai 2:9. An expectation of a rebuilt temple in the messianic age was part of later Jewish expectation as witnessed by the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as rabbinic literature.<sup>55</sup>

*The millennial temple.* While there is no sound contextual or exegetical basis in Ezekiel 40–48 for taking the temple figuratively or allegorically, there is ample evidence for interpreting it as a literal, eschatological temple. Five points favor this view.

First, chapters 36–37 point to Israel as a transformed people restored to a transformed land. Ezekiel 37:25–28 serves as an introductory summary to chapters 40–48. "They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make

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a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My *sanctuary* in their midst forever. My *dwelling place* also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever" (italics added).

As Price notes, "These verses reveal that the future restoration of the Nation will be in the same place (Israel) and in the same form (a Temple) as in the past."<sup>56</sup> Chapters 38–39 record the prophecy of a great invasion of Israel in the end times when Israel will have been restored to their land and be living in peace and prosperity. Ezekiel 36–39 and its theme of eschatological restoration set the stage for chapters 40–48.<sup>57</sup>

Second, Ezekiel included specific measurements and types of sacrifices. Scholars almost universally interpret the details and sacrifices of the Law of Moses literally. And they adopt a literal understanding of the detailed measurements of the Mosaic tabernacle and the Solomonic temple. No sound exegetical reason exists to reject the literalness of the details of the temple Ezekiel saw in chapters 40–48. If they are not literal, then why did Ezekiel not explain the meaning of these symbols?<sup>58</sup>

Third, the literal temple in chapters 8–11 supports a literal interpretation for the temple in chapters 40–48. In exile in Babylon, Ezekiel received a vision of the literal Solomonic temple in Jerusalem (chaps. 8–11). Seeing the glory of God depart from the temple, he announced God's judgment at the hand of the Babylonians. Almost everyone agrees that this temple was the temple built by Solomon. With this pattern established in chapters 8–11, the temple in chapters 40–48 should be interpreted the same way, since nothing in the text indicates that it is symbolic.

Everything Ezekiel mentions in chapters 8–11 concerning the temple—its "inner court" (8:3), "porch" (v. 16), "altar" (v. 16), "threshold" (9:3), and "east gate" (10:19)—was seen in a vision (8:3) of the literal Solomonic temple. Then in a vision of the temple in chapters 40–48 Ezekiel mentioned the same places—"inner court" (40:27), "porch" (v. 48), "altar" (43:18), and "the gate facing toward the east" (v. 4). Why should they not also be interpreted literally

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and not as symbols?<sup>59</sup> As Block notes, "The substantive parallels among these texts require that the same hermeneutical principles employed in the interpretation of the previous prophecies apply here, and that one interpret this block in light of the previous visions of God."<sup>60</sup>

Ezekiel 40–48 predicts a complete reversal and restoration of what occurred in 586 B.C. The glory of God had departed from the temple in Jerusalem, but it will return to another temple in Jerusalem (43:4–5). Since God's glory departed from a literal temple, why not understand that the return of God's glory will take place in a literal temple as well? "If the presence of God left a literal Temple and will return, it should return to a literal Temple. If the desecration and destruction of a literal Temple were described in a vision, then the restoration and consecration of a Temple should also be understood as literal."<sup>61</sup>

In the reestablishment of Israel's theocracy the center of her new life will be the Lord Himself, who will return in glory to rule in her midst (43:1–9). The necessity of a royal residence for God's glory will be fulfilled in the construction of the millennial temple. God will reign with this temple as His throne (v. 7) just as He did previously in the tabernacle and the temple.<sup>62</sup>

Fourth, the eschatological interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48 harmonizes with other Old Testament passages that prophesy the existence of a millennial temple and sacrifices in that future temple (Isa. 2:3; 56:6–7; 60:13; Jer. 33:18; Joel 3:18; Hag. 2:7, 9; Zech. 14:16–21).<sup>63</sup>

Gentry, however, gives five arguments against seeing a literal temple in Ezekiel 40–48.<sup>64</sup> First, he says the site of the temple is on a "very high mountain" (40:2), but there is no high mountain in the area of Jerusalem. However, Zechariah 14:4–10 records major topographical changes in the land that will occur in conjunction with the second coming of Christ. One of those dramatic changes will be

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that "Jerusalem will rise" (Zech. 14:10). Viewing this literally, God will supernaturally provide the high mountain on which the temple will be situated (Isa. 2:2–4; Mic. 4:1–2).<sup>65</sup>

Second, Gentry notes that the source and flow of the river is incredible (Ezek. 47:1–2). This may be true, but would this really be an impediment to God in the messianic kingdom? Joel 3:18 also mentions the millennial river.

Third, Gentry states that the function of the river in making the Dead Sea flourish (Ezek. 47:6–12) surely must be a symbol. But why must this be symbolic? In the messianic kingdom great changes will occur throughout the earth as the curse is reversed and the earth is restored (Isa. 11:1–11).

Fourth, Gentry maintains that the twelve tribes are given parallel tracts of land, which would be awkward in real geography (Ezek. 47:13–23). However, the apportionment of the land among the twelve tribes is consistent with the greatly expanded borders in the Promised Land in the kingdom.<sup>66</sup>

Fifth, Gentry's most strenuous argument is that interpreting the animal sacrifices, circumcision, and priesthood literally in these chapters is "redemptively retrogressive."<sup>67</sup> However, an examination of the text reveals that there will not be a reinstatement of the Law of Moses in the messianic kingdom, but a new system of kingdom law. While there are some similarities with the Mosaic Law, numerous differences reveal that the systems are not the same.<sup>68</sup> The millennial system of sacrifices and priesthood will not be a reinstatement of the Law of Moses, for it was terminated with the death of the Messiah.<sup>69</sup> In fact the numerous differences between Ezekiel 40–48 and the Mosaic Law prompted some Jewish rabbis to question the inclusion of Ezekiel in the Hebrew canon.<sup>70</sup>

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The issue of millennial sacrifices has been dealt with extensively and ably by numerous scholars and should no longer be a serious impediment to this view.<sup>71</sup> Every mention of "atonement" in chapters 40–48, except 45:15–17, relates to the concept of ceremonial purification or consecration of the temple or altar.<sup>72</sup> In the one exception in 45:15–17 the purpose will be the same as in the Mosaic system, that is, to provide a graphic picture of the ultimate atoning work of Christ, which alone can pay the ransom price for sin and provide forgiveness.<sup>73</sup>

These temples in Ezekiel and Revelation are remarkably similar, as seen in this table.

Ezekiel 40–48	Revelation 11:1–2
Ezekiel was an Old Testament prophet.	John was a New Testament prophet.
He ate a scroll (3:1–3).	He ate a little book (10:9).
He was in exile in Babylon.	He was in exile on Patmos.
He had a vision (40:2).	He had a vision (4:1–2).
He saw a temple that did not exist on earth at the time of the vision (Solomon's temple was destroyed twelve years earlier).	He saw a temple that did not exist on earth at the time of the vision (the second Jewish temple was destroyed twenty-five years earlier).
An angel measured the temple as Ezekiel carefully observed. <sup>74</sup>	John was commanded to measure the temple.

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Though both of these temples are eschatological, they are not the same. The settings differ. The setting for the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 is tribulation and desecration, while the setting in Ezekiel 40–48 is restoration. Thus the temple in Revelation is the third Jewish temple, which will exist in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4), and the temple in Ezekiel is the fourth Jewish temple, which will exist during the messianic kingdom. The salient point is that if Ezekiel spoke of a literal, future temple that did not exist at the time he wrote, then John could have followed that same pattern.

## Conclusion

In light of Revelation 11:3–13 and the parallels in Daniel and Ezekiel it is best to view the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 as a future, reconstituted temple. The temple John saw and measured is the future Tribulation temple, that is, the third Jewish temple (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4). Thus the eschatological temple in Revelation 11:1–2 offers no support for an early date for Revelation, as preterists propose. The following points summarize the support for this view.

First, the activity of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3–13 is consistent with a literal interpretation of verses 1–2. Second, the primary Old Testament background for Revelation 11:1–2 is Daniel 7, 9 and Ezekiel 40–48. Third, Daniel mentioned a temple and sacrifices several times even though the temple in Jerusalem was not standing at the time he prophesied. And the time period in Revelation 11:2–3 (forty-two months or 1,260 days) is consistent with the final half of Daniel's seventieth week when a literal temple will exist. Fourth, Ezekiel saw a temple that did not exist at the time of the vision (Ezek. 40–48). Fifth, the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 is a literal, eschatological temple (the fourth Jewish temple). Likewise, John received a vision of a future, literal temple (third Jewish temple) that did not exist at the time he received the vision (Rev. 11:1–2).

<sup>1</sup>Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Apocalypse of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1958), 87.

<sup>2</sup>Robert A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation*, Studies in Biblical Literature (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 24.

<sup>3</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935; reprint, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 328–31. Many view the temple here as figurative of the church in the final days of persecution in the Great Tribulation (Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 500–501; George E. Ladd, A

*Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 151–53; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 213–14; and David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1998), 597–98. Others view the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 as symbolic of the church throughout church history (G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary [London: Black, 1966; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987], 130–32; and G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 557–61). Grant R. Osborne identifies the temple as “the church, primarily the saints of this final period but secondarily the church of all ages” (*Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 410).

<sup>4</sup>Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 597.

<sup>5</sup>Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 81.

<sup>6</sup>Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 571.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 81; cf. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1900; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 236.

<sup>8</sup>Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 152.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* See also Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 81.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Osborne, *Revelation*, 411.

<sup>12</sup>Randall Price also gives several excellent arguments in favor of the literal interpretation of the temple and against the symbolic view (*The Coming Last Days Temple* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999], 317–21).

<sup>13</sup>C. H. Giblin, “Revelation 11:1–13: Its Form, Function and Contextual Integration,” *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 438–40.

<sup>14</sup>Simon J. Kistemaker, “The Temple in the Apocalypse,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 433–41.

<sup>15</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 321.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>17</sup>Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: American Vision, 1998), 175–76.

<sup>18</sup>J. Ritchie Smith notes that if the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 was the literal temple, John may have simply been looking back to it. “But even if it be the literal temple that appears, does the conclusion follow? If the vision of the temple proves that the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, does the vision of the woman and the child in chapter xii. prove that it was written before the birth of Christ? Evidently the seer is looking backward in the one instance; why not in the other? By what right is it assumed that the date of any particular vision gives the date of the book?” (“The Date of the Apocalypse,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 45 [1888]: 308). The problem with Smith’s statement is that in verse 2 the treading of the temple is future as indicated by the future tense of the verb πατήσουσιν. Richard Bauckham points to Revelation 8:1 in support of the notion that the literal temple had to be standing in Jerusalem when John wrote Revelation. He maintains that the thirty-minute silence parallels the morning ritual of burning the incense in the temple after the lamb had been sacrificed (Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1993], 70–83).

<sup>19</sup>Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 175–76 (*italics his*).

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 174–75.

<sup>22</sup>Robert L. Thomas, “Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 5 (1994): 197.

<sup>23</sup>Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 170, 174–75.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, xlviii.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas, “Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation,” 195–96.

<sup>26</sup>Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, xlviii.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 163, 247 n. 46, 250.

<sup>28</sup>Kenneth L. Gentry, *Dominion* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 408 (*italics his*).

<sup>29</sup>Thomas, “Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation,” 196.

<sup>30</sup>Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 174–75.

<sup>31</sup>Price provides an excellent discussion of the historical setting of Isaiah 66 and its parallel with the Tribulation temple in Revelation 11:1–2 (*The Coming Last Days Temple*, 217–19, 497–98).

<sup>32</sup>Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 213.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 80–81. Some have proposed that the measuring is a symbol of preservation, protection, and safeguarding (e.g., Kistemaker, “The Temple in the Apocalypse,” 435). But the problem with this view is that it does not

adequately fit verses 3–13.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 319–20.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Revelation includes more Old Testament allusions than any other New Testament book. In numbers, Isaiah is first, followed by Daniel, Ezekiel, and Psalms, although the numbers vary from one commentator to another (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 77). However, Daniel is generally considered the Old Testament book with the most influence on Revelation (G. W. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984]). According to Ferrell Jenkins, Revelation has fifty-three allusions to Daniel and forty-three to Ezekiel (*The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* [Marion, IN: Cogdill Foundation, 1972], 24).

<sup>39</sup>Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 17.

<sup>40</sup>While many modern scholars date Daniel in the second century B.C., most conservative scholars date the book about 530 B.C., during the final decade of Daniel's life (e.g., Gleason L. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1974], 387).

<sup>41</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 314–16.

<sup>42</sup>Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 559.

<sup>43</sup>Johnson, "Revelation," 499–500; cf. E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St. John*, trans. Patrick Fairbairn (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852), 1:xlvii.

<sup>44</sup>The date of this vision was April 28, 573 B.C. (Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 513).

<sup>45</sup>Mark F. Rooker, "Evidence from Ezekiel," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 129.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. See also Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 511–12.

<sup>47</sup>Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 356. Gentry views the temple in Ezekiel 8–11 literally, the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 figuratively, and the temple in Revelation 11:2 literally, but the inner aspects of it in 11:1 figuratively. As noted earlier, this lack of hermeneutical consistency is a weakness in his view.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 357.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 359.

<sup>50</sup>Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 237.

<sup>51</sup>John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1969), 253–54.

<sup>52</sup>Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 943; and Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 461.

<sup>53</sup>Alexander, "Ezekiel," 943.

<sup>54</sup>Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 45. Rooker observes that "the arrangement of the book of Ezekiel is typologically the same as that found in the Pentateuch—both focus on a redemption from exile followed by a giving of legislation" ("Evidence from Ezekiel," 130 n. 53).

<sup>55</sup>Rooker, "Evidence from Ezekiel," 130–31; cf. Alexander, "Ezekiel," 942–52.

<sup>56</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 519.

<sup>57</sup>Alexander, "Ezekiel," 943–44.

<sup>58</sup>Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 461–62.

<sup>59</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 518.

<sup>60</sup>Block, *Ezekiel*, 496–97. It appears, however, that Block fails to follow his own suggestion. He views the temple in Ezekiel 8–11 as the literal Solomonic temple that was desecrated, but he sees the temple in chapters 40–48 "ideationally" or symbolically as a nonliteral temple (ibid., 505, 745).

<sup>61</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 517–18.

<sup>62</sup>Alexander, "Ezekiel," 952.

<sup>63</sup>Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 523–24.



<sup>64</sup>Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 353–54.

<sup>65</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of God's Glory* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 260. Unger views this elevation of Jerusalem literally but believes that “the literal furnishes the vehicle for the emblematic.” He holds that the physical elevation will portray spiritual truths as Jerusalem serves as the center of blessing for the whole earth. Eugene H. Merrill views the flattening and elevation as figurative only (*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* [Chicago: Moody, 1994], 355–56).

<sup>66</sup>Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 472–74.

<sup>67</sup>Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 354–56.

<sup>68</sup>Fruchtenbaum provides an extensive list of the differences between the Mosaic Law and Ezekiel 40–48 (*The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 462–64).

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 458–69; Alexander, “Ezekiel,” 946–52; Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, 533–57; Jerry M. Hullinger, “A Proposed Solution to the Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1993); *idem*, “The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (July–September 1995): 279–89; *idem*, “The Divine Presence and Uncleanness: The Rationale for Ezekiel’s Animal Sacrifices,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (October–December, 2006): 405–22; Thomas Ice, “Literal Sacrifices in the Millennium,” *Pre-Trib Perspectives* 5 (2000): 1, 4–5; Rooker, “Evidence from Ezekiel,” 131–34; and John C. Whitcomb, “Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 201–21.

<sup>72</sup>Alexander, “Ezekiel,” 950.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup>Chris Schlect, a preterist who follows the Neronian date, admits that the command for Ezekiel to watch the measurement of the temple twelve years after it was destroyed weakens the view that the temple was standing when John was commanded to measure it (“A Reasonable Look at Revelation,” in *And It Came to Pass* [Moscow, ID: Canon, 1993], 102 n. 40).

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