

A PROPOSED READING OF REVELATION 11:1-13

*João Paulo Thomaz de Aquino**

ABSTRACT

The passage under analysis is considered as one of the most difficult in the entire book of Revelation. The first two verses present several exegetical challenges regarding the true sense of temple, the time of the events, the actions of the gentiles, and the meaning of “the holy city”. The second part (vv. 3-13) poses the question regarding the identity of the two witnesses. After reviewing the literature on vv. 1-2, the author advances his own interpretation and then proposes a new understanding of the two witnesses. He concludes that the measurement of the temple points to God’s testing of his people rather than to a mere promise of preservation. He argues that the passage is typologically related to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD and to a continuing situation throughout the history of the church. He contends that the two witnesses should be taken as literal persons who will appear sometime in the so-called Great Tribulation.

KEYWORDS

Book of Revelation; The measurement of the temple; The two witnesses; Typological interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

It is not without reason that Keener calls this passage “perhaps the most difficult passage to interpret in the entire book of Revelation.”¹ Mounce also

* B.Th., Presbyterian Theological Seminary Rev. José Manoel da Conceição, 2002; M.Th., Andrew Jumper Graduate Center, 2007; Th.M., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2009; D.Min., Andrew Jumper Graduate Center, 2014. This article is an adaptation of a paper submitted in December of 2015 to the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theological Studies, with concentration in New Testament.

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 287. “This chapter is universally conceded to be one of the most difficult in the Apocalypse...”

affirms that it is “universally recognized as difficult to interpret.”² Such kind of commentary is common when scholars are dealing with Revelation 11.³

Some of the most problematic elements in Revelation 11 relate to: (1) What is the referent of temple in Rev 11:1-2? Is it the Jerusalem temple, a heavenly temple, or an idealized image for the church? Discounting these, might it make reference to a future temple waiting to be constructed? (2) What is the time to which these two verses point: past, future or the whole church era? (3) In which sense will the Gentiles trample the holy city for forty-two months? (4) What city is referred through the expression “the holy city” – to a literal Jerusalem or to the Jerusalem from above? Such are a few initial problems only regarding the first two verses! The second part of our text present to ourselves the two witnesses, whose identity and meaning is another conundrum of interpretation.

In light of the above, the objective of this paper is to present a close reading of Rev 11:1-2, followed by a broader discussion of the identity of the witnesses of Rev 11:3-13. Against numbers of contemporary theologians in common agreement, we will contend that the text does not speak about the preservation of the church as such. Rather, we hope to show that Revelation 11 highlights the proper task of God to test and prove his church – and this to affirm exactly what to preserve and what not to preserve.⁴ We will also defend that the two witnesses are literal persons that will appear in the future.

1. REVELATION 11:1-2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

John Snodgrass presents a historicist interpretation, affirming that this text refers to the corruption of the Western Church. In this sense, the church is paganized and measured by the Word of God, the referent of the rod.⁵ Israel

² Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 211.

³ Two examples: “This chapter is universally conceded to be one of the most difficult in the Apocalypse...” Israel Perkins Warren, *The Book of Revelation: An Exposition, Based on the Principles of Prof. Stuarts* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 140. “The first two verses of this chapter have occasioned much trouble to commentators; and the variety of opinion respecting them is so great, that even to give a tolerably full account of it would occupy many pages.” Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Andover: Allen, Morrill, and Wardwell, 1845), 213.

⁴ A brief word about our interpretation of Revelation is timely. First, we agree with Bauckham that “It seems that John not only writes in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, but understands himself to be writing at the climax of the tradition when all the eschatological oracles of the prophets are about to be finally fulfilled, and so he interprets and gathers them up in his own prophetic revelation.” Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), 5. This means that John will bring together seemingly different prophecies and present their fulfillment. At the same time, in my understading, this fulfillment is an ongoing process that will culminate in an end-time eschatological event. Other footnotes will explore other aspects of our exegetical methodology.

⁵ John Snodgrass, *A Commentary, With Notes, On Part of the Book of the Revelation of John*. (Paisley: Neilson and Weir, 1799), 341–343. See a criticism of the historicist position in Christine Joy Tan, “A Critique of Idealist and Historicist Views of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 2014.

Warren defends, in contrast, a preterist interpretation. He presents many texts in which the concept of measuring is used to refer to condemnation and affirms that this text depicts the destruction of the Holy of Holies, a fierce image of the rejection of God for the Jews.⁶ On the reference to the forty-two months he affirms: “The period of time here mentioned accords almost literally with the duration of the Roman invasion up to the capture of the city.”⁷

John MacArthur contends that the temple referred here in one to be constructed during the tribulation, where the whole sacrificial system will be restored.⁸ The Jews who attend the services performed in this temple will be attracted to Christ, understanding that the sacrifices are not enough to make peace with God.⁹ “The forty-two months correspond to the overtly evil career of Antichrist, which dominates the last half of the tribulation (13:5)”¹⁰ According to MacArthur, since Christians will be raptured in the middle of the tribulation, the reference to Gentiles here points to those who “have united with Satan and the beast and oppressed His covenant people, Israel.”¹¹ The measurement is a sign of ownership.¹²

Moses Stuart affirms that this text cannot be read only as historic because there was never a preservation of the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple. To the contrary, the *ναός* was the central place of slaughter.¹³ The impossibility of measuring people also contributes to the impossibility of an exclusive literal interpretation.¹⁴ To Stuart, in light of Revelation 7, this text points to “the preservation of all which was fundamental and essential in the ancient religion.” And with the destruction of all that was external, the preserved part was the common denominator between Judaism and Christianity.¹⁵ At the same time, Stuart sees the fulfillment of this text as referring to the literal fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in 70 AD.¹⁶

⁶ Warren, *The Book of Revelation: An Exposition, Based on the Principles of Prof. Stuarts*, 143.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸ John MacArthur, *Revelation I-II* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 294.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 293. A very similar interpretation is defended by Christine Tan. See Christine Joy Tan, “A Futurist View of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171 (2014): 452-71. By the same author, see also Christine Joy Tan, “A Critique of Idealist and Historicist Views of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171 (2014): 210-25; Christine Joy Tan, “Preterist Views on the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171 (2014): 72-95. For a defense that the two witnesses have their ministry in the second part of the tribulation, see J. A. McLean, “The Chronology of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (2011): 460-71.

¹³ Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 213.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 216-219. Contra Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 127.

Kistemaker affirms that temple cannot be referring to the temple pre-70 because nowhere in Revelation “the holy city” is used to refer to earthly Jerusalem.¹⁷ Furthermore, he despises the futuristic interpretation, affirming that nowhere does Jesus anticipate the construction of another temple.¹⁸ He also despises a prophetic interpretation that previews the salvation of literal Israel because, he says, Revelation is addressed to the universal church.¹⁹ Thus, Kistemaker contends that John is using the pre-70 Jerusalem temple as a teaching model. “The purpose of making these measurements is to delimit the area that is holy from that which is profane; measuring means protecting God’s temple, altar, and people.”²⁰ Those who are outside, for Kistemaker, are the hypocrites, who worship God only with their lips but not with their hearts.²¹ Finally, “The gentiles are not non-Jews, but rather non-Christians who trample all that is holy and make it profane. The trampling of the holy city refers to a period of persecution that Christians suffer throughout the ages.”²² Interestingly, Kistemaker acknowledges that this prophecy was told by Jesus (Luke 21:24) and appropriated by John to speak about the church.²³

Lupieri follows a symbolic interpretation as well. A Catholic, he affirms that as Christ’s sacrifice is repeated in every mass, there is no better image to symbolize the church than an altar.²⁴ To him, the holy city is Jerusalem, God is the temple, the measuring aspect represents the salvation of those who were measured. Lupieri affirms that the objective of the text is preparing the reader for life without Jerusalem.²⁵

The standard symbolic interpretation of the numerical reference is well summarized by Mounce:

The temporal designation of 42 months (11:2; 13:5) is also given in Revelation as 1260 days (11:3; 12:6) and ‘a time, times and half a time’ (12:14). Its primary reference is to the period of time during which evil would be allowed free reign.²⁶

¹⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 322.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 322-323.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 324.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 325.

²² *Ibid.*, 327.

²³ *Ibid.* Keener follows a very similar interpretation of this text by affirming that the measurement is a promise of preservation for the church. Keener, *Revelation*, 289. See also Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 213-215.

²⁴ Edmondo. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 172.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

²⁶ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 215.

Aune sees Rev 11:1-2 as rising out of a separate source from the rest of the chapter.²⁷ His reasoning is based upon the following points of argumentation: the text does not cohere with the antecedent material; the command is given by an unspecified person and it is not carried out by the seer; the physical location of the seer is problematic; and the point of view of the text is clearly a pre-70 one.²⁸ He concurs, though, that in the present literary context, the text points to the preservation of the church, i.e., those worshipers who remain near to the altar of God.²⁹

Bauckham also sees a discontinuity between 11:1-2 and 11:3-13, affirming that both passages are different parallel interpretations of Daniel's prophecy concerning the final period of world history (Dan 8; 12) in connection with Zechariah 12:3.³⁰ For Bauckham, *ναός* refers to the whole sanctuary (holy place and holy of holies), the court is thus the one immediately outside the temple; the worshippers then are the priests, and the altar is the incense altar.³¹ Despite all such various historical referents, though, Bauckham in the end affirms "the temple and the city as symbols for the people of God. [...] The church will be kept safe in its hidden spiritual reality, while suffering persecution and martyrdom."³²

Beale's proposal is perhaps the more far-fetched one, although in a sense it is a synthesis of many previous proposals about these verses. Connecting this text with Rev 7:3-8, Beale affirms that "in Revelation 11 the measuring connotes God's presence, which is guaranteed to be with the temple community living on earth before the consummation."³³ He interprets Ezekiel 40-48 as referring to the people of God and this prophecy as related to the same reality of Ezekiel, the suffering and preservation of the spiritual temple of God, the church.³⁴ To him the worshipers are also priests, and he adds that in light of

²⁷ He follows R. H. Charles on that, who presents five reasons: (1) 11:1-13 is formed from two independent fragments, both written before 70 A. D.; (2) the style differs from John's; (3) the word order is very non-Semitic and also different from John's; (4) the meaning of certain phrases in 11:1-13 differs absolutely from what they will have in the rest of the book; and (5) common ideas between 11:1-2 and 11:3-13 are expressed with different phraseology. R. H. Charles, *A Critical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introd., Notes, and Indices, Also the Greek Text and English Translation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 270.

²⁸ David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 585-586.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 598.

³⁰ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 267; 271.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 266-272.

³² *Ibid.*, 272.

³³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 559.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 560-562.

Rev 6:9-10 they are offering themselves as sacrifices.³⁵ Beale also connects the altar with that of Rev 6:9, interpreting it as the incense altar.³⁶ Very elaborated, however, is Beale's reference to the forty-two months as an amalgamation of similar references in Daniel (7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11-12) with the ministries of both Elijah (2 Kings 2:25) and Moses (Num 33:5-49; 35:6). Beale additionally follows this with a reference to the duration of Jesus' own ministry.³⁷ "Therefore, all four of the references to three and a half years in chs. 11-13 represent an eschatological and typological interpretation of Elijah's ministry and Israel's wilderness journeying, via Daniel."³⁸ To Beale, the referent of both Rev 11 and Daniel all point to multiple contexts:

The initial fulfillment of the "abomination of desolation" in the temple occurred during Antiochus Epiphanes' oppression from 167 to 164 b.C. (1 Maccabees 1-3; 2 Maccabees 5; cf. 1 Macc. 1:20–64 with 4:52ff.; Josephus, War 1.19 and 5.394 summarize the period as "three years and six months"). In Matt. 24:15 and Mark 13:14 the fulfillment of Dan. 9:27 was seen as about to be fulfilled in the Roman siege of Jerusalem, which lasted for about three and a half years (cf. Luke 21:20–24). Indeed, some have seen Rev. 11:2 as a historical "flashback" to the siege of Jerusalem. These initial fulfillments intensified the idea of Daniel's three and a half years being one of tribulation, especially for the temple.³⁹

We might ask, to what aim is the point of all such references? Beale answers: "Therefore, the three and a half years reveals two perspectives about the saints' destiny: they undergo tribulation (11:2; 12:14; 13:5-6), but are nonetheless protected from ultimate spiritual harm. Their existence as a community is guaranteed until the parousia, so that they can fulfill their corporate call to witness (11:3; 12:4, 14)."⁴⁰ To Beale, therefore, the text points to many layers of biblical references – the cumulative result being a symbolic reference to the time of witness of the Church. He does not define if this time is the whole of Church history or a special time of tribulation before the coming of Jesus.⁴¹

Beale interprets the temple, the altar, the worshipers, the court outside and the whole city, all of them, as a reference to the persecuted church. He sees that as a fulfillment of Dan 8.13; Isa 63.18; Zech 12.3 (see also 1 Macc. 3:45, 51; 4:60; 2 Macc. 8:2). To him, those texts present Jerusalem both with

³⁵ Ibid., 563. In the same page Beale comments: "In brief, however, Christians are members of a heavenly community dwelling on earth".

³⁶ Ibid., 564.

³⁷ Ibid., 567.

³⁸ Ibid., 565.

³⁹ Ibid., 566.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 567.

positive and negative associations.⁴² Acknowledging that Luke 21:24 uses the same image to refer to the historical Jerusalem, Beale questions that the strange use is Luke's and not the one of John in Revelation.⁴³

There are perhaps commendable elements in each one of the interpretations above. Nonetheless, they also make clear how much disagreement exists among scholars on the real meaning attached to the first verses of Revelation 11. In the next section of this article, we will delve deeper into exegetical questions. Upon this, we will also propose a more nuanced symbolic reading that tries to account for some of the strengths of several of the above interpretations.

2. REVELATION 11:1-2: INTERPRETATION

¹ And it was given to me a measuring rod similar to a staff, saying:

- “Rise and measure
 - the temple of God
 - and the altar
 - and *those who worship* on it,
- ² but leave out and do not measure,
 - ↳ the courtyard outside the temple
 - ↳ because it is given to the gentiles
 - ↳ and the holy city they will trample for forty-two months.

As Osborne affirms, ἐδόθη should be seen as a divine passive, following the other uses in the book.⁴⁴ This secures God as the ultimate origin of the action involved, yet not necessarily the agent who directly offers the measuring rod to John.

This κάλαμος John received is one of the elements that indubitably links this text to Ezekiel 40-42. Κάλαμος is used 28 times in the LXX, and only in Ezekiel 40 and 42 the word appears more than once. It appears eleven times in Ezekiel 40, once in 41 and six in Ezekiel 42, in a very similar context of measuring a temple.

In the New Testament, besides the other uses in Revelation (Rev 21:15-16), Matthew also uses κάλαμος in relation to the death of Jesus (three times in Matt 27). The κάλαμος given to John was similar to a ῥάβδος – a word far more common in the OT, appearing 121 times in the LXX. It refers to a “relatively slender piece of wood” (BDAG, 902) which many times in the OT

⁴² Ibid., 568–570.

⁴³ “Perhaps the real question is why Luke develops the “trampling” in the way *he* does. Rev. 11:2 is consistently developing the thought of Daniel”. Ibid., 570.

⁴⁴ “With another divine passive, ἐδόθη, John emphasizes again the divine impetus behind these events.” Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 409. This same divine passive appears in 6:2, 4, 8, 11; 7:2; 8:3; 9:1, 3, 5; 11:1, 2; 13:5, 7, 14, 15; 16:8; 19:8; 20:4.

has the connotation of God-given authority (see esp. Exod 7, Num 17, Psa 2). Other uses of *ράβδος* in Revelation make reference to Jesus fulfilling Psalm 2 (see Rev 2:27; 12:5 and 19:15). It is possible, although not certain, that John is receiving this *κάλαμος* with a note of authority for performing the action that will be required from him.

To continue, with this *κάλαμος ὅμοιος ῥάβδῳ*, John is commanded to “rise” and “measure” the temple of God. Although BDAG (272) considers Ἔγειρε as used “to evoke movement from a fixed position,” it is also possible that here it is related to the bitterness of John’s stomach (see Rev 10:10). In this case, it could be seen as John being restored from that malaise.

It is hard not to see the relevance of the verbal aspect theory related to these commands. Time does not explain the difference between the present Ἔγειρε and the aorist μέτρησον. The quality of action does not explain the change in time either, due to the expected reverse order, “rise” as a punctual action and “measure” as a continuous one. The verbal aspect however explains that the author wanted to highlight the rising action while keeping the measuring in the normal level of the narrative. Mathewson gets it right when he says:

In vv. 1-2 the narrative aorist tense form (ἐδόθη) sets the stage for the commands of the voice which are dominated by aorist tense imperative forms (μέτρησον, ἔκβαλε, μετρήσης [aorist subjunctive in negation], and the reason for the commands, ἐδόθη). The imperative in the more heavily marked present tense Ἔγειρε is perhaps used to highlight the urgency of performing the following commands in the less heavily marked aorist (μέτρησον, ἔκβαλε).⁴⁵

Ἔγειρε, therefore, sheds light and attributes more weight to the command to measure (μέτρησον) the temple of God. As we have seen in the literature review, most scholars interpret this order in the sense of preservation of what is measured. Would that be the meaning of this action though? As Osborne says, “It is clear that for a second time (with 10:8-10) John is told to re-create one of Ezekiel’s visions.”⁴⁶ It appears all the more that if we want to properly understand Revelation 11:1-2, it remains fundamental to understand the Ezekiel’s text.

There are OT scholars who defend a dispensationalist view that the temple in Ezekiel is the millennial temple where even sacrifices will occur. Those with this view are divided between the ones who think there will be substitutionary sacrifices and those who think that the sacrifices will be only memorial.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ David Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation: The Function of Greek Verb Tenses in John’s Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 135.

⁴⁶ Osborne, *Revelation*, 409.

⁴⁷ See bibliography, discussion, and more nuanced views in Jerry M. Hullinger, “The Divine Presence, Uncleaness, and Ezekiel’s Millennial Sacrifices,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 405-22;

Bergsma develops the idea that Ezekiel's temple is related to the Jubilee laws and, therefore, it is a temple of restoration. The fact that the dimensions of the temple are multiples of twenty-five (half a Jubilee) and other references to the Jubilee in Ezekiel are enough reasons for him to connect the temple and the Jubilee theme. He affirms that if this is so "it becomes possible to interpret the entire vision of Ezek 40-48 as Israel corporately experiencing an eschatological Day of Atonement in a Jubilee year."⁴⁸ Ganzel and Holtz affirm that one of the main themes of Ezekiel 40-48 is the holiness of Yahweh and this is expressed in detail in the new temple.⁴⁹

Although the similarities between Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation are many, there are elements of dissemblance as well. Revelation 11, for example, never reports the actual measurement of the temple. Additionally, the context is not one of restoration, but one of invasion and suffering; a bringing of destruction, not one of guaranteed protection. Furthermore, the worshipers are not measured in Ezekiel, while the whole of Jerusalem is part of the vision. In this sense, the context of Rev 11 appears to me more similar to that of Ezekiel 8-10, which reports God showing to Ezekiel the atrocities his people were committing in the temple and the punishment God would bring on them. Considering that Revelation 21.9-22.5 also presents a temple and city with measures and many fine details, it is possible to see our text somewhere between Ezekiel 8-10 and 40-48. God will judge his own worshipers and will preserve those who pass his test.

Marko Jauhiainen presents a similar proposal for the act of measuring in Revelation 11. He affirms that instead of symbolizing protection,

[...] measuring in itself symbolizes neither destruction nor protection in any of the passages, though some of the vocabulary related to construction and building can with certain modifications be used metaphorically to connote judgment or destruction (2 Kgs 21:13; Isa 34:11; cf. Lam 2:8).⁵⁰

Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 40-57; Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 166-79; Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 354 et seq.

⁴⁸ John S Bergsma, "The Restored Temple as 'Built Jubilee' in Ezekiel 40-48," *Proceedings Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Society* 24 (2004): 75-85.

⁴⁹ Tova Ganzel and Shalom E. Holtz, "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context," *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 211-26.

⁵⁰ Marko Jauhiainen, "The Measuring of the Sanctuary Reconsidered (Rev 11,1-2)," *Biblica* 83 (2002): 518. The summary provided by Smalley is useful here: "The measuring which is enjoined in this scene has the character of a symbolic prophetic action, as described in the Old Testament (see e.g. 1 Kings 22:11; Isa 8:1-4; Jer 27:2-28:16; Ezeq 24:3-13; also Acts 21:11). Measuring in the Old Testament can be a metaphor for destruction (cf. 2 Sam 8:2; Isa 34:11; Lam 2:8; Amos 7:7-9; et al.). But it can also be a symbol of preservation (Ezek 40:1-6; 42:20; Zech 2:1-5[...])" Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 271.

Although Marko despises 2 Sam 8:2, it fits perfectly with his proposal: “And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.” In David’s case, people were measured, and this defined if one would live or die. Dulk also defends the measurement refers to judgement, but places more weight on the condemnation than in the judgement per se.⁵¹

It is one of the thesis of this paper, therefore, that the act of measuring does not mean protection for the church. Rather, its meaning is God’s analysis or judgement in order to decide those who were to be spared or not, according with the results of the measurement, as it happened to the Moabites in 2 Sam 8:2.

The command received by John was to measure τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν αὐτῷ. There are authors who make the case that the first καὶ is exegetical and, therefore, the temple is explained in terms of the altar and the worshipers.⁵² This is not, however, the most natural reading of the text – a list of three things connected by two καὶ. This view also weakens the evident link of this text with Ezekiel 40-42 and with Revelation 21, where only the temple and its furniture are measured. The apparent problem of measuring people should be dissolved when we remember the use in 2 Samuel 8:2.

At this point in our discussion, we are compelled to deal with the central problem of the text: what is the meaning of these three things: temple, altar, and worshipers? Following Beale, the answer depends on the understanding of the heavenly perspective of Revelation.⁵³ From a heavenly perspective the

⁵¹ “It is a contention of this article that Rev 11.1-2 formulates an answer to the ‘first century theodicy’ similar to what we find in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. To the question as to how it has been possible that the Gentiles have destroyed God’s sanctuary, ‘John replies that they could only do this because God’s own judgement on the temple preceded it. This judgment is symbolised [sic] by the divinely ordered measurement of which our textual unit speaks. The reason that the outer court is not to be measured is that it belongs to those who are in power now, that is, it belongs to the Gentiles. The Gentiles have the power to trample the holy city, but only for a limited period of time (forty-two months) and only because this power has been given them precisely by God himself (ἐδόθη, a passivum divinum).” Matthijs Den Dulk, “Measuring the Temple of God: Revelation 11.1-2 and the Destruction of Jerusalem,” *New Testament Studies* 54 (2008): 448. He also fails in seeing only a preterist reference in this text.

⁵² Jauhainen, “The Measuring of the Sanctuary Reconsidered (Rev 11,1-2)”; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 571. See esp. Rob Dalrymple, “The Use of καὶ in Revelation 11,1 and the Implications for the Identification of the Temple, the Altar, and the Worshipers,” *Filología Neotestamentaria* 87 (2006): 387-94.

⁵³ Presenting that essential feature of Revelation, Beale says: “The origin of revelation is God’s throne room in the heavenly temple. This is a feature that forms a part of prophetic genre (e.g., Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1-2), but in Revelation it becomes the dominating focus in order to underscore the divine, heavenly source of revelation sent to the seven churches. There is also emphasis on the heavenly perspective so that the churches will be reminded that real spiritual struggles are going on behind the scenes of what is happening on earth.” Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 38. Bauckham

boundaries of space and time are relativized and important patterns of God's action throughout history become more clear. In this sense, Revelation presents God's perspective about the past, present, and future.⁵⁴ Revelation also makes clear that there are celestial counterparts for many earthly realities, indeed, the heavenly things are real and the earthly are the counterparts that are disputed by Satan. There are counterfeit entities as well.⁵⁵ Beale, therefore, wrongly stresses the celestial reality in detriment of the earthly one.

With these remarks on mind, it is possible to hold that the temple has more than one reference point at the same time. First, what is in view in Rev 11:1 is the Holy of Holies, as is always the case in Revelation's use of *ναός*. Temple is a typology God uses throughout the Bible to refer to his presence among his people. In Revelation, except by this occurrence, it refers always to the heavenly temple (see 3:12; 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17 and 21:22). Altar is an important part of the imagery of temple, pointing to the prayers of the saints, worship, and sacrifice. The heavenly altar appear many times in Revelation: 6:9-10; 8:3-5; 9:13; 16:7. Thus, John is referring mainly to earthly and literal realities, from past and future. But both the temple and the altar also have a heavenly reality, which makes possible a symbolic reading together with the literal one.

Completing the picture, John is asked to measure also the worshipers. Worship is central in Revelation.⁵⁶ The church worships in heaven and on earth.⁵⁷ The practical problem of John's reader was the temptation to worship

also comments: "In the first place, John's work is a prophetic apocalypse in that it communicated a disclosure of a transcendent perspective on this world. [...] The effect of John's visions, one might say, is to expand his readers' world, both spatially (into heaven) and temporally (into the eschatological future), or, to put it another way, to open their world to divine transcendence." Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 7.

⁵⁴ Allow me another long quotation of Beale: "The apocalyptic-prophetic nature of Revelation can be defined as God's revelatory interpretation (through visions and auditions) of his mysterious counsel about past, present, and future redemptive-eschatological history, and how the nature and operation of heaven relate to this.⁵ This revelation irrupts from the hidden, outer, heavenly dimension into the earthly and is given to a prophet (John), who is to write it down so that it will be communicated to the churches. The heavenly revelation usually runs counter to the assessment of history and values from the human, earthly perspective and therefore demands that people change and realign their views with the heavenly view; in this respect, people in the churches are exhorted to submit to the demands of the book's message or else face judgment." Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 38.

⁵⁵ See "Counterfeiting" section in Vern S. Poythress, *The Returning King* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 2000), <http://www.frame-poythress.org/ebooks/the-returning-king/>. See also Joe E. Luncford, *Parody and Counterimaging in the Apocalypse* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

⁵⁶ W. Hulift Gloer, "Worship God! Liturgical Elements in the Apocalypse," *Review and Expositor* 98 (2001): 35-57; Mazie Nakhro, "The Manner of Worship according to the Book of Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 165-80.

⁵⁷ P. A. de S. Nogueira, "Celestial Worship and Ecstatic-Visionary Experience," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 (2002): 165-84.

the emperor.⁵⁸ The verb προσκυνεω is used twenty-four times in the book. From these, ten times it refers to people worshiping God (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:1, 16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4, 10; 22:9) and eleven times to the worshipping of the counterfeit entities (9:20; 13:4 [2x], 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).⁵⁹

As to historical meaning, John is referring to the temple of Herod which was destroyed in 70 AD and explaining the divine purpose behind such a tragedy.⁶⁰ At the same time, John is drawing from a recurrent theme in the OT, the evaluation that God does from the worship of His people. God measures his worshipers and deals with them (and with the temple and the altar) according to the result of His measuring.

In the Old Testament it was possible for the worshiper to defile and desecrate both the altar and the temple; we remind ourselves of numerous stories recorded as to this effect: Exod 20:25; Lev 20:3; 21:12; Psa 79:1; Jer 19:4; Ezek 5:11; 7:22, 24; 23:39; 24:21; 25:3; 44:7; Dan 11:31; Zeph 3:4; Mal 1:7-12; 2:11. These texts make clear that in despising the law, God's people was defiling the altar and the temple and the result of that desecration was judgement, invasion, and exile.

Revelation 11:1 does not appear at this junction, to be pointedly prophetic of the church during a time of a single persecution. Rather, given a background of warning and divine judgements, the worshipers of God are called upon to evaluate in a broader sense the directives of their own lives. Desecration of the altar and the temple of God because of the people's sins is certainly conceivable in an ongoing spiritual sense, just as it has occurred many times throughout history. This understanding of the text fits better the variegated spiritual situation of the churches in Rev 2-3.⁶¹

In the same context, Rev 11:2 narrates the order John receives of "leaving out the outward courtyard outside the temple". John uses three times words with the preposition εκ: ἔξωθεν; ἔκβαλε; and ἔξωθεν again. If the insiders of

⁵⁸ "The central political reality in the author's day – the late first century – was the indomitable Roman Empire and its 'divine' emperors. The pressing issue for John's readers was how Christians, who gave their highest loyalty to Jesus, should conduct themselves in a world where economic and political structures assumed that everyone would worship the emperor." J Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 15.

⁵⁹ The occurrences in Rev 3:9; 19:10; 22:8 refer to worship, to the people of God, and to the angel of God.

⁶⁰ As Dulk says: "Rev 11:1-2 refers to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and that the author tries to explain to his audience that the Gentiles have not overcome, but that God is still in control." Dulk, "Measuring the Temple of God: Revelation 11.1-2 and the Destruction of Jerusalem."

⁶¹ "The fact that John explicitly and carefully contextualizes his prophetic message in seven specific contexts makes it possible for us to resist a common generalization about Revelation: that it is a book written for the consolation and encouragement of Christians suffering persecution, in order to assure them that their oppressors will be judged and they will be vindicated in the end". Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 15.

the temple are the worshipers of God, the outsiders are those who worship the beast, called in the text τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, gentiles or pagans. The text points that they will not be measured (judged) and the reason is that God gave (ἔδότη) Jerusalem to them (τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν).

The fact that this text has a clear connection to Luke 21.24, καὶ πεσοῦνται στόματι μαχαίρης καὶ αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πάντα, καὶ Ἰερουσαλήμ ἔσται πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν, makes clear that John is looking back and forth. The connection between the texts is clear because both texts are eschatological, both speak about ἔθνος, both use πατέω to express the action of the gentiles; both carry the concept of a predetermined period. Moreover, the connection between Jerusalem and τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν is known.

Finally, the last problem of these two verses is related to the meaning of the time reference to μῆνας τεσσαράκοντα [καὶ] δύο. This reference should be equalized to the three and a half years of Daniel (7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11-12) and with the expressions 1260 days (Rev 11:3; 12:6) and time, times and half a times (Rev 12:14). Besides Daniel, there are other biblical and historical referents. It points to the ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 17; 18:1; Luke 4:25; James 5:17) and Moses (Num 33:5-7).⁶² It also makes reference to the oppression by Antiochus Epiphanes, to the ministry of Jesus, the time of the siege of Jerusalem from 67 to 70 AD. The result of all these referents is a symbolic reference to a predetermined time of oppression for the people of God.

The message for the first readers is that they should watch how they were living their Christian lives and testimony because God was measuring them. Only those who pass God's evaluation would be preserved in the midst of persecution by the worshipers of the beast, which would last a predetermined time. This is a reality throughout the history of the church, but it will be especially applicable at the very end in the tribulation period.

3. REVELATION 11:3-13: THE IDENTITY OF THE TWO WITNESSES: A NEW PROPOSAL

While space is limited here, our next objective in this last section of this article is to provide an introductory treatment of the identity of the two witnesses of Rev 11:3-13. After all, "the first task of the interpreter is to identify these two witnesses."⁶³ Aune also stresses the centrality of the witnesses: "The entire section is presented not as a vision that John saw and is now reporting but a narrative prophecy focusing on the two witnesses."⁶⁴

⁶² Cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 414; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 565.

⁶³ Paige Patterson, *Revelation* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 242.

⁶⁴ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 585.

In 2005, Seth Turner wrote a PhD dissertation for Oxford University about the history of the interpretation of Revelation 11:1-13, from the first commentaries up to 2004.⁶⁵ His focus is on the identity of the two witnesses. Turner shows that prior to 1000 AD the passage was applied in mainly two ways, (1) to two eschatological figures, usually Enoch, Elijah, and/or Moses and (2) to the church living between the parousias of Christ. There were also some historicist interpretations which saw the two witnesses as Peter and Paul. From 1000 to 1516 the majority of the readers still interpret the text in the same way, but the first corporate interpretation (the two witnesses as the Franciscans and Dominicans) and historicist interpretations gain more visibility. From 1516 to 1700 the Protestants interpret the beast as the papacy and the Roman Church and the witnesses as the proto-Protestants during 1260 years prior to the Reformation. Catholics interpret the passage as applying to the future and some read the passage as applying to the past. After 1700 all of those interpretations found fewer defenses, just as there appeared other proposals as well as the critical interpretation affirming that John was wrongly expecting a quick fulfillment of his prophecy. Beale is representative of many contemporary commentators when he writes:

The “two witnesses” are not two individual prophets, whether Moses and Elijah, Enoch and Elijah, Paul and Peter, or the two Jewish high priests killed in A.D. 68. Neither are they only a part of the Christian community whether Jewish Christians or Christian prophets or martyrs. [...] The two witnesses also do not represent concepts like “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus” because they are portrayed as people who perform actions and speak words. Rather, they represent the whole community of faith, whose primary function is to be a prophetic witness. Just as John the Baptist was not a literal reappearance of Elijah, but came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), likewise the witnesses are not Moses and Elijah reincarnated. Nevertheless, the two witnesses are patterned after these two OT figures (see on vv 5-6).⁶⁶

There is a major context commonly ignored here, however. As many interpreters make clear, there are several doubles who seem to fit in some measure the description here provided: Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, David and Salomon, Zerubbabel and Joshua, John the Baptist and Jesus, Peter and Paul. One of the contentions of this paper is that there is a divinely established pattern that serves as context to this prophecy. This is not considered by most interpreters.

⁶⁵ Seth Turner, “Revelation 11:1-13: History of Interpretation” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2005).

⁶⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 572-573.

Besides, if we take seriously the judicial aspect of the word *μάρτυς* in light of the law that affirms the need for at least two witnesses (Num 25:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15), another argument for the judicial understanding of Rev 11:1-2 is made. At the same time, these two witnesses become witnesses against those among God's people who are walking astray.

That the narratives of Elisha and Elijah follow the ones of Moses and Joshua is a fact commented and defended by many writers.⁶⁷ The reasons for affirming that the Elisha-Elijah history is patterned after Moses-Joshua are lexical (use of the same words), geographical (repetition of places), and historical (repetition of events and sequence of events).

As the Old Testament predicts the coming of Elijah before the Messiah (Mal 4:5; Mat 11:14; Mat 17:11-12 and par.), it is expected that in some sense the relationship of John the Baptist and Jesus is built on the same typology of Moses-Joshua and Elijah-Elisha. Interestingly, the names Joshua, Elisha and Jesus are all derived from the same Hebrew root, meaning salvation. There are studies showing how the evangelists wrote their gospels making these connections clear.⁶⁸ Some of these studies contend that Luke uses the same pattern Elijah-Elisha to represent Peter-Paul and Christ-Church (esp. in the ascension account in Luke 1). Spadaro says: "The seamless baton change from John to Jesus is reminiscent of Moses/Joshua, David/Salomon and Elijah/Elisha".⁶⁹

Rev 11:1-13 makes reference to many of these characters. The link to Zerubbabel is clearly made in Rev 11:4, which quotes Zechariah 4, a text in which Zerubbabel is the main character. Rev 11:6 makes connection with the ministry of Elijah described in 1 Kings 17. Moses (cf. Exod 7:17-19) is alluded to in Rev 11:6. Both the crucifixion and the ascension of Jesus are referred to in Rev 11: 8 and 12, respectively.

Although much more could be said about these duplets and their connections, the point is clear: the Bible presents a typology of servants of God working two by two (cf. Luke 10.1). It is this typology that is developed by John in Revelation. This asks for a more literal fulfillment, of two future

⁶⁷ Rachele Gilmour, *Juxtaposition and the Elisha Cycle* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 85 et passim.; Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 172; Marvin A. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 272.

⁶⁸ Dean B. Deppe, *Theological Intentions of Mark's Literary Devices: Markan Intercalations, Frames, Allusionary Repetitions, Narrative Surprises, And Three Types of Mirroring* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 362 et seq.; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the New Testament Collected Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 152; Daniel S. Dapaah, *The Relationship Between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth: A Critical Study* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), 95 et seq.; John S. Kloppenborg and Jozef Verheyden, *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁶⁹ Martin C. Spadaro, *Reading Matthew as the Climactic Fulfillment of the Hebrew Story* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2015), e-book.

characters appearing in the history, rather than the proposal that both witnesses represent the church.⁷⁰

It is possible to assert that John is reaffirming the master-disciple structure for the testimony of the church and that he predicts the coming of a duplet as Moses-Joshua, Elijah-Elisha and John-Jesus during the time of the great tribulation.

CONCLUSION

This article provided a close reading of Rev 11:1-2 and a very brief analysis of the identity of the two witnesses of Rev 11:3-13. An eclectic view on the measurement of the temple was presented. It was argued that the act of measuring points to God's testing of his people instead of just a guarantee of preservation. God will preserve those who do not fail His test of fidelity. The application of a macro-typological reading to the text has shown that it is possible to see Rev 11:1-2 as connected to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD and at the same time a constant situation throughout the history of the church with a special broader fulfillment in the end, right before the coming of Jesus.

Based also on a typological understanding, this article contended that the two witnesses should be interpreted as literal persons which will appear some time in the period called the great tribulation. Some of the ideas here presented certainly deserve a more careful treatment. The application of a reading conscious of some biblical typological patterns can prove useful to the understanding of Revelation.

RESUMO

A passagem sob discussão é considerada uma das mais difíceis de todo o livro do Apocalipse. As dois primeiros versos apresentam vários desafios exegéticos quanto ao verdadeiro sentido de templo, a época dos eventos, as ações dos gentios e o sentido de "a cidade santa". A segunda parte (v. 3-13) apresenta a questão da identidade das duas testemunhas. Após fazer a revisão da literatura sobre os versos 1-2, o autor apresenta a sua própria interpretação e a seguir propõe uma nova compreensão das duas testemunhas. Ele conclui que a medição do templo aponta para a ação de Deus em testar o seu povo, antes que para uma simples promessa de preservação. Argumenta que a passagem está tipologicamente relacionada com a destruição do templo em 70 AD

⁷⁰ Cf. a good defense of the two literal individuals in Tan, "A Futurist View of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11," 460-466. In the conclusion of her article she clearly summarizes her thesis: "They will be literal persons (not symbols), they will be two in number, their miraculous activities are to be understood literally, their ministry is prophetic in nature, and they will minister during the yet-future Tribulation period. In addition the testimony of eighteen early church fathers adds additional support to this view." (471)

e com uma situação contínua em toda a história da igreja. Insiste que as duas testemunhas devem ser entendidas como pessoas literais que irão aparecer em algum momento da chamada Grande Tribulação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Livro do Apocalipse; A medição do templo; As duas testemunhas; Interpretação tipológica.

