

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 16, Revelation 11 Temple and Two Witnesses Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 16, Revelation 11 Temple and Two Witnesses, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Dave Mathewson **interprets** Revelation 11, focusing on **two key symbols**: the temple and the two witnesses. He argues that the **temple metaphorically represents God's people**, the church, throughout history, experiencing both protection and persecution. The **two witnesses symbolize the church's faithful witness**, enduring hardship until Christ's return. Mathewson **emphasizes the symbolic nature** of the text's imagery and numerical details, rejecting a strictly literal interpretation of timelines. He connects these symbols to Old Testament themes, highlighting the church's ongoing struggle and eventual vindication.

2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Revelation).



Mathewson_Revelation_Session16.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpt on Revelation 11 by Dr. Dave Mathewson:

Briefing Document: Revelation 11 - The Temple and the Two Witnesses

Introduction:

This lecture by Dr. Dave Mathewson focuses on the interpretation of Revelation 11, specifically analyzing the two primary images presented: the measuring of the temple and the ministry of the two witnesses. The lecture emphasizes the symbolic nature of these images, drawing connections to the Old Testament and other New Testament passages, while also offering insights into their meaning within the broader context of Revelation and the nature of the Church.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Symbolic Interpretation:

- Dr. Mathewson emphasizes the importance of interpreting the imagery of Revelation 11 symbolically rather than literally. He states, *"The starting point is realizing this is probably symbolic of something as we've seen over and over again, which is the case in the book of Revelation."* This approach is crucial for understanding the true message of the text.

1. The Temple as the People of God:

- The temple in Revelation 11:1-2 is not a literal structure (either past or future), but a metaphor for the Church, the community of believers. Dr. Mathewson argues, *"I take the temple here to be metaphorical of the people of God, or that is, throughout Revelation, it would be the people of God, the new people of God, the church consisting of both Jews and Gentiles."*
- This interpretation aligns with New Testament passages where the church is described as a temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:20-22).
- He further notes that the Qumran community also applied temple imagery to their own community, but their reasoning differed from John's. John understands the church as the temple because Jesus is the true temple.

1. Measuring and Protection:

- The act of measuring the temple symbolizes God's ownership, protection, and preservation of his people. As Dr. Mathewson notes, *"the measuring of the temple, the temple symbolizing the people of God, suggests the protection and the preservation of God's people."*
- Not measuring the outer court, allowing it to be trampled by the nations, represents the church's dual reality: spiritual protection and earthly persecution. He suggests that the outer court symbolizes that *"this is the church seen from two different perspectives...the measuring of the temple...indicates the church as protected spiritually...while still subject to persecution."*

1. The 42 Months and Time:

- The time periods mentioned (42 months, 1260 days, three and a half years) are not meant to be literal, chronological markers but are symbolic representations of the character of the church's existence. He says *"the author's use of the number 42 is not so much meant to be literal as to indicate and interpret the character and the meaning of the time during which the church will suffer persecution."*
- The symbolic meaning is drawn from Old Testament texts:
- **Three and a half years (half of 7):** Represents intense persecution that is limited, incomplete (short of perfection) and will not last.
- **42 months:** Indicates a time of testing and preservation, drawing on parallels to Israel's time in the wilderness.
- **1260 days:** Evokes the time of testing prophesied by Daniel.

1. The Two Witnesses as the Church:

- The two witnesses, inspired by Old Testament figures of Moses and Elijah, are symbolic of the entire witnessing church and its prophetic role. Dr. Mathewson states that *"I would agree that the two individuals are symbolic of the entire witnessing church... a symbolic vision or image of the church in its faithful witness and its prophetic role in the world."*
- Both witnesses perform the miracles of both Moses and Elijah. They are not meant to represent separate individuals.

- They are also identified with the two lampstands from Zechariah, which, in Revelation 1, represents the churches. This reinforces that the witnesses symbolize the church.

1. The Church's Dual Nature:

- The narrative of the two witnesses highlights the church's dual nature:
- **Invincible:** The witnesses are initially depicted as unharmed, protected by God, and exercising power.
- **Vulnerable:** The witnesses are eventually killed by the beast, showing the reality of persecution and suffering for the church.
- This duality emphasizes the paradoxical nature of Christian existence. As Dr. Mathewson explains: *"instead of seeing the church as having a period of success and then being vulnerable, it's rather to read this as once again seeing the church from two different perspectives."*

1. The Beast and the Abyss:

- The beast emerging from the abyss represents a demonic force and oppressive, godless empires (particularly the Roman empire in John's day). Dr. Mathewson says *"this image of a beast is one that already comes to John with a history of use and interpretation and identification with evil rulers and evil empires that oppress and harm God's people."*
- The abyss is the home/prison of demonic beings. The two together reveal the demonic source of the church's persecution.

1. Death and Resurrection as Vindication:

- The death of the two witnesses mirrors the suffering of Christ and his followers and the world celebrates this.
- Their resurrection represents the vindication of the saints by God, showing that their faithful witness was not in vain. *"Now, God vindicates them by raising them up and giving them life, showing that their faithful witness indeed was not in vain."*
- The description is drawn from Ezekiel 37, where the breath of God raises the dry bones of Israel.

1. The Great City and Response:

- The "Great City" where the witnesses die is a composite of oppressive, godless cities (including Babylon, Jerusalem, Sodom, and Egypt), ultimately represented by Rome during John's time, but applicable to any city that embodies rebellion against God. Dr. Mathewson states that it seems *"as if the author is combining all of these cities into one great city in opposition to God, and who opposes and oppresses God's people."*
- Following the witnesses' resurrection, a tenth of the city is destroyed, and some give glory to God, suggesting a possibility of both forced acknowledgment and genuine repentance.

1. The Seventh Trumpet:

- The lecture concludes by noting that the seventh trumpet (which is where the chapter ends) will be explored in the next session.

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson's lecture provides a comprehensive overview of Revelation 11, emphasizing the symbolic nature of its imagery and offering insights into the meaning of the temple, the two witnesses, and the challenges faced by the church. The lecture highlights that the chapter should not be read as a literal timeline but rather as a description of the nature of the church's existence as it navigates persecution and faithfully witnesses to Jesus Christ. The emphasis on symbolic interpretation allows for the message to be applicable to all periods of church history, not just the first century.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 16, Revelation 11, Temple and Two Witnesses

Revelation 11 Study Guide: The Temple and Two Witnesses

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the two primary images presented in Revelation 11, and what is the central question regarding them?
2. What Old Testament texts does John draw upon in the image of measuring the temple, and what does this imagery typically represent?
3. What are the four different interpretations of the temple presented by Dr. Mathewson, and which does he support?
4. According to Mathewson, what is the significance of measuring the temple and excluding the outer court, and what are the two possible interpretations of this exclusion?
5. What are the various ways in which the time period of the church's existence is represented in Revelation 11, and what is the significance of the specific numbers?
6. Who are the two witnesses most likely modeled after, and what specific miracles do they perform that support this?
7. What is the symbolic meaning of the two witnesses, and how does it relate to the church's role in the world?
8. What is the significance of the witnesses being clothed in sackcloth and what is their primary role?
9. How does the beast from the abyss relate to the witnesses' ministry, and how does this connect to the themes of chapters 12 and 13?
10. What two responses are given to the witnesses' deaths in the "Great City" and what does their resurrection signify?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two primary images are a temple being measured and two witnesses. The central question is what these images portray, what they refer to, and the relationship between the two images.
2. John draws on Ezekiel 40-48 and Zechariah 2:1-5. Measuring the temple is usually symbolic of ownership and protection.
3. The four interpretations are: a literal rebuilt end-time temple, the literal first-century temple, the future people of God (figuratively), and the church itself. Mathewson supports the last interpretation: the church as the people of God.
4. Measuring the temple symbolizes the protection and preservation of God's people, whereas not measuring the outer court represents the church's experience of persecution. The exclusion could either represent unfaithful church members or the church's dual experience of protection and persecution.
5. The time period is represented as 42 months, three and a half years, and 1260 days. These numbers are not literal, but symbolize the character of the church's existence as a time of both testing and preservation.
6. They are most likely modeled after Moses and Elijah. They perform miracles like shutting up the sky and turning water into blood, similar to what Moses and Elijah performed.
7. The two witnesses symbolize the entire witnessing church in its prophetic role. It reflects the church's task of being a faithful witness to Jesus in the face of opposition, much like the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 were called to be.
8. Being clothed in sackcloth signifies repentance and mourning due to judgment. Their role is to deliver a message that ultimately results in judgment.
9. The beast, a demonic figure associated with oppressive empires, emerges to oppose the witnesses, and this is a precursor to the more detailed treatment of evil and oppression in chapters 12 and 13. It signifies the true source of the church's persecution.
10. The first response is dishonoring the witnesses by leaving their bodies unburied. The second is that the world celebrates their deaths. Their resurrection signifies their vindication and shows that their witness was not in vain.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different interpretations of the temple in Revelation 11, arguing for the most plausible interpretation, and discuss how this interpretation illuminates other themes in the book of Revelation.
2. Analyze the symbolic meaning of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, exploring their connection to Old Testament figures and their role in representing the church's mission.
3. Compare and contrast the temple and the two witnesses in Revelation 11 as two perspectives of the same entity. Explain their parallel imagery and how they contribute to understanding the nature of the church's existence.
4. Discuss the significance of the time periods (42 months, 1260 days, three and a half years) in Revelation 11. How do these numbers relate to the nature of the church's experience, and what do they reveal about John's view of history and the end times?
5. Explore the themes of persecution and vindication in Revelation 11, explaining how they are reflected in both the image of the temple and the two witnesses. How do these themes relate to the larger narrative of the book of Revelation?

Glossary of Key Terms

Abyss: A place of chaos or a prison of demonic forces; represents the source of evil and opposition to God.

Altar: Within the temple setting, it symbolizes worship and sacrifice, representing the church's dedication to God.

Apocalyptic Literature: A literary genre characterized by symbolic visions, revealing the hidden realities of the spiritual realm and the future.

Beast: A symbolic figure representing an evil, oppressive force often associated with idolatrous, anti-God empires.

Church: In Revelation 11, primarily symbolic of the community of believers, seen as the new temple and the faithful witnesses.

Great City: A term used to describe the center of rebellion and opposition to God, embodying the characteristics of past oppressors like Babylon, Egypt, Sodom, and even Jerusalem.

Lampstand: A symbol that represents the church, reflecting the light of God in the world and echoing the temple imagery.

Measuring: An act that symbolizes protection, ownership, and preservation by God.

Preterist View: An interpretation of Revelation that understands its prophecies as primarily referring to events that occurred in the first century.

Sackcloth: A symbol of mourning, repentance, and humility.

Temple: A symbolic image representing the dwelling place of God and his people.

Two Witnesses: Symbolic of the witnessing church that faithfully proclaims God's message and faces opposition.

Vindication: The act of being justified and proven righteous, often through resurrection or divine reversal of judgment.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 16, Revelation 11, Temple and Two Witnesses, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Revelation 11: The Temple and Two Witnesses

1. **What does the temple in Revelation 11:1-2 symbolize?** The temple in Revelation 11:1-2 is not a literal, physical structure, either from the first century or a future rebuilt temple. Instead, it's a metaphor for the people of God, the Church, which includes both Jews and Gentiles. This imagery is drawn from the Old Testament where the temple was the dwelling place of God, and is now applied to the community of believers in the New Testament era. The measuring of the temple signifies God's protection and preservation of His people.
2. **Why is the outer court of the temple excluded from being measured and given to the Gentiles to be trampled for 42 months?** The exclusion of the outer court can be interpreted in two ways: (1) It may symbolize the unfaithful or compromising members of the church, contrasted with the faithful who are represented by the measured inner temple. (2) It can represent the church viewed from two perspectives - the measured inner temple signifies the church as spiritually protected by God, while the outer court represents the church as it suffers persecution in the world, emphasizing that the Church will be both preserved and subjected to trials.
3. **What is the significance of the 42 months (or 1260 days, or three and a half years) mentioned in Revelation 11?** These time periods (42 months, 1260 days, and three and a half years) are not intended to be taken literally as a specific duration. Rather, they are symbolic of the entire period of the Church's existence, from the first century until Christ's return. These numbers express the character of the church's existence as a time of both preservation and intense testing, or persecution. The number 42 recalls the Old Testament themes of judgment, testing, and divine protection, while three and a half being half of seven (the number of perfection) suggests a period of incompleteness.

4. **Who are the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3-13, and what do they represent?**

The two witnesses are not necessarily two literal individuals, such as Moses and Elijah, though they do reflect their prophetic roles. Instead, they are symbolic of the entire witnessing church. They embody the church's prophetic function, its ministry, and its faithful witness to the world. They are described as performing the miracles of both Moses and Elijah, demonstrating a powerful and prophetic witness. They are also associated with the lampstands from Zechariah and Revelation, which further ties them to the concept of the church as a light to the world.

5. **Why are there specifically two witnesses?** The number two has significance in two possible ways: (1) It draws from Old Testament legal requirements in Deuteronomy, where two or three witnesses were necessary for testimony to be valid. (2) It may reflect the two faithful churches (Smyrna and Philadelphia) from Revelation 2 and 3 that served as models of uncompromising witness. So, the two witnesses could represent the model of the Church as faithful witnesses.

6. **How does the persecution and death of the two witnesses relate to the rest of Revelation, particularly the trumpet judgments in chapters 8 and 9?** The apparently unhindered ministry of the two witnesses eventually ends as a beast from the abyss is permitted to kill them. This represents the church being subjected to persecution and martyrdom. The persecution is tied to the trumpet judgments of Revelation 8 and 9. The beast represents oppressive, godless powers, and the abyss is the dwelling place of demonic evil. The judgments in chapters eight and nine are depicted as consequences for humanity's rejection and persecution of the church's faithful witness.

7. **What is the significance of the beast killing the two witnesses, their bodies lying unburied in the city, and their resurrection after three and a half days?** The death of the witnesses and their bodies lying unburied highlight the intense persecution and shame the faithful church faces. The city they lie in is a composite symbol of any great, godless, oppressive city that rejects God. Their resurrection is a powerful symbol of vindication; that although the world rejects and oppresses them, God ultimately reverses that verdict, raising them up and showing the validity of their testimony and faith. It's tied to the idea of resurrection as a vindication for the faithful.

8. **What is the significance of the earthquake and the subsequent response of the people after the resurrection of the two witnesses?** The earthquake and the collapse of a tenth of the city, along with the death of 7,000 people, represent divine judgment. The survivors' response of giving glory to God is a debated point; it may represent forced acknowledgment of God's power, but it also holds the possibility of a genuine act of repentance, particularly in light of the witness of the Church. Importantly, this potential for repentance comes after, not before, the death and vindication of the faithful witnesses. This highlights how it is the faithful witness of the church, even unto death, that brings about repentance, not just raw displays of divine power.