

Text: Rev. 11:1

Title: "Arise and measure God's temple"

Time: 10/22/2017 am; 11/5/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: Sometimes you have to measure something to correctly appreciate it. DNA is one of those things. Each of our cells contains DNA. DNA is "supercoiled" so that it can fit into a cell. Imagine a towel or string that you twist – slowly it gets shorter. DNA does that on a nano-technological scale. One cell's worth of DNA uncoiled measures out to be about 2 meters long. Were you to take all the DNA in all of your cells and stretch them out end to end, I am told that they would cover a distance that is twice the diameter of the solar system. There is a lot to appreciate about DNA, and one of the ways to heighten our appreciation for this part of creation is to consider these measurements.

In our passage John is commanded by the strong angel of chapter 10 to "arise and measure!" He is given a measuring rod and told to use it to measure the sanctuary, the altar of incense, and those who worship in the temple. The Lord does not do that because He needs information on some dimensions so that He can embark on a remodeling project. He commands this of John so that we would take time to appreciate some important dimensions of God's temple.

There was a time, 1817-1819, during which there was both a Dartmouth College and a Dartmouth University. That long story is not for us to focus on this morning, but during that brief period a pastor named William Allen was the president of Dartmouth University. I mention him because he wrote a hymn about the importance of measuring spiritual blessings correctly (#158 in his *Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship*):

“Wise men have measured mountains,
And fathom’d depths of seas,
Have trac’d the hidden fountains,
And search’d deep mysteries;

“But they have fail’d to measure
What most might blessings prove,
And fail’d to find the treasure
Of Christ’s most wondrous love.

“But sure no rock-crown’d mountain
So lofty lifts its head,
And from no welling fountain
Such joys are widely spread:--

“The love of Christ transcending
Yon heav’ns’ exalted height,
Is flowing love, ne’er ending, --
In God’s own glorious light!”

Our text this morning is an invitation to take some measurements of something that dwells in God’s own glorious light. The angel commands John to “Arise and measure God’s temple.” That is going to be the title of the message. It turns out that taking some measurements of our own of God’s temple is good for us spiritually. When we do that correctly, we no longer “fail to measure what most might blessings prove” or “fail to find the treasure of Christ’s most wondrous love.” Notice four things with me this morning.

I. To measure God’s temple correctly, we need the right measuring-rod (v. 1a). The angel not only issues the command to measure, but also gives the rod with which to do the measuring.

Illustration: We get our English word *metric* from the Greek word translated *measure* in this verse (μετρέω). As Americans, we are a bit out of step with the rest of the world because we use the imperial system of measurement instead of the metric system. So when the Patriots need to get a first down, they need 10 yards. If we had the metric system, we would have to say that they needed 9.144 meters. If the first down chain on the sideline was 10 meters instead of 10 yards, it would be about two feet 10 inches, almost a whole yard, longer. That could impact a lot of football games. The Buckeyes would have been in trouble against the Wolverines last year under those conditions.

Appl: The point here is that we have to measure things using the correct standard, or we are going to get the measurement all wrong. As Dr. Allen's poem teaches us, we often fail to measure what is truly valuable to us, and when we do measure those things we often fail to do so with the right standard in mind. This same word *measure* is used in a passage in which Paul has to rebuke fellow Christians for using the wrong standard to measure their lives (2 Cor. 10:12). There Paul makes the point that ourselves are the wrong standard to measure our lives. How we are doing or what is important spiritually should never be matters of personal opinion, or even of the opinions of other people. If we use those things for our measurement standard, we are going to get the measurement wrong.

Appl2: So what is the correct measurement standard when it comes time to take the measurements of spiritual things? We find that answer in 1 Cor. 2:6-16. Verse 15 tells us that the one who is spiritual is able to measure all things. He can do that because he has access to the things of the Spirit of God, which can bring him beyond his own natural abil-

ity (v. 14), and the things of the Spirit of God Paul refers to there are the truths of God's self-revelation (vv. 9-10).

What standard has God given us to measure all things? His precious Word! Is that what we use? Will our conclusions about the dimensions of God's temple be guided by what God's word says about God's temple, or by what you and I happen to think on our own about it? To measure God's temple correctly, we need the right measuring-rod.

II. When we correctly measure God's temple, we find it to be the place of His dwelling (v. 1b).

Illustration: If we use the wrong standard, one of the things our personal opinion might tell us today is that places are not that important when it comes to God's presence. Place has become much less important to our being in one another's presence with today's technology. James and I watched the Yankees/Indians playoff game with Brandon and Carrie, even though James and I were in New Boston and Brandon and Carrie were in Chichester. We could do that because technology enables the same game to be broadcast at the same time in both locations, and it enables our two separate locations to communicate in real time through various means. We did not have to be in the same geographical place to enjoy the game together.

Appl: That aspect of our lives can make us forget the importance of place when it comes to the temple of God. While it is true that our omnipresent God is not confined to any one place (Acts 17:24, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."), still it is also true that certain places are described as dwelling places of God in the Scripture. With Paul we understand that He is not limited to temples, but He still desires to dwell in them.

In our text John takes the measurements of a place. That place is called God's temple. The Greeks had two words translated *temple* in our KJV, one that referred to the entire complex, courts and porticos and all, and one that referred to the inner sanctuary that was most holy. That second idea is the word that we have here (ναός). It comes from a Greek verb that means *to dwell*. The omnipresent God exists everywhere, but He does not dwell in this sense everywhere.

Illustration: It is kind of like the difference between being at home and being on the road. I am going to be in Greenville next week, and my existence there is going to be very different than my time spent at home. It would be horrible to not have a home to come home to.

This is true for God as well. There are places He calls home, places He dwells, and these are called His house or His dwelling place. The temple of heaven we see in our passage is certainly one of those, but we need to understand that there are at least two other places that Scripture tells us about where God dwells today that need to be correctly measured by us. In both it is the agency of the Holy Spirit that provides for a special exhibition of the Lord's presence.

(1) God dwells in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:12-20). Our body is God's temple because the Spirit of God dwells within us. That means that our body is a part of the body of Christ, and whatever we do with our bodies the body of Christ does. And that means we must live sexually pure lives even in an age in which immodesty and immorality have become the norm.

(2) God dwells in the local church assembly (1 Cor. 3:5-17). Paul calls the local church at Corinth God's field and God's building (v. 9). He is not saying that they had a field and a building; he is saying that they were one. He is referring to

the lives of believers in Christ. God used Paul to build that building carefully (v. 10). It is God's temple (vv. 16-17). So he says, "Do not destroy God's temple." Three other passages speak of the local church assembly as a place of God's dwelling: Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Tim. 3:14-15, and 2 Cor. 6:16-18.

Illustration: Some Baptist churches today call themselves, "Tabernacle Baptist Church," with this insight.

III. When we correctly measure God's temple, we find it to be the place our prayers go (v. 1c).

Appl: John is told to measure the altar of incense that is before God's throne in the temple. We spent some time considering this as we contemplated the meaning of the angel at the beginning of the seven trumpet judgments, the one who represented the high-priestly ministry of Jesus Christ (Rev. 8:3-5). The judgments of the Great Tribulation will tell the story that the prayers of the saints were not in vain. Why come to prayer meeting? Why spend time on your knees before you start your day? Why spend so much time in prayer during a Sunday morning service?

Answer: The altar's dimensions. Our prayers go to God's temple where the altar of incense makes them acceptable and pleasing to the One who is on the throne.

A specific challenge: Can you add a time to pray with believers to your weekly schedule? If you are shut in, you may have to call someone to come over. Get to one more of our Tuesday morning (men), Wednesday night, or Sunday morning prayer times. Come to our Sunday evening discipleship time to pray for that work in the hearts of those to whom we are ministering the gospel and the commands of Christ. Have we measured correctly the altar?

IV. When we correctly measure God's temple, we find it to be the place where worship is expected (v. 1d).

App1: We are told in 7:15 that these worshippers are especially that great multitude that have come away from the Great Tribulation. You may remember that they are distinguishable from the 24 elders, who serve as priests and kings with the Lamb in His kingdom. Perhaps it is true that believers who worship the least in this life will have the most worshipping in the temple to do during the Great Tribulation and the millennium, while others rule and reign on earth with their Savior.

App2: However we may understand that, what is far clearer is the fact that One dwells in God's temple who expects to be worshipped. Few books tell us how to worship our God as forcibly and thoroughly as the book of Revelation. Wherever we see the worship of God in Revelation, two accompaniments of true worship are there (Rev. 14:7):

1. True worship falls down and fears God (*fear God* – 14:7, 15:4; 4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:4, 19:10, 22:8-9, crown casting 4:10).

2. True worship expresses to God His true worth (*give glory to Him* – 14:7, 15:4; 4:11, 5:13-14, 7:10, 12, 11:17, 19:3, 5).

Conclusion: This morning we have taken up the measuring rod of the word of God and taken down some of what it says about the dimensions of God's temple. It is the place He dwells. Our bodies and our assembly times are similar places. It is the place our prayers go. We should pray. And it is the place where worship is expected. Have we worshipped in His house today – fearing Him and glorifying Him? Would our Lord sing Allen's verse of us? "But they

have fail'd to measure/What most might blessings prove,/ And fail'd to find the treasure/Of Christ's most wondrous love." Let's not fail to measure and to treasure God's temple.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching