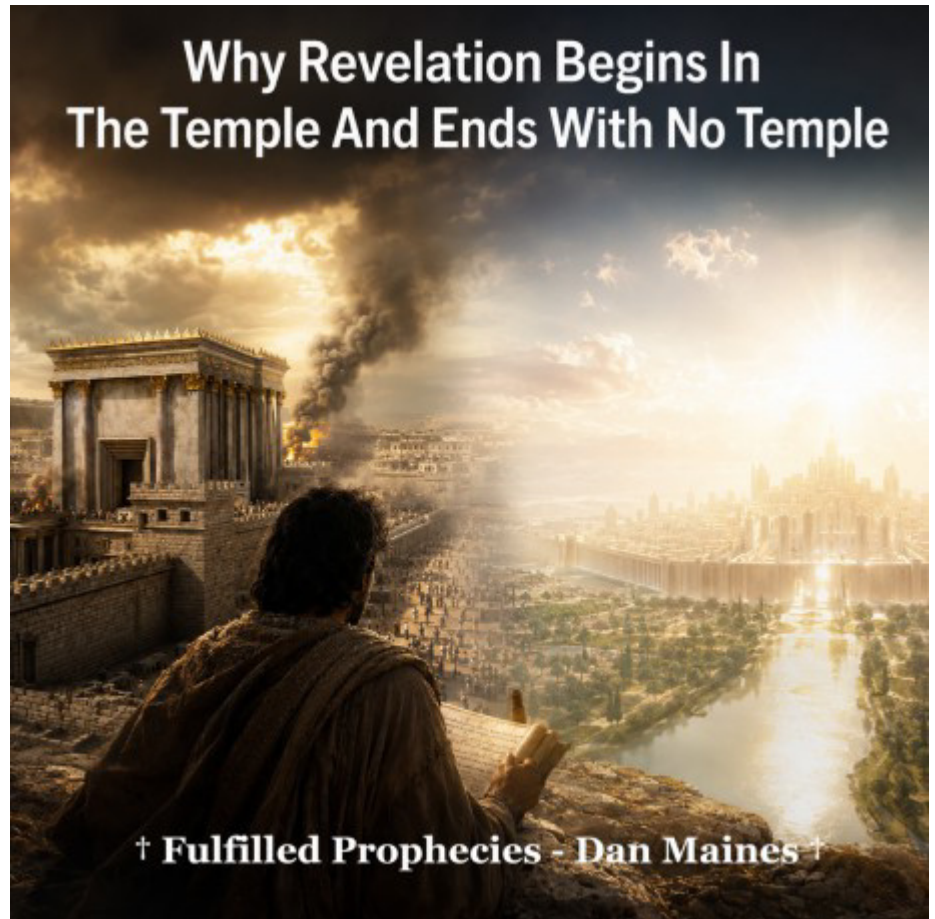


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## Why Revelation Begins In The Temple And Ends With No Temple



By Dan Maines

## Why Revelation Begins In The Temple And Ends With No Temple

### Introduction

† Revelation doesn't move randomly from one vision to another. Its imagery develops toward a conclusion. Early in the book, John sees lampstands, an altar, incense, priests, the ark of the covenant, and the heavenly sanctuary. As the visions progress, the temple becomes increasingly associated with judgment. By the time John reaches the New Jerusalem, he makes one of the most important statements in the entire book, there is no temple

in the city.

† That progression tells the story of the transition from the old covenant order centered around a physical sanctuary to the completed new covenant order centered entirely in God and the Lamb. The book moves from sanctuary imagery to judgment upon the old order, and finally to a city where a temple is no longer necessary.

† Revelation's conclusion isn't about God eventually rebuilding another physical temple. It's exactly the opposite. John's vision reaches its climax when the temple disappears because everything the temple represented has reached its fulfillment in God and the Lamb.

### **Revelation 1:12-13**

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And after turning I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and wrapped around the chest with a golden sash.

† Revelation opens with sanctuary imagery. The golden lampstands immediately bring temple imagery into John's vision, but Christ is standing in their midst. The focus has already begun shifting from a physical sanctuary to the presence of Christ among His people.

† Under the old covenant, lampstands belonged to the sanctuary and were associated with priestly service (Exodus 25:31-40). In Revelation, Jesus stands among the lampstands, showing that access to God's presence is being understood through Christ rather than through Jerusalem's physical temple.

† This prepares us for the direction Revelation will take. The symbols of the sanctuary remain, but their meaning is being centered in Christ and His covenant people.

### **Revelation 6:9-11**

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth?" And a white robe was given to each of them; and they were told that they were to rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters who were to be killed even as they had been, was completed also.

† John now sees an altar, but the altar is connected with martyrs crying for vindication. Temple imagery has become judgment imagery.

† Their question is about timing, How long? The answer isn't thousands of years. They're told to rest for a little time until the remaining martyrdom is completed. Revelation itself places this judgment within an approaching time frame (Revelation 1:1, 3).

† Jesus had already connected the judgment for righteous blood with first-century Jerusalem and said that all these things would come upon that generation (Matthew 23:34-36).

Revelation's altar scene continues that same covenant lawsuit.

### **Revelation 8:3-5**

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense ascended from the angel's hand with the prayers of the saints before God. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and hurled it to the earth; and there were peals of thunder and sounds, and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

† The sanctuary imagery becomes even more directly connected with judgment. Incense and the altar first represent the prayers of the saints, then fire from that same altar is thrown out in judgment.

† The message is powerful. The prayers of God's persecuted people aren't forgotten. The sanctuary itself becomes the setting from which judgment proceeds.

† Revelation isn't merely describing worship in heaven. It's showing the covenantal process by which the cries of the saints

are answered and their persecutors are judged (Luke 18:7-8).

### **Revelation 11:1-2**

Then there was given to 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 courtyard which is outside the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

† Here Revelation brings the temple, altar, worshipers, nations, holy city, and coming trampling together in one vision.

† The holy city being trampled by the nations reflects Jesus' warning that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies and trampled by the Gentiles (Luke 21:20-24). Revelation's temple vision belongs naturally within that first-century judgment setting.

† This is especially significant because the temple isn't presented as something that must be rebuilt thousands of years later. John sees temple imagery while describing the judgment of the holy city that Jesus had already predicted.

### **Revelation 11:19**

And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.

† The earthly sanctuary had claimed covenant significance, but John sees the true covenant reality opened in heaven. The earthly structure wasn't the final destination of God's redemptive plan.

† Hebrews teaches the same movement. The earthly sanctuary belonged to the first covenant and served as a figure pointing beyond itself (Hebrews 9:1-9). Revelation uses the same covenant framework.

† Once again, the opening of the temple is followed by judgment imagery. Lightnings, voices, thunder, earthquake, and hail communicate divine judgment. Revelation keeps bringing

sanctuary and judgment together because the old covenant world was reaching its appointed conclusion.

### **Revelation 15:5-8**

After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and their chests wrapped with golden sashes. And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

† By this point, Revelation's temple imagery has become unmistakably connected with covenant judgment. The angels carrying the final plagues come directly out of the temple.

† The bowls aren't disconnected disasters randomly occurring in world history. They belong to the book's developing judgment scene, which began with the cries of the martyrs and continues until God's judgment is completed.

† Notice the word finished. Revelation is moving toward completion. Judgment proceeds from the temple until the plagues have accomplished their purpose. The sanctuary imagery is approaching its conclusion.

### **Revelation 21:22-23**

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

† Here is the destination toward which Revelation has been moving. John doesn't see a bigger temple, a restored temple, or a third temple. He sees no temple.

† John even tells us why. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. What the physical sanctuary represented has reached its covenantal reality. God's people don't approach Him

through a physical building, priesthood, altar, or animal sacrifice. They approach Him through Christ.

† This is why Revelation can't end with the restoration of the old covenant temple system. That would reverse the entire direction of the book. Revelation moves from temple symbols, through temple judgment imagery, to a New Jerusalem where God and the Lamb themselves are the temple.

† The disappearance of the temple isn't a minor detail. It's one of Revelation's clearest declarations that the old covenant sanctuary order wasn't God's final plan. The shadow has given way to the reality (Hebrews 8:5, 13; 10:1).

† Jesus had already announced this transformation when He told the Samaritan woman that the hour was coming when worship wouldn't be centered in Jerusalem, but true worshipers would worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24). Revelation 21 shows the completed covenant world toward which those words pointed.

## **Historical References**

† Josephus described the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in AD 70. His account records the burning of the sanctuary and the devastation that brought Jerusalem's temple-centered national order to its historical end. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6.

† Josephus' description is important because Revelation repeatedly joins the holy city, temple imagery, persecution, bloodshed, and judgment. The historical destruction of Jerusalem provides the first-century setting in which those themes reached their devastating climax.

† Eusebius later recorded the early Christian understanding that Jerusalem's disasters followed the rejection and persecution of Christ and His messengers. He also preserved the tradition that believers in Jerusalem departed before the city's destruction. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapters 5-7.

† These historical witnesses don't establish the interpretation by themselves. Scripture establishes the doctrine. History shows that the first-century world actually experienced the destruction

Jesus had warned His generation was coming (Matthew 23:36-38; 24:1-2, 34).

### **How It Applies To Us Today**

† We aren't waiting for another physical temple to become the center of God's redemptive program. Revelation ends by telling us that God and the Lamb are the temple.

† We don't need an earthly priesthood to bring us into God's presence. Through Christ we have direct access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

† We don't need animal sacrifices because Christ's sacrifice accomplished what the old covenant sacrifices could never accomplish permanently (Hebrews 10:10-14).

† We don't need to travel to Jerusalem to find the dwelling place of God. God's people have come to the heavenly Jerusalem and belong to His covenant city now (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† Revelation begins surrounded by sanctuary imagery because it tells the story of covenant transition and judgment. It ends with no temple because the transition is complete. God isn't calling His people backward into shadows. He's brought them into the reality those shadows anticipated.

† The question shouldn't be, When will another temple be built? Revelation's final answer is far greater, I saw no temple in it. God and the Lamb are the temple.

### **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** Does Revelation teach that Christians should expect another physical temple to become the center of God's worship?

**A:** No. Revelation's final picture of the New Jerusalem specifically says that John saw no temple because God and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

**Q:** Why does Revelation use so much temple imagery if the book ends without a temple?

**A:** Because the temple symbols help explain the covenant transition. Revelation uses lampstands, altars, incense, the ark, sanctuary imagery, and priestly imagery while moving toward

the completed reality found in God and the Lamb (Revelation 1:12-13; 8:3-5; 11:19; 15:5-8; 21:22).

**Q:** Was the destruction of Jerusalem's temple predicted by Jesus?

**A:** Yes. Jesus said the temple buildings would be thrown down, and He placed the fulfillment of His judgment prophecy within that generation (Matthew 24:1-2, 34).

**Q:** Does no temple mean there is no worship?

**A:** No. It means worship is no longer dependent upon a physical sanctuary. Jesus had already said worship wouldn't remain centered in Jerusalem, but would be in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

**Q:** Are believers waiting to enter God's covenant presence someday?

**A:** No. The New Testament says believers have access to the Father through Christ and have come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 12:22-24).

**Q:** Why is Revelation 21:22 so important to understanding the entire book?

**A:** Because it reveals where Revelation's temple imagery was heading. The book doesn't end by rebuilding the old system. It ends with God and the Lamb as the temple, showing that the old covenant shadows have reached their fulfillment in the new covenant reality (Hebrews 8:5, 13; 10:1).

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## **Source Index**

† Revelation 1:12-13; Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 8:3-5; Revelation 11:1-2; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 15:5-8; Revelation 21:22-23

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7

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