

# The Gospel in Revelation

is the divine initiative of the Father and the Son to save the lost. If the Son had remained in heaven and the Father had come to this earth as a man, the inspired record would read the same. Jesus was not reluctant to die nor was the Father reluctant to forgive. It would have made no difference, then, if their positions had been reversed. God died for us on Calvary in the person of His Son. We see this truth in New Testament passages that describe the death of Christ as the death of God's Son:

“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son”  
(John 3:16, NIV).

“He . . . did not spare His own Son” (Romans 8:32, NKJV).

“We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son”  
(Romans 5:10).

In giving His Son, God was giving Himself. God Himself willingly assumed the role of the guilty victim through the person of His Son, bearing the penalty for our sins. The nail that pierced Jesus' hand cut through the hand of God. The spear thrust into Jesus' side gored into God's side. Christ was not an independent third party, in addition to the Father and the sinner, but was the eternal Son of the Father, one with the Father in His essential being. Calvary was not a punishment on a meek Christ by a harsh and punitive Father, nor a seeking gesture of a loving Christ toward a distant and indifferent Father. Instead, the righteous, loving God humbled Himself in and through His only Son to become flesh, sin and a curse for us, in order to redeem us without compromising His own character. God's own heart suffered on the cross. If Calvary meant the dying of God Himself, then our measurement of God is a measurement of love unbounded. In the words of Charles Wesley's hymn “And Can It Be”:

“Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, should'st die for me?”

The cross of Jesus Christ is the judgment of God, in which the Judge Himself took our place on Golgotha.

## Summary

Revelation 11 opens with a call to measure the temple and the altar. This is, in the symbolic language of Bible prophecy, a call to measure the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Consider all that Christ has suffered for you. Take in its length and breadth and know God's love at a heart level that passes all understanding. He has taken all your sin and suffered all your pain. He has overcome sin, iniquity and transgression in every form, so that you might experience release from the torments of a guilty heart and surrender to His relentless love.

## Relentless Love

The story of a Man is told,  
On Calvary's hill so long ago.  
He saw our plight, He heard our cry,  
And stepped into our place to die.  
    How could He condescend so low?  
    The depths of love we scarcely know;  
    The height, the breadth, the length of pain,  
    And yet He bore it for our gain.  
We ripped His clothes; His face we beat;  
With nails we pierced His hands and feet;  
And yet God's love He did proclaim:  
“I see no person here to blame.”  
    For every blow and every pain,  
    We thrust on Him, we saw no shame.  
    “Forgive them, Father, for this deed,”  
    He said of us to meet our need.  
Before He came He saw our hate,  
And mocking jeers that sealed His fate.  
And knowing well what we would do,  
He loved us still when we were through.  
    His suffering soul cried out alone,  
    But no response came from the throne.  
    For this was God's eternal tear,  
    A love to cast out all our fear.  
We took the Man, no bones we broke,  
This King of heaven, prince blood-soaked.  
But quickly death had done its part;  
The only thing we broke . . . His heart.  
    Behold the Man, the great Divine,  
    Tasted the death that's yours and mine.  
    And at what cost? We'll never know,  
    The price He paid, to Him we owe.  
Behold it! Let it fill your soul!  
Yes, drink it down; the cup is full;  
With grace that cleans our guilty stain,  
That love within our hearts might reign.  
    Will you step out and seek this love?  
    If you refuse and make no move,  
    Your parched and empty soul to fill,  
    In His great heart, He'll love you still.

# Preludes of Hope

## Measure the Altar

In our previous study in this series, through the writings of the apostle John, we have witnessed the unsealing of the “little book,” the book of Daniel. We have seen God's perfect and complete message destined to finish the mystery of God (Revelation 10:7), and heard the instruction to proclaim this gospel truth before many nations, peoples, tongues and kindreds (Revelation 10:11). With this background, we move into another vision in Revelation, beginning with Revelation 11:1:

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there’” (Revelation 11:1, NKJV).

Remember the symbolic significance of the scenes in Revelation. To “measure” is not talking about calculating the temple's or the altar's physical dimensions. John is instructed to probe, fathom, plumb the depths of these mysterious elements. Map them and sound them out. So let's begin.

*What is the temple of God in this verse?* First, consider that this verse directs John to measure *those who worship in the temple*. It would stand to reason, then, that the temple does not represent the people who worship God in the temple. What does it represent? Reading further down in this chapter, we again allow the Bible to interpret its own language:

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament” (Revelation 11:19).

So the temple of God is His dwelling place in heaven. To measure the temple of God, then, is to measure His government; it is to measure Him. How do we measure God? We find a clue in the next phrase, in which John is also told to measure the altar.

## The Gospel in Revelation

Study No. 8

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## Behold the Lamb

The altar in the Old Testament sanctuary symbolized the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus for the world. In the earthly sanctuary service appointed by God, animal sacrifices for sin were made on an altar in the courtyard area. These sacrifices pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who alone could take away the sins of the world. The book of Hebrews uses this sanctuary symbolism to identify the true meaning of the cross in chapter 13:

“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (Hebrews 13:10-12, NKJV).

To measure the altar, then, is to measure the sacrifice of Christ. It is to try and comprehend the length, breadth, height and depth of love demonstrated to us in the life and death of Jesus:

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19, NKJV).

The symbolic command to measure the altar is similar to the call, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). We are to understand that Jesus was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), and with that understanding we are also to measure God’s love. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). By measuring the altar, we are concurrently measuring the temple of God, God’s very government and character, as demonstrated in Christ’s sacrifice.

## God Forsaken

Jesus is the Lamb in Revelation, the true sacrifice to which the sanctuary service and the altar pointed. To measure the altar is to measure this sacrifice, to comprehend something of the terrible price that was paid by Christ for our redemption.

What was the price Christ paid? How much did He suffer for us?

Jesus was whipped, beaten, crowned with thorns and mocked. His hands and feet were pierced. He was nailed to a cruel cross, hung up to die between heaven and earth while the mocking crowd dared Him to come down. But it wasn’t the nails that held Him there. Christ could have

as easily come down off the cross as He could turn water into wine. It was love that bound Jesus to the cross.

The cross that Christ was nailed upon,  
That took the life of God’s dear Son;  
Was not a stake or man-made tree,  
It was mercy and forgiveness for you and me.

Christ was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as He deserves. “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Yet it is not just the physical suffering of Jesus that we find at the altar. When we measure the cross of Christ, we find a much deeper anguish than that of physical pain. The prophetic words of the Bible describe Christ as offering His soul as a sacrifice for our sin: “For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from Thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves. Selah. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; Thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth” (Psalm 88:3-8).

Mental anguish tore at the heart of Christ. His senses told Him that this death was final and permanent, that nothing would be realized beyond the tomb. He felt that He would be no more. In tasting the death of the lost, He was experiencing the wrath of God in our behalf. In the prophetic words of the Psalmist, the ordeal Christ faced is set before us: “O spare Me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more” (Psalm 39:13). “An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto Him: and now that He lieth He shall rise up no more” (Psalm 41:8).

The agony Christ suffered was not just the death of the body. Like one who had been forsaken of God in the embrace of sin, Jesus experienced the death of the soul with no hope for the future:

“And He . . . began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death’” (Matthew 26:37-38). “Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death’” (NAS).

To face this death, realizing fully the potential of complete lostness, is what the Bible refers to as *hell*: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

## The Wrath of God

God is life. He holds the life of every living creature in His hands. No one lives or breathes without Him. To be given up by God, to be forsaken as Christ was, is to experience the wrath of God:

“For the wrath of God,” says the apostle Paul, “is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. . . . Therefore God also gave them up. . . . For this reason God gave them up.” (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, NKJV).

On the cross, Christ tasted God’s wrath against sin. The experience was such that hope did not present any possibility of His coming forth from the grave. The soul cry of Jesus split the darkness: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Matthew 27:46, NKJV).

Jesus took our place, died our death, and experienced our forsakenness so that we might go free. And because He was forsaken for us, we can say, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, *but not forsaken*; cast down, *but not destroyed*” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Christ, the Bible teaches, has tasted the second death so that its physical pain and mental anguish would have no power over those who would choose to believe in Him: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ‘He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death’” (Revelation 2:11, NKJV).

How do we overcome? How is it that we can have this victory over the second death? “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 12:11).

There is power in the blood. Those who have the power of the blood, the life of Christ, cannot be overpowered by the second death. They cannot be overcome with hopelessness, although they feel keenly the sting of sin and the guilt it brings. They have seen and accepted the Savior. They believe in Him. They know that the price for their sins has already been paid. They have given all to Him. Sin no longer holds them: “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power” (Revelation 20:6, NAS).

## The Love of God

The call to measure the temple and the altar in Revelation 11:1 is a call to measure the love of God revealed through the cross. Both the temple and the altar represent the united work of God the Father and God the Son in our salvation. It is not Jesus persuading God or God punishing Jesus as though they are in conflict with each other. The cross