

# End Times Prophecy 314: Two Witnesses & Authority



[biblestudying.net](http://biblestudying.net)

Brian K. McPherson and Scott McPherson

Copyright 2012

## The Two Witnesses and Apostolic Authority

This study will seek to examine in greater detail certain unexplored aspects of the role of the two witnesses. We can gain insight into this question by studying the apostolic discussion of their work in building the temple and the body of Christ.

The Greek word “heiron” (2411) is used to refer to the greater temple complex and structures including its courts and walls. This word occurs 71 times in the New Testament. However, it is only used once after the Book of Acts (1 Corinthians 9:13.) In contrast, the Greek word “naos” (3485) is used to refer to the temple building itself, the holy house. This word is used 46 times in the New Testament, 19 of those occurrences are after the Book of Acts. While “naos” typically refers to the earthly temple in Jerusalem or to a heavenly Temple (in Revelation), it is also used in at least four verses to refer to the body of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:16** Know ye not that ye are the temple (3485) of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple (3485) of God, him shall God destroy; **for the temple (3485) of God is holy, which temple ye are.**

**1 Corinthians 6:19** What? know ye not that **your body is the temple (3485) of the Holy Ghost which is in you**, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

**Ephesians 2:21** In whom all **the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple (3485) in the Lord:**

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul compares his work as an apostle and teacher of Christians to someone working in a field and to an architect (masterbuilder) constructing a building. In his “building” metaphor, Paul explicitly states that the building is the temple of God. In both the temple metaphor and field metaphor Paul explains that the field and the temple are references to Christians. In the temple metaphor, Paul explains that the temple is founded upon Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:5** Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 **I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.** 7 **So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the**

increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward (3408) according to his own labour (2873). 9 For we are labourers (4904) together with God: ye are God's husbandry (1091), ye are God's building (3619). 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder (753), I have laid the foundation (2310), and another buildeth (2026) thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth (2026) thereupon. 11 For other foundation (2310) can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build (2026) upon this foundation (2310) gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 16 Know ye not that ye are the temple (3485) of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple (3485) of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple (3485) of God is holy, which temple ye are.

In Ephesians 2-3, Paul likewise compares his work as an apostle and teacher to someone who builds a temple. As in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul explains that Christians are part of that temple which is first built on the foundation of the apostles and Jesus Christ, the chief corner stone of the foundation.

**Ephesians 2:**19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household (3609) of God; 20 And are built (2026) upon the foundation (2310) of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner (204) stone; 21 In whom all the building (3619) fitly framed together (4883) groweth unto an holy temple (3485) in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together (4925) for an habitation (2732) of God through the Spirit. 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

In his first epistle, the apostle Peter also compares Christians to living stones that are part of a spiritual house. Like Paul, Peter refers to Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

**1 Peter 2:**4 To whom coming, as unto a living (2198) stone (3037), disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively (2198) stones (3037), are built up (3618) a spiritual house (3624), an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner (204) stone (3037), elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone (3037) which the builders (3618) disallowed, the same is made the head (2776) of the corner (1137), 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Although Peter does not use the Greek word “naos” (3485) for temple, he does refer to the temple with the phrase “house.” The Greek word translated as house is “oikos” (3624.) Later in this epistle, Peter explains that the “house of God” (“oikos” 3624) is Christians.

**1 Peter 4:17** For the time is come that **judgment must begin at the house (3624) of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?**

The New Testament uses this Greek phrase “house of God” (“oikos” 3624, “theos” 2316) to refer to the temple (or tabernacle).

**Matthew 12:4** How he entered into **the house (3624) of God (2316), and did eat the shewbread,** which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

**Mark 2:26** How **he went into the house (3624) of God (2316)** in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

**Luke 6:4** How **he went into the house (3624) of God (2316),** and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

**Hebrews 10:21** And having **an high priest over the house (3624) of God (2316);**

In his letter to Timothy, Paul likewise uses this phrase “house of God” (“oikos” “theos”) to refer to Christians.

**1 Timothy 3:15** But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house (3624) of God (2316), which is the church of the living God,** the pillar and ground of the truth.

Both Paul and Peter used the synonymous terms “temple” and “house of God” to metaphorically refer to Christians.

The idea of Christians as the temple of God originates with two Old Testament references to Christ himself as the cornerstone of the temple.

**Psalms 118:22** **The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.**

**Isaiah 28:16** Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, **Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.**

In the New Testament these Messianic prophecies are applied to Jesus. It is worth noting that Psalm 118 and the New Testament references to it identify the leaders of God's people as the builders. The prophecy from Psalm 118 refers to the leaders of God's people during Jesus' ministry who rejected him as Christ. However, in 1 Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 2-3, Paul identifies himself (and the other apostles) as builders of God's temple with Jesus as the cornerstone of the foundation.

**Matthew 21:42** Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read **in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner:** this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

**Mark 12:10** And have ye not read this scripture; **The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:**

**Luke 20:17** And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, **The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?**

**Acts 4:11** **This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.**

**Ephesians 2:19** Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household (3609) of God; **20 And are built (2026) upon the foundation (2310) of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner (204) stone;** 21 In whom all the building (3619) fitly framed together (4883) groweth unto an holy temple (3485) in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together (4925) for an habitation (2732) of God through the Spirit. 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

**1 Peter 2:4** To whom coming, as unto a living (2198) stone (3037), disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively (2198) stones (3037), are built up (3618) a spiritual house (3624), an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. **6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner (204) stone (3037), elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.** 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, **the stone (3037) which the builders (3618) disallowed, the same is made the head (2776) of the corner (1137),** 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Paul and Peter's concept of Christ as the cornerstone, the apostles as foundation stones, and Christians as living stones of the temple are all derived from Christ's statements in Matthew 16. In Matthew 16, Peter identifies Jesus as the Christ and Jesus describes Peter's profession as the rock upon which Jesus will build his church. Effectively, Jesus is here identifying the apostles' proclamation of Christ as the foundation of the metaphorical temple.

**Matthew 16:**15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, **That thou art Peter (4047), and upon this rock (4073) I will build (3618) my church;** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus and his disciples discuss the buildings of the temple complex and describe the stones that they were made of.

**Matthew 24:**1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple (2411): and **his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings (3619) of the temple (2411).** 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, **There shall not be left here one stone (3037) upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**

**Mark 13:**1 And as he went out of the temple (2411), one of his disciples saith unto him, **Master, see what manner of stones (3037) and what buildings (3619) are here!** 2 And Jesus answering said unto him, **Seest thou these great buildings (3619) ? there shall not be left one stone (3037) upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**

**Luke 21:**5 And as some spake of the temple (2411), how it was adorned with goodly stones (3037) and gifts, he said, 6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which **there shall not be left one stone (3037) upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**

The word translated as “stones” in each of these passages is “lithos” (3037.) It is the same word that Peter uses 5 times in 1 Peter 2:4-8 to describe Jesus and Christians as stones of the temple.

We can see that the New Testament metaphorically describes Christians as stones that comprise the temple of God which is founded on the apostles and with Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. In their writings the apostles describe themselves as builders of this spiritual temple. This is similar to Psalms 118 which refers to the leaders of God’s people as the builders. According to the New Testament this job of “building” God’s people was transferred to the apostles by Jesus.

We have seen that in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul used the metaphor of planting a field alongside his metaphor of building the temple. In both cases, he was referring to the apostolic work of evangelizing and teaching God’s people. God’s people were metaphorically represented as the field and the temple.

**1 Corinthians 3:5** Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? **6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.** **7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.** **8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward (3408) according to his own labour (2873).** **9 For we are labourers (4904) together with God: ye are God's husbandry (1091), ye are God's building (3619).** **10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder (753), I have laid the foundation (2310), and another buildeth (2026) thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth (2026) thereupon.** **11 For other foundation (2310) can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.** **12 Now if any man build (2026) upon this foundation (2310) gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;** **13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.** **14** If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. **15** If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. **16** Know ye not that **ye are the temple (3485) of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? **17** If any man defile the temple (3485) of God, him shall God destroy; **for the temple (3485) of God is holy, which temple ye are.**

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul directly applies the idea of a vineyard to the apostles' work among Christians.

**1 Corinthians 9:5** Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? **6 Or I only and Barnabas**, have not we power to forbear working? **7** Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? **who planteth a vineyard (290), and eateth not of the fruit thereof?** or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

We have already traced the origin of Paul's temple metaphor. His "field" metaphor is also traceable to similar origins. In the gospels Christ uses an Old Testament metaphor for God's people (Israel) as a vineyard that God cultivated. In Jesus' metaphors, the vineyard was in the charge of husbandmen. These were workers who oversaw the maintenance and cultivation of the vineyard. According to Jesus' metaphor, the husbandmen were replaced by others who would bring forth the fruit of the vineyard. Jesus even couples this parable with Psalm 118 which speaks of the stone rejected by the builders. As the gospels indicate the leaders of God's people (the Pharisees and Sadducees) were the builders and husbandmen of the parable. (Mark 12:1-11 and Luke 20:9-19 also record this parable.)

**Matthew 21:33** Hear another parable: **There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard**, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, **and let it out to husbandmen**, and went into a far country: **34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.** **35** And the husbandmen took his

servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 **When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?** 41 They say unto him, **He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.** 42 **Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner:** this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43 **Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.** 44 **And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.** 45 **And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.**

Likewise, in Matthew 20, Jesus gives another parable describing the preaching of the gospel using the idea of laborers in a vineyard.

**Matthew 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder (3617), which went out early in the morning to hire labourers (2040) into his vineyard (290). 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers (2040) for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard (290). 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard (290), and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard (290); and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. 8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard (290) saith unto his steward, Call the labourers (2040), and give them their hire (3408), beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? 16 **So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.****

The Greek word translated "laborers" is "ergates" (2040.) It comes from the Greek verb "ergo" (2041.)

**2040 ergates**

**from 2041**; TDNT-2:635,251; n m

AV-labourer 10, workman 3, worker 3; 16

1) **a workman, a labourer**

1a) usually one who works for hire **esp. an agricultural worker**

2) one who does, a worker, perpetrator

**2041 ergon**

from a primary (but obsolete) ergo (to work); TDNT-2:635,251; n n

AV-work 152, deed 22, doing 1, labour 1; 176

1) business, employment, that which any one is occupied

1a) that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking

2) any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind

3) an act, deed, thing done: the idea of working is emphasised in opp. to that which is less than work

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul uses a compound work formed from the Greek verb “ergon” (2041) and the Greek preposition “sun” (4862) meaning “together.” In this passage, Paul is discussing the apostolic work using the idea of laborers planting in a field. The word translated as “husbandry” is “georgion” (1091) which refers to a cultivated field. This is the same passage in which Paul discusses the apostles as builders of the temple of God (v. 9-17.)

We can see where the apostles got their metaphorical comparisons of God’s people as a temple and as a cultivated vineyard or field. And we can see where the apostles got their idea that they were the builders and planters of this temple and vineyard.

Throughout his ministry Jesus uses cultivation, agricultural, and harvest metaphors to teach about God’s people. (Matthew 7:17-19, Matthew 12:33, Matthew 13:3-40, Matthew 20:1-8, Matthew 21:33-45, Mark 4:26-32, Mark 12:1-11, Mark 13:3-32, Luke 6:43-44, Luke 8:5-15, Luke 13:6-7, 18-19, Luke 20:9-19.)

Matthew 24:32, Mark 13:28, Luke 21:29, Matthew 9:37-38 and Luke 10:2 all record Jesus’ describing the end of the age using harvest imagery. Similarly, John 4:35 records Jesus’ description of the work of the apostles using harvest imagery. And we have already seen the apostles using similar cultivation metaphors in their writings.

The New Testament also makes it clear that the apostles were appointed to be witnesses of Jesus Christ’s teachings and deeds and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so. (John 15:27, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:32, and Acts 10:39-41.) This appointment to be witnesses was equivalent to the apostolic commissioning recorded in Matthew 28, Mark 16, and Acts 1.

We have already examined Matthew 16. In Matthew 16, Jesus Christ identifies the apostles' proclamation of Christ as the foundation upon his church would be built. After remarking about this foundation, Jesus states that he will give them authority to bind and loose.

**Matthew 16:15** He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? **16** And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. **17** And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. **18** And I say also unto thee, **That thou art Peter (4047), and upon this rock (4073) I will build (3618) my church;** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **19** **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**

Matthew 18 records Jesus' follow-up remarks on this authority that he was giving to the apostles to bind and loose. The context of Matthew 18 shows that the apostolic authority to bind and loose involved their authority to excommunicate. This authority to excommunication was inherently connected to the apostles being witnesses to what Jesus taught and did during his ministry. (For more on Matthew 18 and excommunication please see our "Unity and Excommunication" study.)

**Matthew 18:15** **Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16** **But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17** **And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 18** **Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19** **Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20** **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. 21** **Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22** **Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.**

In Romans 15:19-20, Paul parallels Jesus comments in Matthew 16. In Romans 15, Paul describes the apostolic commission to build the church as building the foundation.

**Romans 15:19** **Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20** **Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build (3618) upon another man's foundation (2310):**

Notice how Paul's phrase "where Christ was named" perfectly parallels Peter's profession of Christ in Matthew 16, when Jesus described Peter's confession as the foundation of the church. Now, we know from 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 and Ephesians 2:19-3:1 that Paul equated the apostolic ministry with building the temple of God's people. Here in Roman 15:19-20, Paul is expressing his desire to preach the gospel where it had not yet been preached. In verse 20, Paul refers to preaching to those who had not yet heard the gospel as "not building on another man's foundations." According Paul, "building on another man's foundations" was equivalent to teaching people who had already heard the gospel from another apostle or evangelist.

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul makes similar references to his preference to preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard it rather than working where someone else had already preached. According to Paul, preaching to those who had already heard the gospel was equivalent to working "in another man's line of things made ready to our hands."

**2 Corinthians 10:13** But we will not boast of things without **our measure (280)**, **but according to the measure (3358) of the rule (2583) which God hath distributed to us, a measure (3354) to reach even unto you.** 14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: **for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:** 15 Not boasting of things without our measure (280), that is, of other men's labours (2873); but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule (2583) abundantly, 16 **To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast (2744) in another man's line (2583) of things made ready to our hand (2092).**

We can see that Romans 15:20 and 2 Corinthians 10:14-16 both discuss Paul's apostolic ministry among those who had not yet heard the gospel. In Romans 15:20, Paul refers to this using the common New Testament metaphor of God's people as a temple. Therefore, he states that he wanted to go where he could build without building upon another man's foundations. The apostles laid the foundations of the metaphorical temple through their preaching. So, Paul sought to go where other apostles (and evangelists) had not yet preached the gospel. Preaching where another apostle had already gone was "building on another man's foundation." In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul similarly refers to preaching where someone else had already preached as working "in another man's line" where things had been made ready. Paul's comments in Romans 15:16 and 2 Corinthians 10 are identical in meaning.

The fact that 2 Corinthians 10 parallels the phrase "building on another man's foundations" in Romans is informative. Throughout this passage Paul repeatedly references "measuring." The Greek word translated as measure is "metron" (3358.) It is used twice in verse 13.

**2 Corinthians 10:13** But we will not boast of things without our measure (280), but according to the measure (3358) of the rule (2583) which God hath

**distributed to us, a measure (3358) to reach even unto you. 14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ: 15 Not boasting of things without our measure (280), that is, of other men's labours (2873); but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule (2583) abundantly, 16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast (2744) in another man's line (2583) of things made ready to our hand (2092).**

In verse 13, Paul refers to the “measure of the rule” which God had given to the apostles. Here the Greek word “metron” (3358) is connected to the Greek word “kanon” (2583.) These two Greek nouns (“metron” and “kanon”) have very similar meanings. Both refer to measuring rods and also metaphorically to a standard of judgment.

### 3358 metron

an apparently primary word; TDNT-4:632,590; n n

AV-measure 13; 13

#### 1) **measure, an instrument for measuring**

1a) a vessel for receiving and determining the quantity of things, whether dry or liquid

1b) **a graduated staff for measuring, a measuring rod**

1c) proverbially, **the rule or standard of judgment**

2) determined extent, **portion measured off, measure or limit**

2a) the required measure, the due, fit, measure

### 2583 kanon

from kane (a straight reed, i.e. rod); TDNT-3:596,414; n m

AV-rule 4, line 1; 5

1) a rod or straight piece of rounded wood to which any thing is fastened to keep it straight

1a) used for various purposes

1a1) **a measuring rod, rule**

1a2) **a carpenter's line or measuring tape**

1a3) the measure of a leap, as in the Olympic games

2) a definitely bounded or fixed space within the limits of which one's power of influence is confined

2a) **the province assigned one**

2b) one's sphere of activity

3) **metaph. any rule or standard, a principle or law of investigating, judging, living, acting**

A comparison of Romans 15:20 with 2 Corinthians 10 connects the apostolic commission to preach the gospel with the idea of building the temple of God. 2 Corinthians 10 uses the idea of “measuring” and a “measuring rod” to refer to the apostolic ministry among Christians. We can see this because verse 16 speaks of places where the gospel had already been preached as “in another man's line.” The word translated “line” is “kanon” (2583.) Likewise, verses 13-14 speak of the

apostles having been given a “metron” and “kanon” (“measure of the rule”) by God which reached unto the Corinthians. By this Paul means that his apostolic ministry and authority included the Corinthians because he had preached the gospel to them.

A few verses earlier in 2 Corinthians 10:8, Paul refers to this same concept simply as the authority that the apostles had been given to edify the church.

**2 Corinthians 10:8 For though I should boast (2788) somewhat more of our authority (1849), which the Lord hath given us for edification (3619),**

The word “edification” is translated from the Greek word “oikodome” (3619.) This word refers to edification metaphorically through the idea of building. This word “oikodome” is the same word that is used in 1 Corinthians 3:9 to describe God’s people as God’s building (“oikodome”), the temple. Likewise, Ephesians 2:21 also refers to God’s people as his temple using the same Greek word “oikodome.” In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul is talking about the apostolic commission to preach the gospel. He calls this their “authority” to build “oikodome” the church. Clearly, this is another reference to the New Testament idea of the apostles building the church as they had been appointed to do by Jesus Christ through the teaching of the gospel. Therefore, Paul’s use of “metron” and “kanon” to refer to the apostles’ “rule,” “measuring rod,” and “measure” relates to the idea of the apostolic commission to give witness of Christ’s teaching to all men. In fact, Paul is specifically discussing that very topic in this passage.

Throughout the New Testament, the appointment of the apostles as witnesses, as builders, and as the foundation of the church is connected to the apostolic authority. This is clearly conveyed in Matthew 16, Matthew 18, Matthew 28, Mark 16, John 15:27, and Acts 1 which we have already looked at. Some of these passages also discuss the authority to excommunicate as part of this general apostolic authority. It is no surprise then in 2 Corinthians 10 we find Paul discussing the apostolic authority to build the church along with the idea of the apostolic authority for disciplining the church.

**2 Corinthians 10:1** Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: **2** But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. **3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge (1108) of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. 7** Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s. **8 For though I should boast (2788) somewhat more of our authority (1849), which the Lord hath given us**

**for edification (3619)**, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: 9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. 11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

(For more on the relationship between 2 Corinthians 10 and excommunication please see our “Unity and Excommunication” study.)

The most important thing to note from 2 Corinthians 10 is Paul’s application of the concept of “measuring,” and “measuring rod” (verses 13-16) to his discussion of the apostolic authority to build the church (verses 1-11), which metaphorically is referred to as the temple (house) of God.

Our study has provided the following biblical facts that we can now summarize so that we will be prepared to proceed.

1. The people of God are metaphorically described in the New Testament as the temple of God. The apostles are the foundation of the metaphorical temple and Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone of the foundation.
2. The New Testament refers to the apostles as builders of the temple.
3. The New Testament refers to the people of God as a vineyard or cultivated field.
4. The New Testament refers to the apostles as laborers in God’s vineyard.
5. The apostles are commissioned as witnesses (Strong’s number 3144; Luke 24:48, Acts 1:8).
6. As witnesses, the apostles were given authority of excommunication, that is, determining who was and wasn’t part of the church community.
7. Paul refers to the apostolic authority to build the church using Greek concepts related to measuring and a measuring rod.

Like the rest of the New Testament the Book of Revelation likewise employs agricultural and harvest imagery to describe evangelistic work and the end of the age. (Revelation 7:1-8, 9:1-7, 14:14-20, and 19:15.)

While Revelation does use these agricultural metaphors to symbolically depict what happens to God’s people and wicked men, it also makes some reference to events involving and affecting actual earthly agriculture and vegetation. For instance, Revelation 11:6 explains that the two witnesses will be able to prevent it from raining during the days of their prophecy. This will undoubtedly have a significant impact on agriculture. Likewise, Revelation 6:6 refers to what could perhaps most naturally be interpreted as grain shortages.

Likewise, Revelation 11:1-2 provide an equally brief description of the literal rebuilding of the temple captured in the imagery of the measuring of the temple building.

**Revelation 11:1** And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple (3485) of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. **2** But the court which is without the temple (3485) leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months. **3** **And I will give power unto my two witnesses (3144)**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Revelation 11 provides a description of the commissioning of the two witnesses to measure the temple house itself. We should note that the word “witnesses” (3144) is the same word that is applied in the New Testament to the apostles in relation to their commission from Christ to preach the gospel. Likewise, the Greek text of verse 3 does not include a word for “power.” To be clear the text definitely indicates that something is given to the two witnesses. Translators have used the word “power” here to display the fact that the specific rendering of the Greek grammar requires that the two witnesses are receiving something. Given that the Greek word for “give” (1325) is the same in verse 3 as it is in verse 1 (“given”) we believe it is more appropriate to understand the two witnesses as being given the object mentioned in verse 1, specifically the reed like unto a rod. The phrasing of these three verses strongly suggests that it is the two witnesses who will ultimately be given the reed like a rod and told to measure. The fact that it is John the Apostle who is first given this reed in verse 1 provides some indication that the two witnesses will have an authority similar to John’s authority as a witness (3144, Revelation 1:5) and as an apostle (or perhaps even that John himself is a prefigure in some sense of the two witnesses).

Furthermore, the Greek word translated as “temple” is “naos” (3485.) Verse 2 indicates that the courts that were outside of the temple building are not to be included in this future measuring. In any case, it is important to note that Revelation 11 is describing an actual rebuilding of the temple house itself in the years prior to Christ’s return. This rebuilding is necessary because the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and various biblical passages describe the existence of a temple building during the final years of this age. (See Daniel 9:24-27, Daniel 11:30-31, Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:12, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4.)

So far, we have the following important details about the Book of Revelation.

1. Revelation describes actual events that involve and affect real earthly plant life.
2. Revelation describes actual events involving the rebuilding of the temple by the two witnesses.
3. Both Revelation and the rest of the New Testament metaphorically reference God’s people and evangelistic work using agricultural symbolism.

These three observations about the Book of Revelation prompt us to ask the following question. Is there reason to consider that like the rest of the New Testament, Revelation also refers to apostolic authority to build the church and excommunicate through the idea of measuring and building the temple?

Besides the New Testament's own application of the concept of building the temple to the leadership work, teaching, and authority of the apostles (including excommunication), there are several factors to consider. These factors lead us to conclude that Revelation 11 is indicating that the two witnesses are also given something equivalent to this kind of authority.

First, we know that the two witnesses are told to measure the temple. While this clearly refers to an actual rebuilding of an actual temple, it also fits precisely with the New Testament language of the apostolic authority to build the church and excommunicate (such as 2 Corinthians 10.)

Revelation 11's description of the two witnesses measuring the temple employs the use of a reed. The Greek word translated as reed in verse 1 is "kalamos" (2563.) Revelation 21:15-16 use this same Greek word to discuss measuring the New Jerusalem. Likewise, in the Septuagint, Ezekiel 40:3, 5-8, 41:8, and 42:16-19 all use this same Greek word "kalamos" (2563) to refer to measuring of a temple structure. Like "metron" and "kanon," the Greek word "kalamos" (2563) can be used to refer to a measuring rod.

### 2563 **kalamos**

or uncertain affinity; ; n m

AV-reed 11, pen 1; 12

1) a reed

2) a staff made of a reed, a reed staff

3) **a measuring reed or rod**

4) a writer's reed, a pen

The Greek word translated as "measure" is the verb formed from the Greek noun "metron." It is the word "metreo" (3354.) Of significance to our inquiry is exactly what is being measured. Revelation 11:1-2 lists three things that are measured. The first two items are the temple building itself ("naos") and the (incense) altar that is inside the temple building. Verse 2 explains that the courts which are outside the temple building ("naos") are not to be measured. The first court was the court of the priests which contained the brazen sacrificial altar. (For a more detailed discussion about what is included in the rebuilt, Premillennial temple please see our study on the Premillennial Temple, especially section three.)

**Revelation 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple (3485) of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without the temple (3485) leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.**

The third thing which Revelation 11:1 states is to be measured is "them who worship within the temple." The fact that people are to be measured is informative. First, the inclusion of people among the list of measured items tells us that the first two items are not metaphorical references to people. Rather, they are references to a literal temple building. Second, the inclusion of people as a

measured item indicates that someone (in the context it is likely the two witnesses who) will somehow measure people. This seems like an odd concept. How and why would the two witnesses or anyone measure the people?

The best explanation of this comes from what we have already seen in the New Testament. The idea of measuring people is easily understood in relation to the apostolic commission to build God's people as discussed in passages like 2 Corinthians 10. In light of the New Testament discussion of these subjects and its use of terminology, Revelation 11:1-2 makes perfect sense. Perhaps not incidentally, other New Testament passages use "metreo" (3354) in reference to judging other people, such as Matthew 7:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:12. (On a potentially related note, we might also recall 1 Peter 4:17's declaration that judgment must begin at the house of God, which certainly connects the judging of God's people and the temple.)

We should also note that Revelation 21:15-16 also discusses measuring a literal structure using a reed ("kalamos.") However, Revelation 11:1 states that the two witnesses are given "a reed like unto a rod." In that verse the Greek word "kalamos" (reed) is connected to the Greek word for "rod" translated from the noun "rhabdos" (4464.) Revelation 21:15-16 does not refer to the rod, but simply speaks of a reed.

There may be no particular importance to this. However, the Greek word "rhabdos" (4464) is used elsewhere in Revelation, the New Testament, and the Old Testament Septuagint. Of particular importance is the occurrence of "rhabdos" (4464) in 1 Corinthians 4:21.

**1 Corinthians 4:21** What will ye? **shall I come unto you with a rod (4464) or in love,** and in the spirit of meekness? **5:1** It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. **2** And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away (1808) from among you. **3** For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, **4** In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **5** To deliver (3860) such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. **6** Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? **7** Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: **8** Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. **9** I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with (4874) fornicators: **10** Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. **11** But now I have written unto you not to keep company (4874), if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. **12** For what have

I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?  
13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away (1808) from among yourselves that wicked person.

The very next verse of 1 Corinthians begins chapter 5. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-11, Paul explains this reference to a rod in chapter 4, verse 21. In chapter 5, Paul instructs the Corinthians to excommunicate a Christian brother who was in sin. Therefore, Paul is using the Greek word “rhabdos” in reference to the practice of excommunication and the apostolic authority to enforce that practice. In fact, “rhabdos” is used throughout the New Testament including the Book of Revelation to refer to authority. (See also Hebrews 1:8, 9:4 and Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15 which all use “rhabdos” 4464 to refer to authority and the power to enact discipline.)

When taken into account the language and concepts presented in these various New Testament passages provide confirmation of a fact that is perhaps not all that controversial: the two witnesses will be leaders of God’s people during the final years before Christ’s return. Their leadership role is presented in terms that are similar to that of the New Testament apostles, evangelists, and elders. These two men are apparently charged with overseeing the rebuilding of the actual temple in Jerusalem. There is also a reference to their having an authority to measure those who would worship therein. Linguistic cues in Revelation 11 and throughout the New Testament indicate that the two witnesses are given the ability to make authoritative determinations regarding excommunication in accordance with the apostolic teaching that is preserved in the New Testament. Part of this conclusion may be conveyed in Revelation 11:1-3’s statement about the giving of a rod to measure those who worship within the temple building itself.

We can tie these scriptural observations back into our discussion of 2 Corinthians 10. Earlier we saw that Paul used the idea of measuring and building the temple in reference to apostolic authority over the churches and the preaching of the gospel. In his commentary on these matters, Paul describes those who the Lord commends in this work as “approved.”

**2 Corinthians 10:16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand. 17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved (1384), but whom the Lord commendeth.**

In the chapter that immediately follows, Paul goes on to chronicle his work, preaching, and authority as an apostle (verse 5). He contrasts his work with those who taught false doctrine and deceived people by preaching a different gospel thereby leading them away from Christ (verses 2-4).

**2 Corinthians 10:18** For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. **11:1** Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. **2** For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin

to Christ. **3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. 5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.**

Here we can see that Paul has a contrast in mind between those whose work in sharing Christ's teachings are approved (1384) and those who teach false doctrine. In our Unity and Excommunication study we compared passages such as Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, and Acts 1:3-8 and saw how in the New Testament the preaching of the gospel referred to the whole of Christ's teaching on any subject.

We might also consider the Greek term translated as "approved" in 2 Corinthians 10:18 to distinguish between Christ's teaching as preached by the apostles and false doctrine taught by others. The Greek word translated as "approved" is "dokimos" (1384).

#### 1384 dokimos

from 1380; TDNT-2:255,181; adj

AV-approved 6, tried 1; 7

1) **accepted, particularly of coins and money.**

2) **accepted, pleasing, acceptable**

As the definition indicates this Greek word "dokimos" refers to what is accepted by an official authority, such as with currency. It is fitting therefore for Paul to use this term to speak of teaching that is commended by the Lord in 2 Corinthians 10:18. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 11:19, Paul again distinguishes between sound teaching and heresy using this Greek word "dokimos" (1384).

**1 Corinthians 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved (1384) may be made manifest among you.**

Paul's point in verse 19 is that those whose teaching was approved and apostolic would be known ("made manifest") or recognized by the church and distinguished from those who taught heresies and deviated from apostolic preaching.

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul instructs Timothy regarding his labors in the church. In verses 6, 15, and 19 we find the familiar references to agricultural labor and the foundation of the temple. But in verses 8 and 14-18, Paul contrasts what he has taught with those who have erred from the truth and subverted the faith of others.

**2 Timothy 2:6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. 7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. 8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: 9 Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even**

unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. 10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: 13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. 14 **Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.** 15 **Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.** 16 **But shun profane and vain babblings:** for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 **Who concerning the truth have erred,** saying that the resurrection is past already; **and overthrow the faith of some.** 19 **Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal (4973), The Lord knoweth them that are his.** And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

In verse 15, Paul tells Timothy to endeavor to show himself to be a workman who is approved (1384) by God. We should also note that in verse 19, Paul refers to the foundation of God as having a seal or "sphragis," 4973.) In this way, "sealed" by God is another way of referring to what is approved. This can be used to refer to apostolic teaching and to those who proclaimed it.

Returning to 2 Corinthians, we again find Paul contrasting between those who are approved in their doctrine and those who are not.

**2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;** prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that **Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?** 6 **But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.** 7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved (1384), but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates (96). 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection. 10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification (3619), and not to destruction.

First, Paul tells the Corinthians to examine themselves to make sure they are "in the faith." This is similar to 2 Corinthians 10:15 where Paul stated that his work was to increase their faith according to his apostolic commissioning. But here in 2 Corinthians 13:5-6, Paul states that those who aren't "in the faith" don't have "Christ" in them and are therefore "reprobates." The Greek word translated as "reprobates" is "adokimos" (96). It is simply the negation of "dokimos" (1384) and, as such, it means "unapproved."

#### 96 adokimos

**from 1** (as a negative particle) **and 1384;** TDNT-2:255,181; adj

AV-reprobate 6, castaway 1, rejected 1; 8

1) **not standing the test, not approved**

- 1a) **properly used of metals and coins**  
 2) that which does not prove itself such as it ought  
 2a) **unfit for, unproved, spurious, reprobate**

In verse 6 Paul cites himself (and other apostolic workers) as examples of those who are approved in their work. In verse 10, Paul refers to his authority (“exousia” 1849) that Christ gave him “unto edification.” Here, “edification” is translated from the Greek noun “oikodome” (3619) which is the same word used in passages like 1 Corinthians 3:9 to refer to the apostles as laborers and the church as “God’s building.” We also find “oikodome” used in 2 Corinthians 10:8 to refer to the apostolic authority to build.

In 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul uses “adokimos” (96) to refer to departing from subjection to apostolic preaching and being “castaway” (“adokimos” 96). In 2 Timothy 3:8, Paul refers to those who resist the truth and who are “reprobate” (96) concerning the faith.

In addition, as we can see by looking at the definitions above, these two Greek words “dokimos” (1384) and “adokimos” (96) speak of being approved (or unapproved) in a manner comparable to the authentication of ancient coins or metals.

**Ancient Greek Coinage - The first coins were issued** in either Lydia or Ionia in Asia Minor at some time before 600 BCE, either by the non-Greek Lydians for their own use or perhaps because Greek mercenaries wanted **to be paid in precious metal** at the conclusion of their time of service, and wanted **to have their payments marked in a way that would authenticate them...Minting - All Greek coins** were hand-made, rather than machined as modern coins are. **The design for the obverse was carved (in incuso) into a block of bronze or possibly iron, called a die. The design of the reverse was carved into a similar punch. A blank disk of gold, silver, or electrum was cast in a mold and then, placed between these two and the punch struck hard with a hammer, raising the design on both sides of the coin.** - wikipedia.org

**Coining - In minting, coining or coinage is the process of manufacturing coins using a kind of stamping** which is now generically known in metalworking as "coining". This process is different from cast coinage, and can be classified in hammered coinage or hammering and milled coinage or milling. **A coin die is one of the two metallic pieces that are used to strike one side of a coin.** A die contains an inverse version of **the image to be struck on the coin...Ancient Coin Dies - Prior to the modern era, coin dies were manufactured individually by hand by artisans known as engravers.** - wikipedia.org

As the above quotes show, in ancient times coins that were approved and recognized as authentic by the authority were stamped with a seal by the state. This sealing involved pressing an official mark signifying that they were approved by the authority and should be accepted for commerce. This is how

authentic coins were distinguished from counterfeit coins. Interestingly, the New Testament also uses this concept of “sealing” in reference to having accepted the true gospel. We have already seen the concept of being “sealed” (4973) used by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:19. But, in 1 Corinthians 9:2, Paul speaks of the church in Corinth as the “seal” (4973) of his apostolic work in the Lord. Likewise, in 2 Timothy 2:19 and 1 Corinthians 9:2, Paul uses the Greek noun “sphragis” (4973) to refer to that which has the “seal” of God’s approval.

#### 4973 **sphragis**

probably strengthened from 5420; TDNT-7:939,1127; n f  
AV-seal 16; 16

1) a seal

1a) the seal placed upon books

1b) a signet ring

1c) **the inscription or impression made by a seal**

1c1) of the name of God and Christ stamped upon their foreheads

1d) **that by which anything is confirmed, proved, authenticated, as by a seal (a token or proof)**

The related Greek verb “sphragizo” (4972) which comes from the noun “sphragis” (4973) also refers to being approved as authentic.

#### 4972 **sphragizo**

from 4973; TDNT-7:939,1127; v

AV-seal 22, set to (one’s) seal 1, stop 1, seal up 1, set a seal 1, vr seal 1; 27

1) **to set a seal upon, mark with a seal, to seal**

1a) for security: from Satan

1b) since things sealed up are concealed (as the contents of a letter), to hide, keep in silence, keep secret

1c) in order to mark a person or a thing

1c1) **to set a mark upon by the impress of a seal or a stamp**

1c2) angels are said to be sealed by God

1d) **in order to prove, confirm, or attest a thing**

1d1) **to confirm authenticate, place beyond doubt**

1d1a) of a written document

1d1b) **to prove one’s testimony to a person that he is what he professes to be**

And we see this verb “sphragizo” (4972) used in passages like John 3:33 to refer to those who receive Christ’s teaching and are “sealed.”

**John 3:33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal (4972) that God is true.**

Ephesians 1:13 explains that those who receive the gospel were “sealed” with the Holy Spirit, an idea that is also expressed in 2 Corinthians 1:22.

**Ephesians 1:13** In whom ye also trusted, **after that ye heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation: **in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with (4972) that holy Spirit** of promise,

**2 Corinthians 1:22** **Who hath (4972) also sealed (4972) us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.**

To be “sealed” then is to be approved by God. In the New Testament this “seal” represented the approval of the Holy Spirit who came upon the apostles and empowered them to go forth preaching in the authority of Christ (Acts 1:8). As we discuss in our Revelation Chronology Study it is important to realize that the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3 are identified by the angel who is speaking as “his witnesses.” In other words, the two witnesses are “witnesses of the angel.” As we explain in our Revelation Chronology study, this is no mere angel. Rather, the description of him provided in Revelation 10 identifies him as the Holy Spirit. This conclusion is established by the rainbow above his head, which corresponds to Ezekiel 1:28’s description of God. (For more information see our Revelation Chronology study.)

The point here is that we have another reference to the two witnesses in terms that parallel apostolic commissioning and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. For instance, Acts 13:1-4 chronicles the apostolic commissioning of Paul and Barnabas. It is this commissioning which Paul has been referring to in his epistles and which we have examined throughout this study. However, it is important to note that like the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3, Paul and Barnabas are commissioned by the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 13:1** Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. 4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.**

These references to the Holy Spirit commissioning the two witnesses as well as the two witnesses being given a reed like unto a rod (“rhabdos” 4464) and measuring people, all relate to the New Testament idea of apostolic authority in regard to teaching the authentic gospel and excommunicating those who teach otherwise. It makes perfect sense that God would authenticate church leaders in the end times in this way in order for them to be distinguished from the false prophets and teachers who will be also be present at that time.

Hebrews 10:15-30 discusses several relevant points that may also be relevant to Revelation 11’s statement regarding the two witnesses and the measuring those who worship within the temple building itself.

**Hebrew 10:15** Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 **Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.** 19 **Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,** 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 **Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;** (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;** but exhorting one another: and so much the more, **as ye see the day approaching.** 26 **For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,** 27 **But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.** 28 **He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:** 29 **Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?** 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

First, Hebrews 10:19 states that through the forgiveness of sins accomplished by Jesus' atoning work, Christians can enter into the Holy Place of the temple. Second, verse 23 instructs Christians to hold to the profession of faith without wavering. Third, verse 25 refers to gathering together with other Christians, especially as we see the day approaching. This is a reference to church gatherings and the coming of Christ. And verses 26-30 explain that there is no more atoning sacrifice for those who persist in sin after coming to Christ. This is a direct contrast with verses 18-19 and 23. In verses 18-19 and 23, those who hold fast to the faith, have forgiveness through Christ's atoning work and therefore can enter into the Holy Place of the temple. Fourth, verse 26-30 discuss those who persist in sin after coming to Christ. For such persons the atoning work of Christ no longer applies. Therefore, they are not allowed to enter the Holy Place of the temple.

Sixth, verse 28 mentions the punishment prescribed by the Law of Moses for those who transgressed the Old Covenant. In Matthew 18, Jesus explicitly appropriates the Mosaic standard of punishment at the word of two or three witnesses. Jesus applies this standard not to capital punishment as was the case in the Law of Moses. Instead, he applies it to excommunication. Hebrews alludes that excommunication is in mind, because it states that those who are punished under the New Covenant aren't punished with death as was the case under Moses' Law. Rather, those who transgress the New Covenant have a sorer punishment that compels them to fearfully anticipate their coming judgment. Again, there is

reference to the day of vengeance and fiery destruction, which the bible associates with Christ's return.

So, Hebrews 10:19-30 indicate that those who faithfully abide in the New Covenant established by Christ can enter the Holy Place of the temple because of Christ's sacrifice. And, Christians who persist in sin after coming to Christ cannot enter into the Holy Place of the temple because Christ's sacrifice doesn't cover their sins. Plus, this passage directly emphasizes the importance of remaining in church fellowship. Consequently, the contrast, between the instructions to remain in fellowship with faithful Christians in verse 25 and the punishment (at the word of two or three witnesses) for those who transgress the New Covenant, provides at least an implicit reference to excommunication.

All of this fits very well with Revelation 11:1-3 where the two witnesses are told to only build the temple building itself (in which were the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.) This is the part of the temple that Hebrews 10:19 says Christ's faithful followers can enter into. Likewise, Revelation 11:1-3 depicts a measuring of those who can worship inside the temple building itself. This would indicate an authority to limit who is and is not able to enter the temple and by direct extension implies an authority to identify who is and is not a faithful Christian. Apparently, at the word of the two witnesses someone may be identified as transgressing the New Covenant and worthy of excommunication. Strangely, this seems to perfectly parallel the false prophet's involvement in identifying those who do not worship the beast as worthy of death (Revelation 13:15).