

# **The Two Witnesses**

Revelation 11 – by Dr. Craig P. Scott

Chapter eleven of Revelation is a parenthetical section beginning in chapter 10 and extends through chapter 14, (with the exception of 11:15-19, which introduces the seventh trumpet). The narrative, however, does not advance until chapter 15, when the bowl judgments are released ending with Christ's second coming to the earth. Chapter's 10 through 14 provide us with vital information that will aid in our understanding of the total prophetic scene.

In our previous lesson, the apostle John saw the third temple of God. We have to remember that when John recorded that vision, Herod's temple, [the temple in Jesus' day – the second temple] had already been destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Therefore, what John saw, no doubt, refers to the temple that will be rebuilt shortly before or during the Tribulation period.

When that happens, the Jewish people will revert to the Old Testament form of worship which will include the offering of animal sacrifices for their sins. They will be rebuilding this temple in unbelief. It is an open rejection of Jesus as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

However, the reinstatement of the temple worship will make many Jews realize that animal sacrifices cannot take away sin [Heb. 10:4] and God will use this growing dissatisfaction to prepare their hearts to receive Christ at His second coming [Zech. 12:10-13:1].

Immediately after this, the chapter introduces the two supernatural witnesses. Their appearance is designed to convince lost humanity the need of salvation. They are also assigned the task to proclaim God's judgment on the wicked world. Together, they will fearlessly preach the gospel during Earth's darkest hour.

## **THE TWO WITNESSES [11:3-19]**

In my opinion, God will raise these men up shortly before the midpoint of the Tribulation. A number of commentators place them during the first half of the tribulation. That means they would die during the abomination done to the temple, followed by Israel fleeing. Their resurrection would take place during Israel's flight into the wilderness.

But if you compare their ability to turn the water into blood, stopping up the

heavens, the ability to call fire down from heaven, and darkness over the land, etc. Those events are more closely aligned with the bowl judgments.

Secondly, their appearance best coincides with the abomination of desolation in the temple, and their death occurring shortly before the end of the tribulation. Their resurrection would coincide with Israel's mass conversion in one day (Zechariah 3:10; Romans 11:26). This would be followed by the nation mourning ten days (Zechariah 12:10) and three days later the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would fall upon the nation (Zechariah 13:1) followed by the Lord's return.

Third, the connection between Revelation 11:1-2 and the two witnesses' best fits in the second half of the tribulation. They will preach the gospel so the Jewish remnant can believe while proclaiming God's message of judgment during the final stages of Gentile rule.

The Bible requires the testimony of two people to confirm a fact or verify truth [Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28].

**Seven features** of the lives and ministry of these two powerful preachers are given in the remainder of this chapter.

#### **A. THEIR DUTY [11:3a]**

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

The LORD gives the two witnesses their authority. Their prime responsibility is to preach God's Word. They will proclaim that the disasters occurring in the world are the judgments of God and warn unbelievers that judgment and hell will soon follow. They will also preach the gospel, calling people to repentance and faith. They will do this for 3½ years or more precisely 1,260 days.

We have several ways 3½ years are described in the book of Revelation.

#### **42 months speaks of the abomination**

**Rev. 11:2** – “But the court which is without the temple 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**.”

**Rev. 13:5** – “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue **forty and two months.**”

**A Time, and times and half a time** speaks of Jacob’s trouble during the last 3½ years.

**Rev. 12:14** – “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for **a time, and times, and half a time**, from the face of the serpent.”

**Dan. 12:7** – “**And** I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand **and** his left hand unto heaven, **and** swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for **a time, times, and an half; and** when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”

**A thousand two hundred and threescore days** speak of the latter half of the tribulation.

**Dan. 12:11** – “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be **a thousand two hundred and ninety days.**”

**Rev. 11:3** – “And I will give power unto my **two** witnesses, and they shall prophesy **a thousand two hundred and threescore days**, clothed in sackcloth.”

**Rev. 12:6** – “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there **a thousand two hundred and threescore days.**”

B. **THEIR ATTITUDE** [11:3b]:

The two witnesses will wear sackcloth to express their great sorrow for the unbelieving world. Sackcloth is the rough and heavy course cloth worn in ancient times to show mourning, distress and humility [Gen. 37:34; 1 Chron. 21:16; Dan. 9:3].

They will not only mourn for a world filled with wicked, unrepentant people but for the desecration of the temple, the oppression of the Holy City and the wicked reign of the Antichrist.

### C. THEIR IDENTITY [11:4]

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”

The identities of these two witnesses are not given; however, John describes them as the two olive trees and the two lamp stands, standing before the God of the earth. This seems to be a reference to Zechariah chapter 4 where a lampstand and two olive trees are mentioned.

**Back in Zechariah’s time**, God raised up two witnesses – Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel. Just as these two men were raised up to be witnesses for God and empowered by the Holy Spirit [represented by the olive oil], so the two witnesses in Revelation will execute their prophetic office in the power of God not in human ability.

**There are four reasons why many believe the two witnesses are Elijah and Moses.** Even though these reasons may be true, it is still speculation regarding their true identity.

1. Their miracles are similar to the ones performed by Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament for the purpose of bringing about repentance.
2. Both the Old Testament and Jewish tradition predict the return of Elijah and Moses in the future.
3. Both Elijah and Moses appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration [Matt. 17:3].
4. Both Elijah and Moses left the earth in unusual ways [2 Kings 2:11-12 and Deut. 34:5-6; Jude 9]

### D. THEIR POWER [11:5-6]:

Whether or not these two witnesses are Elijah and Moses, they will have miraculous powers similar to these two Old Testament prophets.

1. They will be able to defend themselves.

They will be universally hated, and many will desire to hurt them; however, they will have supernatural powers to kill their enemies with fire.

2. They will perform miracles.

God often used miracles to authenticate His messengers as true prophets of God. They will be able to bring drought upon the earth, turn water to blood, and cause plagues to come upon the earth. These two witnesses will bring havoc on the land, causing men to both fear and hate them. They will be invincible for 3½ years.

#### **E. THEIR DEATHS [11:7-10]:**

Because godless men hate these servants of God and their message, men will try to murder these men. They will not be successful for God will protect them until their testimony is finished [3½ years]. Then God will allow Antichrist [the beast from the abyss] to kill them.

1. Their dead bodies will lay in the streets in Jerusalem.

The dead bodies of these two witnesses will lie out in the open for 3½ days. In the ancient world, exposing an enemy's dead body was the ultimate way of dishonoring them. God forbade this practice [Deut. 21:22-23].

Jerusalem, the city of God and the place where Jesus was crucified, will become so corrupt that it will be as wicked as Sodom and as evil as Egypt.

2. Everyone will see their dead bodies.

People from around the world will look upon their dead bodies with contempt and hatred. For the first time in history, this is possible with satellite television, the Internet, and smart devices. For 3½ days, their bodies are exposed before sinful, unrepentant men who rejoice in their deaths.

3. People will celebrate worldwide.

The deaths of the two witnesses will bring global celebration. The unbelievers will rejoice over their deaths and give gifts one to another. Their emotional response demonstrates their continual rejection toward God and His messengers.

## **F. THEIR RESURRECTION:**

After 3½ days, their celebration over the death of the two witnesses' will end abruptly. The two witnesses will come back to life and stand upon their feet. Fear will grip the people as they see their two tormentors resurrect from the dead. With their ministry completed, the two are bidden to heaven before the eyes of everyone to see. The two-men rapture will no doubt cause sheer panic throughout the world.

## **G. THEIR IMPACT [11:13]:**

Shortly after the resurrection of the two witnesses, a great earthquake shook the earth. One tenth of the city was destroyed. Seven thousand men are killed. Those who survived the earthquake gave glory to the God of heaven. This term "remnant" is used to distinguish the true followers of God from those who worship pagan deities.

With this event, the second woe is completed for it is the final phase of the sixth trumpet. Two woes are passed one more is yet to come.

## **THE SEVENTH TRUMPET [11:15-19]:**

The blowing of the seventh trumpet [also known as the third woe] does not initiate anything on earth. It is an announcement made in heaven to introduce the next series of judgments to come upon the earth. These judgments are known as the bowl judgments and will be poured out during the last half of the Tribulation period.

After the heavenly introduction of the seventh trumpet, the parenthetical passage continues until chapter 15. The detail of events given in these chapters will include the persecution of God's children [ch. 12], the Antichrist and the False Prophet [ch. 13], and a heavenly vision [ch. 14].

### **A. Great Voices in Heaven/An Angelic Choir [11:15]:**

When the seventh trumpet is introduced in heaven, John hears many voices chanting the triumph of Jesus Christ. In their singing, they declare two things:

1. The kingdom of the world belongs to God:

Christ will conquer the one-world kingdom of the Antichrist when He returns to earth. Earthly rule will end and will pass into the hands of Christ.

2. God's kingdom will reign forever:

The Greek words for "for ever and ever" means "ages of ages." When Christ reign begins on earth, there will be no interruption of His government. Although rebellion will break out at the end of the Millennium after Satan is released from his imprisonment [20:7], the Lord will put down this rebellion so quickly that it will not interfere with the rule of His eternal kingdom.

B. The Song of the Twenty-Four Elders [11:16-18]:

The twenty-four elders bow down and give thanks to the eternal One because He has demonstrated His power and authority over the earth. The elders use the perfect prophetic tense by anticipating in heaven the final stage of God's judgments on the earth before Christ's second coming [vs. 16-17]. They rejoice in Christ's rule over the earth. The twenty-four elders declare three things regarding His coming [v. 18].

1. The nations are angry:

This indicates that at the second coming of Christ the nations are resentful of His appearance and will rebel against Him [Ps. 2]. They willfully reject God's rule in their lives.

2. The dead will be judged:

The dead refers to the Old Testament believers and the martyred saints of the Tribulation period. This judgment does not refer to unbelievers for they will be judged after the Millennium.

3. Those who destroy the earth will be destroyed:

Christ will take the Antichrist and the False Prophet and throw them into the lake of fire. He will also kill those who follow them. All those who reject Christ will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment where they will be judged by their works and where they will meet their fate in the eternal lake of fire [the second death].

### C. The Temple of God [11:19]:

Bound up in the seventh trumpet is the vision of the opening of the temple of God, which represents the promise to believers of the unbroken fellowship we will have with God forever.

#### 1. The Ark of the Covenant:

Inside the temple is the Ark of His covenant. The ark symbolizes God's communion with the redeemed because it was there that the blood sacrifices were offered to atone for men's sins [Lev. 16:2-16; Heb. 9:6-7]. Inside the ark were three things – manna [God's provision for His people], the budded rod of Aaron [God's sovereignty over His people], and the tablets of the law [God's covenant with His people] - Heb. 9:4.

#### 2. Lightning's, voices, thundering, earthquake & hail:

Similar events are associated with the glorious, majestic throne of God [4:5]. They have also been associated with judgment for unbelievers [8:5; 16:17-18]. Heaven is a source of covenant blessings for the redeemed but a source of vengeance and eternal damnation [Rom. 12:19] to those who reject Him.

### Conclusion:

The seventh trumpet represents that Jesus is truly the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. He will one day take the rule of the earth out of Satan's hands. Jesus' kingdom will be a kingdom that has no end. As history moves toward Christ's coming, the world is spinning out of control, getting more wicked and more defiant toward God and His Word. In the light of these future events, we who know Christ should be holy in our conduct and godliness [2 Pet. 3:11].