

Questions About Revelation 11 Speaking About Moses & Elijah

By Pastor Ed Anderson

I believe that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are actually Moses and Elijah. I have heard this preached by many pastors. Prove to me this is wrong.

Answer:

Great question—and one that has stirred much discussion over the years. Many sincere believers have been taught that the **two witnesses in Revelation 11** refer to **Moses and Elijah**, and while that interpretation has some symbolic merit, the **biblical and contextual evidence** actually points in a **different direction**.

Let's walk through this carefully and respectfully.

What Does Revelation 11 Actually Say?

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

Key Details from Revelation 11:

- The **two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days** (a time period familiar in prophecy).
- They are called “**two olive trees**” and “**two candlesticks**” (Rev. 11:4).
- They are killed by “the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit” (v. 7).
- Their dead bodies lie in the street for **3½ days**, and then they are **resurrected** and taken to heaven.

The Common Argument: Why Some Say “Moses and Elijah”

Many believe the witnesses are **Moses and Elijah** because:

- **Moses** represents the **Law**, and **Elijah** the **Prophets**.
- They both **appeared with Jesus** on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–3).

- Elijah called fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10), and Moses turned water to blood (Exodus 7)—which matches the powers of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:6.

But here's why this interpretation falls short.

The Better Interpretation: The Two Witnesses Are the Old and New Testaments

1. They Are Called “Olive Trees” and “Candlesticks”

This language comes directly from **Zechariah 4**, where the two olive trees symbolize **God's Word empowered by His Spirit**:

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.” — *Zechariah 4:6*

The olive trees feed oil into the candlestick—representing the **power of God's Word and Spirit** to enlighten the world. This parallels how the **Old and New Testaments** serve as the foundation of spiritual light and truth.

They Prophecy in Sackcloth (Dark Age Suppression of Scripture)

The 1,260-day period in prophecy (Rev. 11:3) corresponds with **1,260 years** in symbolic time—from **538 AD to 1798 AD**, when the Bible was:

- Suppressed by the medieval church.
- Prohibited from common people.
- Often only available in Latin.
- A witness in “sackcloth”—silenced and hidden.

This fits **perfectly with the history of the Bible**, not Moses and Elijah personally.

3. The Beast Kills Them in the “Great City” (Symbolic France)

Revelation 11:7–9 shows the two witnesses being **killed**, and their bodies lying in the street of the “great city”—spiritually called **Sodom and Egypt** (v. 8). This symbolizes a nation:

- Like **Egypt**: atheistic, denying God.

- Like **Sodom**: morally depraved.

This perfectly describes the **French Revolution** (late 1700s), when:

- The Bible was **banned**.
- Christianity was declared dead.
- Atheism enthroned “Reason” as goddess.
- But after 3½ years, the Bible was restored in France—matching the resurrection and ascension imagery in Rev. 11:11–12.

This timeline is **not consistent with literal Moses and Elijah**, but **symbolic of the rejection and restoration of the Word of God**.

4. Moses and Elijah Are Already in Heaven

Both Moses (resurrected—Jude 1:9) and Elijah (translated—2 Kings 2:11) are already **glorified in heaven**, not waiting to come down, die again, and rise again.

It would be **inconsistent** with God’s plan of salvation for glorified beings to come back, die again, and rise again in a symbolic drama.

5. The Apostolic Witness Style

The idea of “two witnesses” reflects:

- The **twofold testimony** requirement in Jewish law (Deut. 19:15).
- Jesus’ own statement that Scripture testifies of Him (John 5:39).
- The apostles constantly appealing to both the **Law and the Prophets** (Old Testament) and **Christ’s gospel** (New Testament) as witnesses of truth.

Logical Summary

Clue in Revelation 11	Fits Moses & Elijah?	Fits Scripture (OT + NT)?
Prophecy 1,260 years	✗ No	✓ Yes
Olive trees / candlesticks symbols	✗ Partially	✓ Yes

Killed in “great city” (France)	✗ No	✓ Yes
Lie dead 3½ days, then rise	✗ No	✓ Matches Bible history
Called “witnesses” of truth	✗ Limited	✓ Perfect fit

Final Thought

While the Moses and Elijah interpretation has **symbolic beauty**, especially considering their roles in prophecy and the Mount of Transfiguration, it **does not match the actual prophecy** timeline, language, or context of Revelation 11. The **Old and New Testaments**—God’s Word—have been the **true witnesses** to every generation and were indeed **silenced, rejected, and resurrected in power**.

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever.” — *Isaiah 40:8*