



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 57: The Two Witnesses, Part 1

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Review:

- A. We concluded our study of the 6th Trumpet Judgment in our last lesson together. This is found in **Revelation Ch. 9**.
 1. Within this particular judgment, four powerful and evil angels are released from somewhere along the Euphrates River where they have been bound for a long time awaiting this future *“hour, day, month, and year.”*
 2. We are not told why these powerful fallen angels were originally bound by God. However, we are told that He has sovereignly intended to use them for judgment at this very specific point in the future.
 3. They are released to *“kill a third of mankind” (vs. 15)*, and we are told they will lead a supernatural army of *“200 million”* to accomplish this task.
 4. We saw that this number is likely a New Testament figurative term to mean *“countless.”* The size of this supernatural army was beyond measure. John writes down the term to describe it as being *“two myriads of myriads.”*
 5. Within the description of this huge force, in the leadership structure described in this text, and given the function of HOW these forces kill, it becomes apparent the Bible is describing a supernatural force that is unleashed upon the world.
 6. We saw how the text makes the case that this supernatural army is likely focused on killing unsaved or depraved mankind because:
 - a. Those that are not killed still refuse to repent.
 - b. Those that are not killed still choose to remain in their sins.
 - c. God is cleansing the earth of those who refuse to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior.
 7. We concluded our lesson with a review of the desperate and depraved condition of the human heart as the Scriptures describe it.
- I. This week: I want to address a couple of transition elements as we move into a study of The Two Witnesses.
 - A. Looking at **Revelation Ch. 10** and “the little scroll” that John is instructed to eat in **Revelation 10: 9**:
 1. A mighty righteous angel, a divine emissary of Jesus Christ, comes down out of heaven and asserts the right and intention of God to reclaim the globe in the judgments which will soon follow.
 - a. Some commentators try to say this is not an angel, but Jesus Christ Himself. I think those arguments are faulty in several respects. I’m going with a “mighty angel” as **vs. 1** says.
 - b. This angel plants his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, which is a sign that he is showing authority over both.

- c. Typically, in **Revelation**, the sea and land depict the *entire physical* globe, with the sea representing the Gentile nations and the land representing the Jewish nation.
 - d. I don't think it's unreasonable to make that connection here as the angel is claiming God's right and authority to judge the entire world.
- 2. This angel has a "*little scroll*" which he gives to John and which John is instructed to eat.
 - a. This little scroll is similar to the scroll (or book) which Ezekiel was also instructed to eat (**Cf. Ezekiel 3:1-2**).
 - b. Both Ezekiel and John are told to eat these documents. Both of the scrolls were sweet to the taste, but bitter in the stomach.
 - c. Both items contained prophecy which each prophet was to ingest and subsequently deliver to other men (**Cf. Revelation 10:9-11+ and Cf. Ezekiel 2:9-3:4**).
 - d. These items are sweet in the sense that they show God's judgments to be timely, righteous, and proper. However, they are bitter in that they describe events which will bring great pain and carnage upon the world.
- 3. It's pertinent to note the content of **vs. 7** which places the timing of all this as being "*in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet.*"
 - a. This is why I have called this a transition point. We are between the 6th and 7th Trumpet Judgments here. It's pretty clear.
 - b. Within **vs. 7**, it also states "*...the mystery of God will be accomplished (or finished), just as He announced to His servants the prophets.*"
 - c. In a number of the books of the Minor Prophets, and in books like **Ezekiel** and **Daniel**, there is a focus on specific prophecies.
 - d. These prophecies generally concern that future timeframe we call "The Great Tribulation," which is the last half of the larger seven-year Tribulation period.
 - e. A suggestion is seen here within this text that the remaining judgements of God are about to unfold within the last 3 ½ years which also define the second half of the Tribulation.
- 4. Lastly, for whatever reason, John is instructed to not write down what he hears from the "*seven thunders*" (**vs. 4**). However, he is told in **vs. 11** that he is responsible to "*prophecy about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.*"
 - a. Just as the prophet Daniel was sometimes told to "*seal up*" what he had seen in his visions, John is also prescribed here to hide certain bits of information while he is instructed to divulge others.
 - b. There is no end of commentators and scholars who try to explain who and what the seven thunders are or what they spoke, but here the Bible makes it plain: we are not to know.

NOTE: In the big picture here, I think the best operative case is made that events here are at the halfway point of the Tribulation.

The layout of **Revelation** and the specific content of **Chapter 10** make that point clear, as well as the case that things are about to get much worse just as God's prophets had foretold.

- B. That brings us to **Ch 11** where I feel **Revelation** now introduces for us a parenthetical topic known as **The Two Witnesses**.
 - 1. I refer to it as a parenthetical topic because within the flow of the chronology of the book of **Revelation**, the specific matter of **The Two Witnesses** seems to be out of order.
 - 2. This is an issue that God is now calling to our attention. It is introduced to us in a "divine pause" and a glance back to bring this issue up to speed along with everything else that has been going on.
 - 3. Let's first grasp the high-altitude perspective here concerning **The Two Witnesses....**

- C. **The Two Witnesses** are introduced to us on the heels of some commentary about the temple in **vss. 1 and 2**. This is an important issue for us to reflect on.
 - 1. Remember, we looked at the terms of the covenant which the antichrist confirms "with many" in **Daniel 9:27**.
 - a. We concluded from our study of that passage, as well as the related passage of **Isaiah 28:14-18** that - within the terms of this covenant that the antichrist will confirm with Israel and "with many." It is MOST likely that terms will be provided to Israel to build the third temple.
 - b. We see Israel preparing to build the third temple today. Many of the details to accomplish this are already set up and ready to go. However, the timing for this ambition is not now.
 - c. It is most likely that AFTER the **Psalms 83** conflict, and AFTER the War of Gog and Magog in **Ezekiel 38 and 39**: that dynamics in the Middle East will have positioned this ambition of the Jews for the right time.
 - 2. Again, recall that this will also be a future time when the false one-world religious system will be in full swing.
 - a. This false one-world religious system will become a global genocidal campaign, referred to in **Isaiah Ch. 28** as "an overflowing scourge."
 - b. It is why "Death and Hades" in **Revelation 6:8**, also called "Death and Sheol" in **Isaiah 28:15**, hold a tremendous amount of power in the world at that time.
 - c. Anyone who resists this false global religion will be killed. Truth and dissent will not be tolerated.
 - d. The Jews will not want to be part of this global false religion. They do not want the "overflowing scourge" to affect them.

- e. I believe the Bible makes the strongest case that this will be the point that the Jewish people will want their own religious system: a return to Mosaic and Levitical laws, and a return to the temple sacrificial system.
- f. And so, within the terms of this covenant that the antichrist confirms with them, and “*with many*,” they gain permission to build their temple and institute their own religion.
- g. Here, within the first two verses of **Revelation Ch. 11**, we see John being instructed to take note of this development.
 - NOTE: It’s possible that we are also seeing some of the specific terms of this covenant that the antichrist confirms with Israel concerning the building of the temple.
 - NOTE: The area of the outer court (**Revelation 11:2**), is considered as being a separate part, an area that has “*been given to the Gentiles*.”
 - There seems to be a distinction provided to one area of the temple grounds over another area.
- h. In any event, the fact that John is instructed to take note of temple issues and details of its design, suggests that the content of **Revelation Ch. 11** goes back to the beginning, to the START of the seven-year Tribulation.
- i. Here in **vss. 1 and 2**, John is told to measure the temple of God, and to measure its layout. This is stated alongside the note that we are looking at a period of time of 42 months.
- j. This is one-half of the Tribulation timeframe. I believe it is a reference to the first half, the time during which the Jews will reimplement their sacrificial system.
- k. It is BEFORE the antichrist enters the temple at the halfway point and declares himself to be “God.”
- l. Therefore, I think the best set of arguments places the start of the ministry of **The Two Witnesses** to be at the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation.
- m. Logically speaking, this makes best sense:
 - The Jews don’t want any part of this genocidal one-world false religious system. They want to be insulated from it.
 - Instead, they want a return to their sacrificial system; they want their temple and all that goes with it.
 - The antichrist gives them the right to have this within the terms of the covenant.
 - It is directly implied that the antichrist gives them their wishes for seven years, but at the halfway point, 42 months in, he unilaterally discontinues this agreement. That is clearly stated in **Isaiah 28:18**, as well as in **Daniel 9:27**.
 - However, during the time the Jews are carrying out their temple rituals, **The Two Witnesses** are sent to the Jewish people by God to remind them that: they missed the Messiah, they missed the person and work of Jesus Christ, and their temple systems are meaningless and apostate.

- Remember, God’s focus during the Tribulation is primarily on the redemption of Israel. Yes, the whole world is under His judgment (and **Revelation** makes this point), but God’s main purpose is to draw a remnant of Israel back into a proper relationship with Jesus Christ.
- The Tribulation is also known as “Daniel’s 70th Week.” In **Daniel 9:24**, the angel tells Daniel that “*Seventy weeks are decreed for YOUR people.*” So it is beyond any reasonable doubt that The Tribulation is mainly about God’s focus on the Jewish people.
- Also, I believe the Bible makes the point that the ministry and activities of **The Two Witnesses**, while impacting the world at large, is nevertheless directed principally to the Jewish people.

D. So, let’s now look at the issue of **The Two Witnesses** specifically. We will look at the usual WHEN, WHAT, WHERE, WHO, etc. as we do so....

1. **WHEN:** As I’ve shared, I believe the best case puts the start of the ministry of **The Two Witnesses** to be at the start of The Tribulation.
 - a. We know their ministry is for 42 months, or 1,260 days. That is clearly stated in **vss. 2 and 3**, most specifically in **vs. 3**.
 - b. So that reasonably narrows things down to the first half of the Tribulation, or the second half. It’s one of those two. Most scholars (nearly all) go with the first half. I’m one of those.
 - c. This conclusion is all but made concrete when you read that **The Two Witnesses** are eventually successfully killed by the antichrist, when it is also noted that he “*comes up from the Abyss.*”
 - d. We’ve studied how this may be a commentary on a change the antichrist goes through at the halfway point of The Tribulation, when he perhaps becomes a true Nephilim, the same way Nimrod appears to have gone through a similar transformation.
 - e. It is clearly AFTER this point that the Seven Bowl Judgments commence. It is AFTER this point that many developments and prophetic events within the book of **Revelation** take place.
 - f. The Tribulation still needs to run its course. We’re not at the end of it. That strongly argues that it is the first 1,260 days of the Tribulation, and not the second 1,260 days of the Tribulation, that the ministry of The Two Witnesses is taking place.

2. **WHAT:** By this I mean to ask the question, “What do **The Two Witnesses** do?”
 - a. The first thing they do is they “*prophesy*” (**Cf. vs. 3**). I think several things need to be noted here:
 - It means they tell the truth. They speak the truth according to God’s Word.

- They don't flinch from stating the facts. They are not politically correct. (This is the primary meaning of the word "prophesy" in the New Testament.
 - Here, The Two Witnesses are prophesying which means they are exhorting others to heed the Word of God and what it says. They are calling attention to the truth of Scripture.
 - They are speaking this truth very clearly, even if others don't want to hear it. We completely lack prophets like this in our churches today, however, this is EXACTLY what pastors and teachers are called to be: "truth tellers."
- The second thing "prophesy" means is they are telling of the things which are to come. Being as The Two Witnesses are sent by God, it is natural we should see it this way.
 - They will warn people of judgements which are pending. They will alert the world-at-large to the very prophecies we are studying now.
 - They will know these things because they will be Scripturally sound. Therefore, they will proclaim God's intentions. The world will not want to hear this, much as many in the church today do not want to hear this.

b. The second thing The Two Witnesses do is they wear sackcloth. It seems to be a strange point to make, but the Bible calls this assessment point out clearly in **vs. 3**. What do we make of this?

- Sackcloth is a rough, coarse cloth, or a bag-like garment, usually made of black goat hair. It's not PETA certified, and they don't wear it because governmental mandates tell them to.
- Sackcloth is crude stuff, and it's not fashionable (quite the opposite). It's the very basics, and it stands out as odd and unique.
- In the Old Testament, sackcloth was worn as a symbol of mourning, grief, or repentance. (Cf. **Jeremiah 4:8; 6:26; 48:37; 49:3; Amos 8:10 Et al**).
- It is associated with mourning and sorrow. When prophets wore sackcloth, it indicated their own brokenness over the message of doom and judgment which they were delivering.
- It's a little bit along the same lines as John eating the scroll and feeling the bitterness in his stomach. Telling the truth is a hard thing to do.
- However, one mark of a true prophet is they are never cavalier in their dire predictions. Instead, they are distressed at what they are proclaiming.

3. **WHERE:** And by this, I mean 'where' do **The Two Witnesses** base their ministry at?

- a. The biggest clue for answering this is found in **Rev. 11:8**. When they are killed by the antichrist. Their bodies lie in *“the great city which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt.” This is something God permits at a sovereign point in time.*
- b. The context makes it clear this is Jerusalem. This is where they are based for 3 ½ years.
- c. This should not surprise us since their ministry is primarily to the Jewish people. Their ministry starts as a result of the building of the temple, and it’s a specific city as noted in **vs. 13**.
- d. Both Sodom and Egypt typify locations which were prescriptively judged by God. Sodom was an exceedingly wicked city which was overthrown for her sins by God’s judgment, and Egypt was the nation which was judged by plagues prior to the Exodus.