



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 58: The Two Witnesses, Part 2

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Review:

- A. Last week we put Trumpet Judgment #6 behind us and we briefly looked at the transitional information that is contained in **Revelation Ch. 10**.
- B. This is where John, like the prophet Ezekiel of Old Testament times, was instructed to “eat a little scroll.” John did as he was instructed, and he found it to be sweet in his mouth but bitter to his stomach.
- C. The idea here is that God’s judgements are just and proper. That is why John perceived the contents of the scroll as sweet. But they are also judgements that result in great destruction and pain on mankind. That is why John also felt the taste of bitterness.
- D. John is also instructed NOT to write down certain things, but to write down others. This, too, has an Old Testament parallel.
- E. Just as the prophet Daniel was sometimes told to “seal up” what he had seen in his visions, so John is also prescribed here to hide certain bits of information while he is instructed to divulge others.
- F. We noted that in the big picture here, events are roughly at the halfway point of the Tribulation.
- G. It was in last week’s lesson, that we began to study an issue that **Revelation Ch. 11** brings to our attention: that is the issue of **The Two Witnesses**.
- H. I called it a parenthetical issue because the introduction of **The Two Witnesses** here is made outside of the general flow of events that is taking place. It looks back to the start of the Tribulation, and then it brings this issue current from that point.
- I. **We noted several important things about The Two Witnesses:**
 1. FIRST, their ministry is for 3 ½ years, or half of the Tribulation timeframe. We saw from looking at several arguments, the best conclusion is their ministry is within the FIRST half of The Tribulation, and not the second half.
 - a. We saw that their ministry appears to have a direct connection with the Jews rebuilding the temple. This is the temple that the antichrist will abominate.
 - b. We saw that in context, the temple, and the temple grounds are a key matter of concern in **Revelation Ch. 11**, and these issues are associated with the arrival and the ministry of **The Two Witnesses**.
 2. SECOND, their ministry is one of “prophecy.” **Revelation 11:3** says, “they will prophesy.” We noted this primarily means they will boldly declare the truth of God’s Word.
 - a. They will tell of judgment events that are forthcoming, and they will call people to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, which is all Scripturally-based.
 - b. We saw that the NT use of the term “to prophesy” means to clearly declare the truth of the Bible unflinchingly. It is not the same dynamic as the Old

Testament prophets who peered into the future and spelled out details of events that would come.

3. The THIRD thing we learned about **The Two Witnesses** is they will wear sackcloth. This is a crude garment associated with mourning and sorrow.
 - a. When prophets wore sackcloth in the Old Testament, it indicated their own brokenness over the message of doom and judgment which they were delivering.
 4. FOURTHLY, we learned that the ministry of **The Two Witnesses** is headquartered in Jerusalem.
 - a. That's where they will be based, and that is where they will be killed by the antichrist after their three and one-half years of ministry is complete.
- I. This week, we have two more issues to unpack concerning **The Two Witnesses**: HOW they do what they do, and WHO they are.
- A. **HOW** do **The Two Witnesses** do what they do? This is the next question we need to address.

NOTE: It is at this point I want to look at the ministry of **The Two Witnesses** from the vantage point of Scripture as well as the vantage point of the unsaved world.

1. They are stated to have *"fire coming out of their mouths which devours their enemies."*
 - a. I think it is best to see this literally as opposed to figuratively, and in the literal approach, we have two options to consider here:
 - The first is literal fire comes forth directly out of their mouths.
 - The second is they employ their mouths to call literal fire down from heaven.
 - b. Whether it is one or the other seems not to be the main issue, despite arguments by various scholars to suggest one or the other.
 - c. Whether the fire comes directly from their mouths, or whether their words call it down, this unique miraculous authority and defensive ability is intended to underscore the divine source of their ministry. They are sent to minister BY God.
 - d. For my part, I view this statement as being literal in every respect. We need to remember that this will be a unique period in human history during which these two individuals minister.
 - e. This is a time in history during which demonic powers are at a peak, when the supernatural, or the paranormal, IS in fact the new normal. This will be the new norm in everyday life.
 - f. We need to remind ourselves that these will also be the days of the false prophet who *"performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men"* (**Cf. Revelation 13:13+**).
 - g. These assessment points also argue for a completely literal interpretation of what's being said here. These **Two Witnesses** must exhibit miraculous

powers which are on a par with, or even superior to, that of the antichrist and his false prophet.

- h. This all takes place during a time that is marinated in demonic manifestations and *“the works of Satan, displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders” (Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9)*.
 - i. Again, we need to remind ourselves that everything changes after The Rapture. As some of you have already read in my article, *“The Biggest Lie,”* in the latest issue of *Prophecy Watcher Magazine*, the Rapture is a dividing line.
 - j. Before it, there is one routine of human experience.
 - k. After it, a completely different routine takes over.
 - l. Before The Rapture, life’s events are largely confined to operating within the natural dimension – to the things we all now see and accept as normal.
 - m. After The Rapture, however, the supernatural - the paranormal – will dominate instead.
 - n. It’s a very different world after Jesus Christ removes His church from this planet. The Rapture is the dividing point, and it will stand as a bright red line of evidence to underscore the veracity of God’s Word and the message of the Gospel.
 - o. This fact will be partly seen in the ministry of ***The Two Witnesses***. They will continue to show the pattern of the supernatural. This is the ‘new norm’ in a post-Rapture world.
 - Moreover, literal judgments on an unsaved population such as those described here with ***The Two Witnesses*** are already recorded as historical facts in the Old Testament.
 - And here in ***Revelation Ch. 11***, this fire is not said to originate in heaven as it is stated in other passages (i.e. concerning Elijah (Cf. ***2 Kings 1:10-12***) or the False Prophet (Cf. ***Revelation 13:13+***)).
2. The unusual and supernatural nature of the response of ***The Two Witnesses*** to their enemies brings to mind the incident in Numbers where Korah’s household is judged for their sin:

(Cf. Numbers 16:28-33): “And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.” Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from

among the assembly.” In this passage in **Numbers**, Moses explains that the unusual nature of the judgment serves two specific purposes which we have identified as being the same as The Two Witnesses.

- a. **First, it provides unique testimony to the source of the judgment (God),**
 - b. **And second, the authority of Moses as His spokesman is also validated.** It will be the same dynamic with this fire-consuming ability of **The Two Witnesses**. It will be a sign that testifies God is the one judging the opponents of these two men, and it will be a sign that they have God’s full authority in their ministry.
3. The Two Witnesses are given power to do three other things as well, and these three things also play into HOW they will do what they do (**Cf. Revelation 11:6**):
- First, *“These men have power to shut up the sky so it will not rain....”*
 - The same root word which means to “shut, to bar, or to lock” is used where Jesus, in **Luke 4:25**, states *“many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was **shut up** three years and six months, and there was great famine throughout all the land.”*
 - Here, the prophet Elijah shows up again as an example from the Old Testament of this miraculous power, and the timeframe is the same, 3 ½ years.
 - Elijah, by the power and authority of God, shut down the atmospheric heavens. He intervened on the normal and natural processes of this planet and he kept the skies from providing life-giving rain and dew.
 - Second, **The Two Witnesses** also have power like that of Moses in Egypt (**Cf. Exodus 4:9; 7:17-21; Et al.**). They have the ability and the supernatural power to turn water into blood.
 - Again, we need to interpret this literally. It will not be ‘red-colored water. It will be blood. It will be undrinkable.
 - The results of this plague will be like the effects of the 2nd Trumpet Judgment as well as 2nd and 3rd Bowl Judgments which we have yet to study. In all these, the seas and springs of water *“become blood”* (**Cf. Revelation 8:8+; Revelation 16:3-4+**).
 - Lastly, **The Two Witnesses** will be able to initiate numerous plague judgments upon the earth as they wish.
 - We are not told what the full range of these plagues are. The Bible does not describe them.
 - However,, I believe we can assume they are similar to the plagues that Moses and Aaron brought on Egypt when they were seeking to have Pharaoh release the Israelites.

- The long and short of this is the unsaved world of this future time will be tormented by **The Two Witnesses** because these miraculous powers are intended to bring about repentance. This is what **Revelation** underscores as being the one thing the depraved world will not want to do.
- They will not want to get into a right relationship with Jesus Christ, and so they will endure these traumas and judgements as God kills off and rids the earth of all those who will not follow Him.
- The last element pertaining to HOW **The Two Witnesses** do what they do is found in **Revelation 11:7-14**.

NOTE: It is in this passage that we see **The Two Witnesses** killed and then they come back to life. So, the 'how' angle is how God permits them to defy normal life-cycle processes.

NOTE: There are several key points we need to explore concerning this specific issue:

- **(Cf. vs. 7) – “When they have finished their testimony....”**
 - As we have seen throughout our study, and particularly in these Tribulation judgments, the ability of evil to manifest and to have effect is entirely within God’s sovereignty.
 - I know sometimes it feels like evil has the upper hand, and it feels like it is fruitless to try and effect any good, but we must remind ourselves that God is still on His throne. He is 100% in control.
 - It is true here: **The Two Witnesses** may not be killed until they have finished their God-given task. Until that point, they are immortal so to speak.
 - Their period of ministry (as we learned last week) is 1,260 days. That is exactly one-half of the seven-year Tribulation timeframe, and as we learned. It makes best sense to see this being the first half of the Tribulation.
- **(Cf. vs. 7) – “...the beast that comes up from the Abyss....”**
 - This is the first time in **Revelation** that the antichrist is introduced as “the beast” (Greek: ‘therion’).
 - In fact, it is the first time the antichrist is mentioned at all apart from the description of his rise as a political leader in the First Seal Judgment in **Revelation 6:2**.
 - It is the same term used to describe ‘beasts’ that are “given power” to kill in the Fourth Seal Judgment in **Revelation 6:8**.
 - It is my conclusion, that the “beast” term used here is intended to describe a Nephilim element which will be active on earth during this future timeframe.
 - Besides this being a “like the days of Noah,” it is also a reminder that we are at the halfway point of the Tribulation. It is at the halfway point

that the Bible seems to suggest the antichrist becomes something other than what he was when he began.

- This may have something to do with the antichrist's death and occultic resurrection that we studied a few weeks ago – and this, of course, is Satan trying to imitate Jesus Christ. It also may be something similar to what Nimrod went through as he *“began to be a Gibborim,”* from **Genesis 10:8**.
- In any event, it is here that the antichrist achieves what no one else could achieve before this point: the death of The Two Witnesses, and the antichrist earns world acclaim for this deed.

(One commentator describes this event as follows):

*“That this incident will happen after his (the antichrist’s) resurrection from the dead is clear from the statement, the beast that comes up from the abyss, and he will come back from the Abyss by means of his resurrection by Satan. Along with his resurrection, the act of killing **The Two Witnesses** will provide another reason why mankind will worship him. All previous attempts to kill **The Two Witnesses** fail. Immediately upon his resurrection, he kills **The Two Witnesses**. Consequently, their 1,260 days must just overlap into his 42 months. They must have witnessed, therefore, for nearly 1,260 days during his mortal stage, before his assassination.”*

- **(Cf. vs. 8)** – *“...their bodies will lie in the street (etc.)...”* There are a few pertinent things to bring to light here:
 - Lack of burial is particularly repugnant to the Jews and to their Mosaic laws. It is the epitome of indignity.
 - This event takes place at a time when the Jews have returned to a Levitical religious system. This underscores the intense hatred here that is felt against **The Two Witnesses**.
 - **The Two Witnesses** have shown they are sent by God, and that they have the authority of God behind them. None of that matters anymore. The world will hate them for clearly being representatives of God's truth.
 - And as we looked at last week, this all takes place in Jerusalem. That fact is made quite obvious in Scripture.
- **(Cf. vs. 9)** – *(paraphrasing) “the world will gaze on their dead bodies and refuse them to be buried”*
 - This is one of those specific points that caused prophecy scholars for many years to interpret this passage non-literally. “How could the whole world all at one time see these dead bodies?” This was not seen as possible.
 - Suggestions were made about the evening news, about photos in newspapers, and so on. However, it was not until the advent

of smart phones, which nearly all the world's diverse population now has, that this prophecy could be literally fulfilled.

- It just goes to show that we need to trust God's Word and believe what it says down to the smallest details.

4. Why would the world refuse their burial? (This is an interesting question?)

NOTE: Here are the thoughts of one scholar, and I paraphrase his thoughts a bit:

- The first reason is Jewish sensibilities** – One reason their bodies will remain unburied is to introduce an intentional insult to Jewish sensibilities which consider lack of burial an indication of being judged or cursed. This may also be a sign of the world's rising hostilities against the Jews at about this time).
- The second reason is these bodies serve as trophies to the antichrist** – Not only will their bodies be withheld from burial, but it seems likely they will be protected from disturbance by scavengers, such as birds and dogs which would normally descend upon unguarded carcasses. They are prevented from burial and they will likely be protected from scavengers because they serve as trophies to the power of the antichrist. They also serve as a show of victory of the depraved world over the torment which *The Two Witnesses* delivered under the authority of God. So long as these bodies lie on the street, they provide visual confirmation of the superiority of the antichrist. At least, that's how the depraved world will see the matter.

- **(Cf. Rev. 11:10)** – *“those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another.”* Several things to note here:

- The Greek terms and phrases employed here are essentially used of religious and spiritual jubilation, to *“rejoice, celebrate, be jubilant”*
- A couple scholars suggest that the text may be indicating the creation of a holiday: a time for the world to collectively celebrate a single issue.
- The sending of gifts is also an indication of this, and it may also be another indication of the use of smart phones since 'gifts' of all sort can be sent anywhere electronically now whereas that was once not possible.
- The bottom line is *The Two Witnesses* join a long list of God's servants and prophets who were hated by those to whom they were sent.

- **(Cf. vs. 11)** – *“...after three and a half days”* they are supernaturally raised back to life.

- I find the “3 ½” days interesting here. It was three and a half years that the ministry of *The Two Witnesses* was in effect. It will be

three and a half years that the Tribulation has been taking place, and it was 3 ½ years that Elijah had kept rain from falling on Israel.

- Not coincidence! God is repeating a value here to show His sovereign control and hand in it all.