

The Two Witnesses

THIS CHAPTER COVERS ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING subjects of a book full of fascinating subjects. The unbridled charisma and power of the two witnesses is nothing short of spectacular. These men are powerful examples of the love that God still has for the nation that ultimately rejected Him. God proves that He is willing to use any method to call Israel back to Himself. The two witnesses will have an impact upon Israel that is unprecedented.

(1) And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

The imagery here is similar to Ezekiel 40, when Ezekiel is commanded to take a reed and measure the temple for its construction. The point of this passage is not so much the measurements, but the fact that a temple does now exist. This will be the fourth temple that will stand upon the temple mount in Jerusalem, and is more than likely the seducing factor that allies Israel with the Antichrist. The signing of the covenant with the Antichrist began the period of Tribulation, so this temple was obviously quickly built. It now stands completed, ready to be used, and ready to be measured. John is commanded to take the

measurements of the temple and the altar, but also to take the measure of those that worship.

The last measurement is the most disturbing. This temple will be a dead, dry one. It is a monument to a dead religion, to an old covenant, and is evidence of the hard hearts of Israel. It was built in a coalition with the antithesis of Jesus Christ. The ultimate slap in the face is that while they rejected the true Messiah, they will warmly embrace the false Messiah. What happens to the now standing Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock), a Muslim mosque that currently occupies the temple mount, is not mentioned in the Word. Muslims consider Jerusalem to be one of their three holy cities, along with Mecca and Medina. We do know that the Antichrist will be a flawless politician, ambassador, and peacemaker. Solving this great problem will surely be one of the monumental “successes” that will seal his position of power and authority in the earth.

(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.

The third temple to stand upon this site, known as Herod’s temple, was the first to incorporate a court “of the Gentiles.” This was an outer area where “tourists” could come and observe the Jewish way of worship. It appears that the fourth temple will also incorporate a court of the Gentiles.

Herod’s temple was not designed purely for worship. Some do not even consider it an individual temple, for it was really just a remodeled version of Zerubbabel’s temple. Deviation from God’s blueprint was unimportant to Herod, for he was concerned with his own glory, not God’s. It was just another architectural project to a man consumed with such projects. He did it to try to curry favor with the Jews, for he was not really a Jewish king at all. While Rome allowed the Jews to continue in their religion, it was chiefly a tourist attraction in their eyes. Because of the outstanding road systems that the Romans built and the enforced *Pax Romana* cultures began to

mingle as never before. Herod's temple compromised in order to commercialize, and in this court the buying and selling took place that angered Jesus so greatly.

The fourth temple will be a tourist attraction, a slick commercialization of a dead, empty, ritualized religion. The Antichrist keeps his word with the Jews for the first three and a half years, and the temple is built and sacrifices take place within its "holy" places. This Jewish utopia is temporary, for Daniel states that after three and a half years the Antichrist will break his covenant and cause the sacrifices to cease. Not only that, but he will also desecrate the temple, polluting it for further use.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (Daniel 9:27).

Jesus warned the Jews to flee Jerusalem and head to the mountains the moment that they saw this fulfilled (Matthew 24:15–16; Mark 13:14). The final stage will be when the Antichrist sets himself up in the temple as god, and for the last three and a half years (forty-two months) the city will be controlled by the Gentiles, and the Jews will be actively persecuted by the Antichrist and his followers.

(3) And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Perhaps the most flamboyant and intriguing players on the stage of the end times are the two witnesses. They seem to appear from nowhere at the advent of the Tribulation and will witness for the entire first three and a half years (a thousand, two hundred and threescore days) of the Tribulation. They will continually be a thorn in the side of the Antichrist, for although he will hate them passionately, he (and everyone else) will be powerless to prevent or destroy them until

their witness is concluded. These witnesses will not only be a moral conscience, contradicting the false words of the Antichrist and his regime, but will also be a powerful evangelistic force to the Jews. They will be dressed like prophets of old, in sackcloth, the garment of repentance, and they will preach a message of repentance. God will send them as a warning to Israel much like He sent Jonah to Ninevah. The Jews will easily relate to the two witnesses, for they will have the appearance, power, and authority of the patriarchs of old.

(4) These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

They are described as olive trees, indicating that they will be Jews, for the olive tree has always represented the Nation of Israel. The Word also states that they will also be candlesticks, showing that they preach the New Testament gospel (like the Church). Zechariah was shown these two men in prophetic vision, and asked about their identity:

And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth (Zechariah 4:12–14).

The anointed messengers will be a powerful, convincing force, for their appearance and mannerisms will intrigue the Jews. When they began to preach, the Jews will not hear the familiar message of the Torah, but will instead hear the New Testament gospel message that they previously rejected.

(5) And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the two witnesses is their supernatural ability to physically breathe fire. There will

probably be many opportunities for them to use this ability, as both they and their message will certainly be very controversial. When attacked, the witnesses will have the ability to breathe a stream of fire from their mouths, incinerating the attacker. This will not only serve to protect them, but will also be a sign to the unbelieving of the world. They will have the power to back up their preaching! This supernatural ability will capture the attention of both the Jews and the world, but the most important thing to come out of their mouths is not the fire but the message of truth that they preach!

(6) These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

A great deal of speculation has taken place in regards to the identity of these two witnesses. There are fair amount of theological principles involved in this speculation. If these two men are revived from another age, they would have to be those that were somehow outside the rapture, or first resurrection. The point of resurrection is to rise from death to never die again. That results in four names: Enoch, Moses, Elijah, John (the Apostle), or two in the spirit or character of these men. The book of Hebrews makes a key point on this: “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27).

Elijah and Enoch did not suffer natural deaths, so by the law of this passage, they should have to suffer death. It is also possible that John the Apostle did not suffer natural death, although this is not clear (see **John 21:20–24**). Most commentators and theologians agree that Elijah or one like him will be one of the two. Malachi stated outright that Elijah would return in this fashion, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD*” (Malachi 4:5).

While the law above would seem to exclude Moses, the fashion of his “death” is left very uncertain in Scripture. Jude makes the following

statement in his epistle, “*Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation*” (**Jude 1:9**). The body of Moses was a major source of dispute, to the degree that the forces of heaven actually fought with the devil over the body. The Bible adds further controversy with this passage:

And so, Moses the LORD’s servant died there in Moab, just as the LORD had said. The LORD buried him in a valley near the town of Beth-Peor, but even today no one knows exactly where (**Deuteronomy 34:5–6**, CEV).

This verse reveals to us that it was the Lord that buried him (which was fitting, as He had been Moses’ best friend). The grave that he was “buried in” does not exist (could not be found), and angelic forces fought with Satan and his legions over the body of Moses. While these passages are at best inconclusive, it does show that there could definitely be some loopholes regarding the death of Moses.

There are more convincing arguments in the favor of Moses being one of the two witnesses. Zechariah saw a vision of these two witnesses, and he was told that they were the two anointed ones “*that stand by the LORD of the whole earth*” (**Zechariah 4:14**). Three of Jesus’ disciples observed just such a scene when Elijah and Moses met together with Jesus and discussed some matter on the mount of Transfiguration. What a beautiful, vivid image, for Jesus was the conclusion of what the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) had begun! The transfiguration appears to strongly foreshadow some future event. This verse in Revelation lists some of the attributes of these men; breathing fire, stopping the rain, turning water into blood, and calling down plagues at will. These supernatural endowments are biblically reminiscent of wonders performed by Moses and Elijah. Elijah called down fire at least three times in Scripture (**I Kings 18:37,38**; **II Kings 1:10,12**) and also had the ability to stop the rain for the space of three years

during the wicked reign of Ahab. Moses turned water into blood and was God's instrument in all of the plagues at Egypt. These are both strong biblical connections to these men.

The most convincing argument to me, however, comes when one considers that the purpose of these men is to convince Israel of the gospel message. The two men (with the exception of Abraham) that the Jews respect the most would be the originator of the law (Moses) and the most flamboyant, original, and powerful of the prophets (Elijah). These men epitomize the law and the prophets, and as a result, would have more sway upon the Jews than any other.

Enoch did not taste of death, but he also preexisted the nation of Israel, so he would not be represented as an olive tree. His amount of influence on the world was limited, for he is renowned mostly for his incredible walk with God. When it comes to Enoch's passing from earth, the Word simply says that he was not, for God took him (**Genesis 5:24**). The writer of Hebrews uses the word *translated*, and the Greek word literally means that he was transposed (**Hebrews 11:5**). Life on earth was instantly replaced with life in heaven. This verse also states that he was translated that "*he should not see death.*" If the purpose of his translation was to avoid death, then it would seem incongruous that he should be rescued from death only to die at a later time. The statement "*that he should not see death*" is not made of anyone else and appears to disqualify Enoch, for the two witnesses will certainly die. While **Jude 14** does state that Enoch prophesied, the mission of these two witnesses is to influence Israel into embracing Jesus as their Messiah. It is Enoch's lack of influential sway over the Jews that would make him seem a bit more unlikely than Elijah and Moses.

John is a New Testament figure, and most Jews reject the New Testament altogether. Because of this fact, John's influence would be limited. Even men coming in the spirit of the Elijah and Moses would not have the same amount of influence as the

men themselves. The most logical conclusion seems to be that the two witnesses will be Moses and Elijah returned to earth. See the following supplement for a discussion regarding John the Baptist filling the role of Elijah (“Was John The Baptist Elijah?”).

(7) And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Verse 3 lets us know that these two will witness for three and a half years. It is obvious from the chronology of this passage that their ministry will be over the first half of the Tribulation. It is not until they have *finished* their testimony that the veil of protection lifts from them. The great revival of the early portion of the Tribulation has concluded, and the remaining hearts of men are hard and resistant. For the two witnesses, their season is done, their work accomplished. At this point the beast, or Antichrist, will be granted the ability to kill them. God continues to be in control of everything. Yes, the Antichrist does kill them, but only after their work is finished, and in their death they will truly show the power of God. Once again the Antichrist will unwittingly perform a service for Almighty God.

(8) And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

These great men, very likely two of the great patriarchs, will not even be given a decent burial. Their bodies will be left to rot in the streets of Jerusalem. Making a deal with the Antichrist will have commercialized Jerusalem in a way that the Jews probably never anticipated. The effects of his influence are well seen in this description. Jerusalem will be spiritually bereft, and true believers are warned to flee it (**Matthew 24**), for it will be as ungodly as Egypt and Sodom in their days. Sodom is always representative of ungodliness and, in particular, moral erosion. This

reveals that Jerusalem will have fallen into the clutches of the moral bankruptcy that the Antichrist's regime will ride upon. Egypt consistently represents two things in the Bible: the world, and bondage; both are applicable here. The sacred city has become the secular city. The freedom of worship proposed by the Antichrist has actually translated into spiritual bondage. The fact that our Lord was crucified in this city conclusively identifies this city as Jerusalem.

(9) And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

This will be an international media event, with every nation of the world watching the dead and rotting bodies. This coverage will very likely be through satellite television or via the Internet. The ungodly will stare at the bodies with morbid fascination as the cameras train on them and the celebration begins.

I recently read that a new type of football league was being formed to appeal to the fans of the violent (fake) wrestling on television. An editorial was written suggesting that this new game was not violent enough and pointed out several places where this sport could be made more violent and thus appealing to the fans. Another man responded to this editorial in a letter a week or two later and stated that the author of the editorial had not made his game violent enough. He said that what people are really looking for was for the Christians and the lions to be brought back. This both sickened and disturbed me, but in many ways it did not surprise me. The farther that nations and people get from God, the more bestial they become. The fact that the proposed new league has since fallen apart is encouraging: America has been given a little more grace.

The coverage of the two witnesses' deaths will no doubt be considered great family entertainment, two great men being denied the dignity of burial. Replays will show close-ups of the fatal moment

as the bullet strikes or the blow descends. Cameras will provide voyeurs round-the-clock coverage of the decaying bodies. Doomed souls will gather around their televisions and computers in fascination, for this will be true entertainment!

(10) And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

The people of this earth will be so corrupt that they will actually have a Christmas-like celebration and send gifts to one another. There will be singing and dancing, celebrations, and gift-giving because the old, leathery bodies of the two witnesses are lying dead and rotting in the streets of Jerusalem. This event will graphically reveal the unrepentant fallen nature of the earth's remaining inhabitants.

Many times throughout history man has killed the messenger. The people of the earth who did not want to change will celebrate because they will no longer be condemned and tormented by the truth. These precious men spoke with brutal honesty as they issued their call to repentance and in the process laid bare the hidden sins of millions. In their righteous way they tormented the world, and earth's inhabitants will rejoice over their silence.

(11) And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

Satan has a serious problem. Every time he kills a mortal enemy, they keep coming back to life! After three and a half days of lying rotting in the hot sun of the streets of Jerusalem, these men will be revived by the spirit of God and will stand back up. There will be continuing coverage of this event during the three days of their death, for many will witness this moment of renewed life.

The celebration that has been taking place mirrors the one in hell during the three days of Jesus' burial. Just as Jesus busted up the party in hell, He will now rain on the parade of the corrupt world. As they

continue to watch and celebrate, these men will revive and stand back up on their feet. A great hush comes over all the onlookers, and then fingers of terror will begin to grip their hearts. These two bold enemies of evil were dead; the whole world was witness to it! But now the whole world is also witness to the fact that they are alive.

(12) And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

While their enemies around the world continue to watch, a voice from heaven calls to the two witnesses, saying, “Come up hither.” In horror, the Antichrist and his cronies watch as their enemies are caught away before their eyes. All around the world the catching away of the witnesses will lend validity to their years of preaching. Unwittingly the Antichrist has validated the message of the two witnesses and opened the door for supernatural confirmation of their mission.

This brings us to another interesting matter. **First Corinthians 15:23** states, “*But every man in his own order.*” There is an order to the first resurrection: first was Christ, and the second group according to **I Corinthians 15:23** is the Church. Those that ascribe to any other school of thought but pre-Tribulation are going to have problems here. There is not just one catching away, or rapture, but several. Jesus was the first, when He was caught away from the Mount of Olives. Second is the catching away of the Bride of Christ, His Church. Chapter 12 speaks of the 144,000 being caught away, for a fourth rapture (both of these last two seem to take place very close to the midpoint in the Tribulation). If one does not believe in a pre-Tribulation rapture for the church it puts these other rapture occurrences out of their biblical order.

From biblical descriptions of the tribulation saints there seems to be a point where they go from being disembodied souls under the altar (**Revelation 6:9**) to being a host that no man could number around the throne (**Revelation 7:9**). Unlike these other groups,

however, the tribulation saints appear to be harvested not by rapture but rather by death (Revelation 14).

(13) And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

A great earthquake follows the rapture of the witnesses, giving even more credence to the power of God. This earthquake will hammer Jerusalem, where no doubt the cameras are still rolling. What began as a great PR event for the power of the Antichrist ends as a media triumph for God. The entire world sees the power of God over death and that the city that killed these witnesses receives a swift punishment.

The message of the witnesses was the message of Jesus and Him crucified, and their deaths and resurrections will be a powerful portrayal of the message that they preached. Seven thousand people die in this great earthquake, and a tenth of the city is destroyed. The impact of these events has a great impact, perhaps ever overshadowing the ministry of these two men. John records that the entire remnant of people in Jerusalem, at least for the moment, will turn their hearts to God in great fear and glorify Him. *This is not what the Antichrist was looking for!*

(14) The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

The time frame of the second woe is now concluded, and with it, the first half of the Tribulation. The timing of this announcement is designed to reveal that the second half of the Tribulation begins with the third woe. The midpoint of the Tribulation is extraordinarily eventful, and during this period everything changes, including: the death and catching away of the two witnesses, the catching away of the 144,000, the death of the Antichrist, the reanimation of the Antichrist by Satan, who then breaks the covenant

with the Jews, sets himself up as god in the desecrated temple, which results in the escalation of the wrath of the Lamb. The focus of the judgment of God also changes in the latter half of the Tribulation. The earthly rule of nations will be destroyed in preparation for the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ that is to come. The rock that is Christ will smash them all into powder and then will grow into a great mountain that fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:31–35).

(15) And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The purpose of the remaining events in the Tribulation is different than that of the first half. Judgment has been meted upon the earth and its inhabitants for their ungodliness and their treatment of the godly but now will be aimed at the Antichrist and his followers to the end of destroying their dominion over the earth. In subsequent chapters we will see the Antichrist set himself up as god in the temple, directly defying God. He will be Satan inhabited. The wrath of God will be directed at destroying every institution and follower of the Antichrist so that Jesus can be exalted to rightful place upon the throne of the earth.

“The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord.” The final result is proclaimed before the action ever takes place. This is the essence of faith, and God has a tremendous amount of faith in Himself! Before the Tribulation wraps up, every institution of “power” of man will be broken down and demeaned. Power has been abused by mankind from the very beginning. “Absolute power corrupts absolutely” goes the proverb. Even God’s own people, Israel, spurned His governmental system for one that gave power to man. Man has exalted himself again and again, refusing to honor God or give Him the glory that He deserves. God will make a mockery of this attitude, tearing down the kingdoms of man in order to establish His own. And when He begins his reign, it will be an eternal reign. *“Then comes*

the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (I Corinthians 15:24–25, ESV).

(16) And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, (17) Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

These next series of verses show that the wrath of God will be both more directed and fierce than ever before. He is now gathering the limitless measures of His power and will take control of this world by force. He *will* sit upon the throne of this earth, and the one that is pretending to be god will feel the fierce wrath of the true God. This truth causes the Church to fall to its knees in worship once again.

In a sick parody of this scene, the people of earth are gathering in droves to give homage and worship to their leader whom they now hold as their god. Creation never deserves the praise that belongs to the Creator, and both the Antichrist and Satan are created beings. The book of Romans describes this corrupt spirit.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Romans 1:21–25).

Those that will worship the Antichrist in the latter half of the Tribulation will know better. There is manifold evidence throughout

the Tribulation that there is a God...and He isn't the Antichrist. Untold numbers will come to that realization and will repent. In fact, before the outright worship of the Antichrist begins, there are angelic messengers in the sky preaching audibly to the inhabitants of the earth, warning them that if they worship him and take his number they are irrevocably entering into condemnation and will taste of hellfire (**Revelation 14:6–11**). Oh yes, the inhabitants of the earth will know better! They will arrogantly defy God despite this knowledge. All those that make this decision cross a distinct line and move beyond the mercy of God. God will simply “give them up” to the destruction that they choose.

(18) And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

This verse shows that the time has now come for God to complete all of His covenants. In His infinite mercy God has given space during this time of Tribulation for men to change their hearts, but that space is now over. The 144,000 have been sealed, sent, and have evangelized to great effect but now will be gathered home (**Revelation 12;14**). The two witnesses have spoken the truth, died for it, and have been resurrected (**Revelation 11**). There has been a great harvest of souls that concludes with the final harvest in a great “purge” by the Antichrist as he attempts to weed out every believer (**Revelation 14**). Those that are going to turn to God have done so. God's mercy upon the inhabitants of the earth is now depleted.

The new theme is to fulfill covenants. God promised sinners that they would be punished, the dead would be judged, the saints of all ages would be rewarded, those that are desecrating His earth and people would be destroyed, and that He would establish His kingdom upon earth. *God is now prepared to start wrapping things up!*

(19) And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

This description of the might of God is even more awesome than previous ones. The descriptions have come at several junctures where God was revealed in His might and power, typically before taking strong action of some kind. But in this description John shows a greater dimension of power and might than any other before. Lightning, thundering, and voices were typical, an earthquake was present in one previous description, but this passage adds “great hail” to the description. God will reveal Himself even more potently than He has heretofore. The final woe will introduce the seven vial or bowl judgments, which are the most severe of the judgments. As a powerful contrast to the false temple that the Antichrist declares himself as god in, the true temple of God is revealed, and this one has the Ark of the Covenant within.

This leads to a final puzzle in this chapter: is this the original ark of the covenant? If not, is the ark still upon this earth? While this is not necessarily the original ark, there is a possibility that it could be. It is very odd that the ark, the very centerpiece of Judaism, seems to get lost in the shuffle during exile and the history leading into the New Testament. How very strange that Israel has not regained the ark with all the resources they command today. Groups have claimed to have this ark, but no conclusive proof has ever been presented.

It is most likely that the ark is not in human hands, nor will it ever be again. It represented the presence of God for a now defunct dispensation or covenant period. That ark, so important in its time and covenant, would be nothing more than an idol today, for it is not the way to God. Jesus said very plainly in **John 14:6**, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” If Israel did have the ark, it would only reinforce the dead formalism that denotes their faith today. Whether or not this ark is *the*

ark is inconclusive, but there is an ark that is in the heavenly temple. It is fitting that the ark, representing the presence of God, is no longer in an earthly temple where few have access to it but rather in a heavenly temple where all have access to the mercy seat.