

## The Two Witnesses

**Revelation 11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."**

Two witnesses appeared for a number of days that is equal to the 42 months. These are God's witnesses and prophesy clothed in sackcloth; that is, they speak for God. Sackcloth often indicates mourning. They are not vindictive. Though they bring further warnings of judgment, they do so with broken hearts.

In view of the statement that "**Hebrews 9:27 it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this judgment.**"

However, all who are in Christ and who are alive at His coming for the church will be caught up to meet the Lord and will be changed. Their new bodies will be immortal and cannot die. Thus, Hebrews 9:27 is only a general statement that rules out a second chance after death (as well as any possibility of reincarnation).

**Revelation 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.**

In Zechariah chapter 4 the two olive trees are Zerubbabel the prince of David's line and Joshua the high priest. They are two anointed leaders who minister "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). The two witnesses of Revelation are not the two witnesses of Zechariah 4, but by using this language John identified the two witnesses of verse 3 as Spirit-filled leaders.

Zechariah 4:2 also describes a golden lampstand supporting a large reservoir bowl that feeds oil into seven lamps. The two witnesses of 11:3 are both described as lampstands standing before the true God who is Lord over all the earth. When they prophesy they give from God such a fullness of light that no one can deny the truth and clarity of their message.

**Revelation 11:5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.**

If any person makes it his or her purpose to hurt or injure these witnesses in any way, fire goes out of their mouths and devours their enemies. This is the way God has ordained that those who want to hurt them must be killed. It probably means that all they have to do is speak the word, and the fire appears as if from their lips. Fear will be a strong part of their ministry, nullifying any opposition.

This reminds us of Elijah calling down fire from heaven on two groups, each with a captain and 50 men, sent to bring him before King Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:10,12). But the power of both witnesses goes beyond what Elijah was able to do. The language actually may be more related to **Jeremiah 5:14 where God said concerning Jeremiah, "Because ye (the people of Judah) speak this word (a word of treacherous rebellion against God and His prophets), behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."** By this God meant the judgments Jeremiah prophesied would be carried out in spite of the false prophets who said they would not.

**Revelation 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.**

Both witnesses have the power and authority to shut heaven to keep it from raining during the 1,260 days of their ministry. Because Elijah prayed and it did not rain for the same period of 3 ½ years (**James 5:17**), some take this as further evidence that one of the two witnesses is Elijah. There is a long tradition down through Church history of preachers and writers identifying one of the witnesses with Elijah, often connecting this with the prophecy of **Malachi 4:5 where God said He would send Elijah "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."** Both witnesses have this power, and their authority seems to be even greater than Elijah's.

Like Moses, both witnesses have power and authority to turn the waters into blood and to smite the earth, that is, strike down the people of the earth, with plagues. On this basis, some believe the second witness must be Moses. Moses and Elijah did appear together on the Mount of Transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-13**), probably representing the Law and the Prophets. They spoke of Christ's "exodus," and it was evident they knew the importance of Christ's cross, resurrection, and ascension. Both of these witnesses have power and authority beyond that given to Moses. Both of them can strike the people of the earth with every plague as often as they wish. A great deal seems to be left to their will and judgment.

God has never left any period of history without a witness. Thus, He has His witnesses even during this time of great tribulation. Hardly anything in the Book of Revelation has stirred up more controversy than the identification of these two witnesses. Many have become very dogmatic about their choices of who they are. It is probably more important to recognize there are two of them, they work together, their agreement further establishes the truth of their prophetic warnings, and their message and the plagues they bring will leave the world without excuse.

**Revelation 11:7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.**

The two witnesses will have the specified, limited time of 3 ½ years to complete their testimony, that is, their prophetic witness as speakers for God. At the end of that time, the beast who will come up out of the abyss will make war with them, conquer them, and kill them.

It seems also that when their testimony is complete their power to ring fire on their enemies to devour them, and their power to smite the earth with all kinds of plagues will be at an end also. The Book of Revelation does not go into detail and describe just how the beast will make war with them, but he will be victorious. It will appear that once again evil has triumphed. However, it will be only a temporary victory. The last pages of any book reveal who has really won.

“Beast” (*therion*) is a term that means a wild animal. The Greek meaning is different from that of the living creatures of Revelations 4 and 5. The use of the term is like that in Daniel 7, except the beastly nature in Daniel applies to empires, while here it applies to a person. This beast has not been mentioned up to his point. Many believe he is Satan himself, forming a satanic trinity with the two beasts of chapter 13 (p.181). Some scholars insist that though he comes up from the abyss, and this derives his power from Satan, he is a man, undoubtedly the same as the first beast in chapter 13. The same word is used of the beasts in chapter 13, which can be identified as the Antichrist and his false prophet. The first beast in chapter 13 can also be identified as the little horn of Daniel 7:8,20 who makes war with the saints. Paul called him the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10.

**Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.**

To show their disrespect, the people will leave the bodies of the two witnesses exposed on the wide road or Main Street of the great city. The city is not named, but it is identified as a spiritual Sodom and Egypt, and is clearly identified as Jerusalem, because it is the city where our Lord was crucified.

Jerusalem is the great city, not because of its size or population, but because it has had a great and important place in the plan of God. This time it has become a city of great sin. Because of its moral and spiritual humiliation, Isaiah in his day had to call its rulers Sodom rulers and you people of Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:10). To the Jews Egypt represented the place of bondage. Here, it seems the people are under the slavery of sin. Some believe that at this time the Jews had already fled to a place in the wilderness, which some have identified as Petra, south of the Dead Sea in Edom.

It is significant that the bodies of these witnesses lie in the street of this city where their Lord was crucified. In a very real sense they now share in His sufferings.

**Revelation 11:9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.**

Some suppose that television will enable the people to see the bodies of these two witnesses lying in the wide street of the city. Some will perhaps already be in the city, either on business, or as agents stationed in the city. They crowd in around these dead bodies to view them. But they can do this for only 3 ½ days, a very short period compared to the 3 ½ years of their ministry.

During this period the people continue their despicable treatment and scorn of the two witnesses by refusing to allow their bodies to be placed in tombs. The differences between what happens to them and what took place at the crucifixion of Jesus are significant. Jesus alone was the sinless Lamb of God who shed His blood and died for our sins. No one can add anything to that. What God did for our redemption was finished on the cross. Then Jesus was placed in a tomb for 3 days and was raised for our justification.

**Revelation 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.**

The news of the death of the two witnesses will undoubtedly be flashed around the world. All those dwelling on the earth will rejoice over them. They will gather together to make merry with great celebrations and feasting (and probably drinking). They will make it a time of sending gifts to one another as expressions of their gladness and joy. It will be like a great, worldwide, worldly, Christmas celebration but without Christ (compare also John 16:20 where Jesus said the world would rejoice at His death). They will not know how short the period of their rejoicing will be. All those who are still alive on the earth and who were tormented by these two prophets are glad because they are dead. The fact that they are called prophets here draws attention to their message which they spoke for God. Many of the people must have been tormented by the plagues. But the word “tormented” (*ebasanisan*) also includes the idea

of mental torture, anguish, and harassment. God's message through the witness-prophets must have cut through to the hearts of many and made them feel the guilt of their sins. Now the witnesses were dead. The people felt relieved. The beast had won, and they undoubtedly took this to mean the message of the prophets was defeated as well, so they could rejoice, eat, drink, and be merry. They could go in their wicked ways and feel comfortable about their godless life-style.

**Revelation 11:11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.**

After 3 ½ days the celebration and rejoicing of the people left on earth will come to a sudden end. The Spirit of life from God will enter the bodies of the two witnesses, and they will stand up on their feet. The words for "spirit" and "breath" are the same in both Greek (*pneuma*) and Hebrew (*ruach*), this, "The Spirit of life" is parallel to the "breath of life" God breathed on the first man He created (Genesis 2:7).

During the 3 ½ days their bodies will lie in the street of Jerusalem, there may probably be those who will disfigure them. Decay will probably set in. But the Spirit of life is a creative, life giving Spirit that comes from God, full of His power. Thus, the two witnesses will be restored not only to life, but also to full health and vigor. They will be infused with spiritual life as well, and they will stand up full of the power of the Holy Spirit. What a witness to the fact that the victories of the beast will be short lived! God is and always will be the Victor.

Those who observe their resurrection will be overwhelmed with a great fear, a sudden terror. Undoubtedly, they will remember the plagues and divine judgment brought by these two witnesses. They will suppose death and judgment will be their immediate portion. However, the part of the witness of these two prophets is over. More judgment is to come, but not through them.

**Revelation 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.**

The two witnesses will hear a great voice out of heaven calling them to come up, and immediately, while their enemies watch, they will go up to heaven in a cloud. It is probable that their enemies also will hear the voice, and it will gain their attention. But only the two witnesses ascend. The people who are left behind will only gaze into heaven as the disciples did when Jesus ascended (Acts 1:22).

What an important witness this will be! Though the details of the death and resurrection of the two witnesses are quite different from the death and resurrection of Jesus, the fact of their resurrection cannot help but remind their enemies of the resurrection of Jesus. Their ascension in a cloud will certainly remind them of the ascension of Jesus and of the prophecies of His return. Many have denied that Jesus rose from the dead. But the people left in the world will not be able to deny the fact of this resurrection. Neither will they be able to deny this ascension, for the two witnesses will go up in full view of all, almost certainly seen worldwide on television. Their ascension will also connect their resurrection with the resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection is the guarantee of the resurrection, not only of these two witnesses, but of all believers. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-57; John 11:25,26.)

Enoch...

He who was the son of Jared and the father of Methuselah (Genesis 5:18-19, 21-22; 1 Chronicles 1:3). He lived for a total of 365 years and walked with God. In other words, he led a righteous life of faith in service of God. Instead of his death being recorded, it is simply said of him: **then he was no more, because God took him away, Genesis 5:24.** Because he was part of the faithful line of descendants from Adam, he also appears as an ancestor of Jesus in Luke 3:37. The writer to the book of Hebrews, commenting on the faith of some of the great heroes of the past, says that **By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God Hebrews 11:5.** He goes on to make the point that pleasing God is only possible by means of faith in Him. Thus Enoch was counted righteous before God by his faith. Another reference to Enoch is found in **Jude 14-15 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."**

Elijah...

2 Kings 2:10-11 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." 11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Moses...

Deuteronomy 34:5-8 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. 6 And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. 7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. 8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.

Joshua 1:2-3 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them — the children of Israel.

A New Prophet like Moses...

Deuteronomy 18:15-16 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'

Deuteronomy 18:18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

Many believe the two witnesses will either be Enoch, Elijah and Moses because of how they dress (in sackcloth). Elijah is usually a main candidate as one of the witnesses because he did not see death but was carried to heaven on a heavenly chariot. Because the miracles done by the two witnesses are similar to Moses and Elijah most people assume it must be them.

Let's say hypothetically the two witnesses will neither be Moses or Elijah.

First, Elijah was brought to heaven bodily so he has an immortal body that can never die again, once God gives this body it is permanent. If he is transformed then he is unable to die.

Not Moses because flesh and blood cannot enter heaven with their body so he must be transformed also. Moses would have had to have a separate resurrection which the Bible does not speak of to be the other witness. I do not think Moses would be resurrected and then die again in the Tribulation? The Bible never mentions Moses coming back in the Tribulation. One would think it would be worth mentioning if such an important event takes place; if Moses or any other Old Testament Saint would be here for years.

No one really knows for sure who the two witnesses will be. I would suggest they may be someone completely new that act in a similar manner, just as John the Baptist did with Elijah. Two completely new witnesses, as God often does things this way. We don't see him recycle prophets from the Old Testament anywhere else.

The two witnesses will speak their message dressed in sackcloth. They will give a message of repentance and salvation and the sackcloth is a sign of the importance to Israel. John the Baptist wore sackcloth when he gave his message. Likewise this is done just before the Lord is to come again. Sackcloth also means separation from the world a sign for repentance, to seek God's mercy (Jonah 3:5-6; Dan.9:3; Esther 4:1; Amos 8:10; Mt.11:21).

God will use these two witnesses specifically to Israel as he will have the sealed 144,000 Jews from the tribes of Israel to proclaim the Gospel to the world. They will take over the job of proclaiming the Gospel from the Church which will be in heaven during this time. An innumerable number of souls will be won to the Lord Jesus during the tribulation period.

And now He says, John 3:13 "No man hath ascended up to heaven." That is the answer to those today who feel that Elijah and Enoch went to heaven when they were translated. I don't think so because up to this point the Lord Jesus says that no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. In other words, He is saying that He is the only One who can speak about heaven because He is the only One who has ascended up to heaven. Now it is true that there are a host of people who have gone to heaven after Christ,

but in the Old Testament, when a saint of God died, one of God's own, he went to a place that is called Abraham's Bosom—our Lord called it that (see Luke 16:22). It was not until after Christ died and ascended to heaven and led captivity captive that He took those who were in Paradise into the presence of God in heaven. **Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."** Since then, for the child of God, it has always been "... absent from the body ... present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). But when Jesus was here, no other man had ascended to heaven.

**Ephesians 4:9-10 (Now this, "He ascended" — what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)**

**Matthew 27:51-53 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.**