

The Two Witnesses

Rev. 10-11

INTRODUCTION: *At this point we see a great shift in the book of revelation. If you don't recognize this fact you will find it very difficult to interpret.*

- Rev. 1-3: Messages to the Churches
- Rev. 4-9: Chronology of Judgement (seals, trumpets)
- Rev. 10-15: The People of the Last Days
- Rev. 16-22: Chronology of Judgement (final trumpet and bowls)

The first group of people John sees are two Prophets.

We are going to be introduced to two prophets in Chapter 11, and the stage is being set in chapter 10.

Revelation 10:1–7 (ESV)

¹ Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a **cloud**, with a **rainbow** over his head, and his face was like the **sun**, and his legs like pillars of **fire**.

Remember last week we noted the similarities to the trumpet Judgements of Revelation 8-9 and the Exodus of the Old Testament. Those similarities continue with this mighty angel.

- He is wrapped in a cloud - God provided a cloud to lead the children of Israel through the wilderness and to protect them from the heat of the desert.
- His legs are like pillars of fire - God provided a pillar of fire to guide the children of Israel by night.
- He also has a rainbow over his head. What does that point to? God preserving and protecting, saving Noah and his family through the Judgement.

Now realize that this is not just an interesting coincidence. The Holy Spirit placed that is in the text for a reason. He is clueing you in on how to understand this passage of scripture. Just as God Protected, Preserved, and Delivered his People in the Old Testament... He will Protect, Preserve and Deliver his people in the last days.

WHY? Because God is a promise keeper. God said Israel will be saved and Israel will be saved.

ILLUSTRATION: Julie and I have just returned from a week in Israel. During our time we were reminded of the amazing impact that this relatively small nation has made on world history. **Pastor Ed Jones** assembled a paper on the impact of the Jewish people and it made up a list that totaled 100 pages. Here is a sample:

Jews make up 1/4 that is 1% of the Earth Population.

Jews make up 2% of the U.S. Population.

- But they occupy almost 8% of all board seats of U.S. Corporations.
- 173 Jews have been awarded the Nobel Prize - That is 23% of all the recipients of the Nobel Prize were Jewish.
- 37% of the U.S. recipients of the Nobel Prize were Jewish.
- 26% of the Nobel Prize winners in Physics are Jewish.
- 54% of all world champion chess players are Jewish.
- 35% of Pulitzer Prize winners for drama are Jewish
- 36% of the Academy Award winners for best screenplay are Jewish
- 53% of the Academy Award winners for best original song are Jewish
- Thinkers of the 20th Century reports that 30% of the most important thinkers of the 20th Century were Jewish.
- Of the 100 most imminent Phycologists of the 20th Century 37% are Jewish

CONTINUE: That is not even to mention the chief contribution of the Bible - 64 of the 66 books were written by Jewish authors. Can you imagine the secondary and tertiary impact of writings of the Jews have had on Western Civilization?

The concept of a Monotheistic view of God as an Immense, personal, transcendent, intelligent, personal, singular God came from the JEWS.

God's promise to Abraham that in your descendants all of the earth shall be blessed - is most certainly true.

**And yet today the vast majority of the Jews
are not religious at all, much less Christian.**

But the scriptures tell us a day is coming when all of Israel will be saved.

Biblically speaking there are only two people groups Jew and Gentile (everyone else).

- In the Old Testament God worked PRIMARILY in the Jewish people.
- In the Church age there is neither Jew nor Greek, Male nor female, but the dividing line was abolished in Christ.
- Here in the tribulation period, the Church is removed. So God is once again working in the nation of Ethnic Israel.

Paul writes in Romans 11:25–29 (ESV)

²⁵ Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; ²⁷ “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” ²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies for

your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.
29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

So God has promised to patriarchs of the Old Testament that He will save Israel. So you can count on it, there will be a day that practically every ethnic Jew on planet earth will be a follower of Jesus Christ.

How will all of this come about? Read on...

REV 10:2 ² He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land. ⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

Therein lies the twofold nature of biblical prophecy. There is something **very sweet** about the coming of Christ and there is something **very bitter**.

- God's Holiness is being vindicated, Christ is ruling and reigning on the Earth (that's sweet).
- People made in God's image are destroyed (that's bitter).

Revelation 11:1–14 (ESV)

¹ Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, ² but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

Keep in mind when John (around 90AD) wrote this book there was no temple... as Jesus had predicted in **Matthew 24:1–2** (ESV) ¹ Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

That was fulfilled in 70AD when Titus invaded Rome. So when John writes there is no temple in Jerusalem. But from this passage and several others, we know that during the tribulation period there will be a temple.

Now keep in mind, when it comes to raising a temple there is a specific piece of real estate that it is to be built upon. It is under Muslim control at this moment.

The Islamic approach has never been to, "Win friends and influence people". They have consistently established mosques in places where significant Jewish or Christian events have occurred.

In the mid 600's Islamic King Umar the Great conquered Jerusalem and Muslims have basically held control of the temple mount since that time, except for about 100 years during the Crusades.

One of the methods that Islam employees is to construct a mosque on top of or in front of significant Jewish or Christian holy sites.

- Soon after conquering Jerusalem he built the Al-Aqsa Mosque, declaring it the third holiest site in Islam. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is where Muslims believe Muhammad rode a Pegasus into the 7th Heaven. BUT, it is also the site of the Temple.
- 100 years later, the Eastern Gate was sealed by Suleiman the Magnificent and a Muslim Cemetery was built just in front of it. A prayer center was opened inside the wall behind the gate.
- Just in front of the Al-Aqsa Mosque the Dome of the Rock was constructed over what they believed at the time to be the Holy of Holies of the Jewish temple.

HOWEVER, Recent discoveries have proven that the Dome of the Rock may have been built at the wrong place. You see, the Jewish temple was to be built facing in the direction that **SUNRISE occurs on Yom Kippor**, the day of Atonement.

That location is marked now by a small structure known as the Dome of the Tablets, due east from the, "Golden Gate" aligned with the sun on Yom Kippor.

EAST to WEST... why? Well, it points to infinity. If you go North, you will eventually be going South, if you go South, you will eventually be going North... but if you go east, you will never run into West and if you go West you will never run into East... Isn't it awesome that when He forgives us, he separates our sin as far as East is from West, not North is from South?

Well if you draw a line from the Eastern Gate directly west...in line with the sun on Yom Kippor you will see that the Holy of Holies was most likely about 80 yards in front of Dome of the Rock at a place where a small shrine called the **Dome of the Tablet** stands today. Thus, it is possible for a deal to be reached that would allow the Muslims to keep the the Dome of the Rock while simultaneously allowing the Jewish to re-establish Temple worship.



Some have suggested that Orthodox Jews are prepared to erect a tabernacle like structure on that property, sanctify it and resume animal sacrifices in less that a week's notice.

Who will be able to work out such a deal?

Daniel 9:27 (ESV)

27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering...

So AntiChrist will work something out to allow the Jews to erect the Temple. Then somehow in the midst of OT temple worship, the Jews will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Why was John told to measure the temple? Well - when God measures something it is often signifying ownership.

- He measures the promised Land in the Old Testament
- He measure the New Jerusalem later in Revelation.

So He's saying - this place is uniquely MINE.

³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

Now let's talk about these guys.

These are two prophets in the **Old Testament sense of the word**. They are literally speaking for God. And the text tells us that they will have the attention of the entire world. They will do their preaching during the last 3.5 years of the tribulation.

Well who are they?

⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

That is referring to Zechariah's prophecy in Zech. 4:1-14 (ESV)

Zechariah's vision had both a near and a far fulfillment. The historical fulfillment was the rebuilding of a temple by

- **Joshua** the high priest the religious leader, and
- **Zerubbabel**, the political leader.

So whoever these guys are, it seems they will be a **Jewish Political Leader** and a **Jewish Religious leader**.

⁵ And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed.

That doesn't mean they breath fire like a dragon, but that they call fire down Heaven.

Who in the Bible had the ability to call down fire from Heaven to destroy his enemies?
Only one man - **Elijah**.

1 Kings 18 Elijah calls fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifice on Mt. Carmel.

2 Kings 1:9–10 (ESV) ⁹ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” ¹⁰ But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

These guys have been granted the authority to do just what Elijah did.

⁶ They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

Who does that sound like? Who could bring plagues and turn water to blood? MOSES

- **Jewish tradition expected Moses and Elijah to return in the future.**
 - Malachi 4:5 predicted the return of Elijah, and
 - Deut. 18:15,18 said God would raise up a prophet like Moses
- **Both Moses and Elijah left the earth in unusual ways.**
 - **Elijah** never died, but was transported to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11–12), and
 - God supernaturally buried **Moses**' body in a secret location (Deut. 34:5–6) Jude 9 tells us that Michael and Satan contended over the body of Moses. So one assumes, Michael took it into Heaven.
- **Not only that but, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration, which was a preview of the Second Coming (Matt. 17:3).**
- Finally, like Zerubbabel and Joshua - Moses comes as Political Leader, a Law Giver... Elijah comes as a Prophet, a Religious Leader.

So this could be literally be Moses and Elijah. Or it could be two men who have the anointing of Moses and Elijah. The text doesn't tell us for sure.

⁷ And when they have finished their testimony,

Now what is their testimony? What are they preaching? They are showing clearly that this is God's Judgement on humanity. They are pointing to Jesus. they are calling men and women to repent and come to Christ!

It is under the preaching of these two men that Israel will come to complete faith in their Messiah.

7b. the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,

That is Anti-Christ. He seeks to assassinate the prophets of God. Not to imprison them, but to irradiate them.

⁸ and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

That is Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified. So they are prophesying in Jerusalem and Anti-Christ kills them in Jerusalem.

⁹ For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb.

Now when in all of history could a local event that happened on the streets of Jerusalem be seen by the entire world before the advent of satellite technology? The major news outlets will be there, the dead bodies will be seen on camera.

¹⁰ and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

So it's a celebration like Christmas! These two prophets were hated.

ILLUSTRATION: do you remember that scene at the end of the Wizard of Oz when Dorothy's house falls on the wicked witch of the west? Suddenly, everyone started singing and rejoicing!

Well, the slow drift you are seeing in society where things that God calls evil are slowly becoming mainstream and things God calls good are slowly becoming unacceptable, will eventually reach the point that the very prophets of God will be seen as if they were that wicked witch.

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

Can you imagine the moment? Wolf Blitzer says, "wait a minute, we are going live to the city of Jerusalem where a great celebration has occurred over the death of two Jewish men. There we see there dead bodies on the street... then suddenly the mic is garbled as a wind blows over the city... and suddenly... what's that?? One is standing up, then the other...

¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.

Now, imagine that a two man rapture. Look, I know that the concept of God taking people into heaven is difficult to wrap your mind around, but he's done it before...

Elijah in the OT, Jesus in the NT, He will do it again for the entire church, then these two men, then all will be raised for judgement at the end of all things.

¹³ And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

When it says 7,000 people, the word in Greek denotes men whose names are known by others. So this could be celebrities who had gone to Israel to celebrate the death of these two prophets.. but they die in this earthquake.

INVITATION/CONCLUSION: You may be thinking, “When people see these witnesses and the power that God has given them, then they will know and be saved”. Well perhaps some will, but consider this fact -

- God has given 12 KEY Prophets, and literally hundreds of other minor prophets in Scripture.
- Since the Church was founded God has borne witness through signs and wonders at the hands of the Church age Apostles and Prophets.

Were they not enough to convince you?

- What about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? That not enough?

No, you see people will do what they have always done - they explain it all away to their destruction.

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not enough to cause you to bow a knee to Him, fire breathing prophets won't be enough either.