

The Prophecy of Two Witnesses

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In the book of Revelation, almost an entire chapter is devoted to a prophecy regarding God's two witnesses. They appear to be doing a work similar to previous witnesses, like Moses and Aaron who witnessed against Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12; Nu. 33:4), but upon closer examination some key differences will become apparent.

The two witnesses in the eleventh chapter of Revelation are described, using figurative language, as two olive trees and two lampstands. In the first book of Kings, two cherubim are described as being carved from olive wood (1Kgs. 6:23). Throughout the Bible "trees" are used symbolically to represent spirit-beings, both loyal and disloyal. Adam was told that he could fellowship with the trees in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16). Unfortunately, these same trees eventually followed Adam's rebellious example and believed Satan's lies rather than the word of God (see studies: Symbolism),

I (God) made the nations shake at the sound of its fall (Satan's system of governing personified by Egypt), when **I cast it down to hell** (Heb. Sheol; the grave) **together with those who descend into the Pit; and all the trees** (spirit-beings; now fallen angels) **of Eden...** (Eze. 31:16a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

To which of the trees (spirit-beings; now fallen angels) in Eden will you (Pharaoh – a type of Satan) then be likened in glory and greatness? Yet you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden (angels who rebelled along with Adam and Eve) to the depths of the earth; you shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword... (Eze. 31:18a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In the fourth chapter of Zechariah, two olive trees are pictured as being either side of a gold lampstand with seven lamps (Zec. 4:2-3). The seven lamps represent seven spirits that are subject to Jesus Christ (Zec. 4:10; cf. Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 5:6). The lampstand itself pictures Christ and his responsibility over the work that Almighty God gave him to fulfill (Lk. 8:16; 11:33; cf. Jn. 8:12; 9:5). Therefore, olive trees and lampstands are used figuratively to picture activities involving spirit-beings. In the scriptures that follow, the identity of the lampstand and the two olive trees is confirmed,

Then I (Zechariah) answered and said to him (the angel), 'What are these two olive trees, one at the right of the lampstand and the other at its left?' (Zec. 4:11; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So he (the angel) said, 'These (two olive trees and branches) are **the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth**' (Zec. 4:14; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Contrary to what some teach, "the Lord of the whole earth" mentioned in the scripture above refers to Jesus Christ and he is synonymous with the lampstand. This is confirmed by other texts,

For your Maker (i.e. Almighty God) is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and **your Redeemer** is the Holy One of Israel (i.e. Jesus Christ); he **is called the God of the whole earth** (Isa. 54:5; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord, **at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.**⁶**The heavens declare his righteousness**, and all peoples see his glory (Ps. 97:5-6; emphasis added).

Some believe that the god of this present evil age (Gal. 1:4), who is Satan (2Cor. 4:4), has more authority than Jesus Christ when it comes to activities on earth, but this is not the case. Although Satan has exercised his power to influence the thoughts of mankind since the time of Adam (Eph. 2:1-3), his authority is limited and he still needs permission from “the Lord of the whole earth” before he can commit any harmful acts against those that God is working with at any given time (Job 1:6-12; cf. Jn. 13:27).

So the two olive trees that stand beside Jesus Christ in the eleventh chapter of Revelation, are referring to spirit-beings and not human beings as many assume,

These (two witnesses) are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God (Lord) of the earth (Rev. 11:4; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It appears that these same two witnesses accompanied Christ prior to the final judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They met with Abraham and ate a meal with him. Later, they did the same with Lot as part of their witnessing against the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. According to God’s law no one can be given corporal punishment without at least two witnesses confirming the crime (Dt. 17:6; 19:15; Heb. 10:28). Therefore, the two angelic witnesses had to corroborate that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were so entrenched in sinful conduct they were beyond repentance,

And the Lord (i.e. the Angel of the Lord who became Jesus Christ) said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous,²¹ I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to me; and if not, I will know (Gen. 18:20-21; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Much later in history, it appears that these two angels were witnesses to an extremely important event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.¹² And **she saw two angels in white** sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain (Jn. 20:11-12; emphasis added).

The final work of God’s two angelic witnesses will occur at the end of the millennial rule of Jesus Christ. Many have assumed incorrectly that the time frame is just prior to Christ’s return to rule this planet. However, when a number of related scriptures are examined, the correct timing becomes apparent. There are six trumpets blown in the heavenly realm leading up to Christ’s return, but there is an interval of approximately one thousand years before the seventh trumpet is blown. As many sections of the book of Revelation do not flow chronologically, it has to be understood in the manner described by Isaiah the prophet,

Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? ¹⁰**For precept must be upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little** (Isa. 28:9-10; emphasis added).

It has also been assumed by most interpreters of Holy Scripture that the plagues mentioned in the book of Revelation will take place on this earth. However, the language is primarily symbolic and much of it applies to activities in the spirit realm. After all, the judgment of Satan and his demons is a primary focus of this entire prophetic work. Going back to the trumpets that are blown in the spirit realm, six are sounded in sequence and there is an interruption after the sixth,

But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, **when he is about to sound**, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets (Rev. 10:7; emphasis added).

At this point, which is prior to the seventh trumpet sounding, the two witnesses appear. When their commission is finished, the seventh angel blows his trumpet announcing the “time of the dead that they should be judged”, which occurs at the end of Christ’s millennial rule over this planet,

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord (Almighty God) and of His Christ, and He (Almighty God) shall reign forever and ever!’ (Rev.11:15; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The apostle Paul described this same time period and it is post-millennial,

Now when all things are made subject to Him (Almighty God), then the son himself (Jesus Christ) will also be subject to Him (Almighty God) who put all things under him (Jesus Christ), that God may be all in all (1Cor. 15:28; cf. Eph. 4:6; Ed. notes in parentheses).

A second witness to this time frame is mentioned in the verses that follow from Revelation 11:15,

We (the twenty-four elders in heaven) give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was (always in existence), because **You have taken Your great power and reigned**. ¹⁸The nations were angry, and **Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged....** (Rev. 11:17-18a; emphasis added).

In the verses above, Almighty God is seen taking all His power and authority back and overseeing the judgment of the dead, which occurs after the millennial rule of Jesus Christ as the following scripture confirms,

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹²**And I (John) saw the dead** (in vision), small and great, **standing before God** and books (of the Bible; cf. Jn. 12:48) were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. **And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books** (Rev. 20:11-12; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

As the two witnesses finished their testimony just prior to the seventh angel sounding, and as the seventh angel's trumpet blast announced God's judgment of the dead, the time frame is post-millennial. This makes sense because whenever Christ addressed questions related to his return, he emphasized that it would occur suddenly. In other words, the inhabitants of this earth will not know that Christ is going to return three and a half years beforehand, based on the understanding that the two witnesses will be warning all the human inhabitants of the earth for that length of time (Rev. 11:3),

But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my (Christ's) Father only. ³⁷But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be (Mt. 24:36-39; cf. Ac. 1:6-7).

For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night** (1Thes. 5:2; cf. 2Pet. 3:10; emphasis added).

As a number of scriptures indicate that the two witnesses are angelic beings, and as none of the angels know when Christ is going to return (Mt. 24:36), the work of the two witnesses cannot precede Christ's return. Instead, they must commence at the end of the millennium in association with Satan's release, which is his last opportunity to deceive the inhabitants of this planet,

And he (an angel) cast him (Satan) into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But **after these things he must be released for a little while** (Rev. 20:3; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them (Rev. 20:7-9).

It appears that Satan's temporary release will probably coincide with the three and a half year period that the two witnesses are testifying against the evils taking place again on this earth due to his influence.

Some will ask the question regarding how can two spirit-beings die as described in Revelation 11:7? A better question might be how can two spirit-beings take on a form that makes them appear like human beings, and allows them to eat a meal? If the latter question can be answered, the first should be easier to explain,

Then the Lord (the Angel of the Lord who became Jesus Christ) appeared to him (Abraham) by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ²So he (Abraham) lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, **three men were standing by him...**(Gen. 18:1-2a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

When the scriptures above are compared to others in this same section, it is clear that the three individuals who appeared as men to Abraham were all angelic beings,

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground (Gen. 19:1).

Prior to meeting Lot, the angels had eaten a meal with Abraham,

So he (Abraham) took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them (the three angels who appeared as men); and he stood by them under the tree as they ate (Gen. 18:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Although there are many opinions and theories regarding the identity of God's two witnesses mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Revelation, most do not take into account all the other scriptures pertaining to these individuals. It is important to consider that if the two witnesses started their work 1260 days prior to Christ's return (Rev. 11:3), many people would be able to calculate the exact day that Christ's feet would touch down on the Mount of Olives (Zec. 4:14) making his statement in Matthew 24:36 false. Also, if this situation did occur, Christ would not be coming as "a thief in the night" and his return would not resemble "the days of Noah."

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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