

## Week 24-The Two witnesses

### Rev 11:1-14

#### I. Introduction

- a. Throughout history God has faithfully sent His spokesmen to call sinners to repentance.
- b. During the long, dark years of Israel's rebellion, "the Lord warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets' " (2 Kings 17:13).
  - i. Tragically, however, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.
  - ii. They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them.
  - iii. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the Lord had commanded them not to do like them. (vv. 14–15)
  - iv. The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people,

until there was no remedy. (2 Chron. 36:15–16)

- c. Prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, and the others confronted both wayward Israel and sinful Gentile nations.
- d. Jeremiah's experience was typical of the reception that the prophets often received:
  - i. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear, saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the Lord has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.' " (Jer. 25:1–6)

- e. Yet the picture has not been entirely bleak; God has always preserved a believing remnant.
  - i. To the Romans Paul wrote, “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved’ ” (Rom. 9:27; cf. Rom. 11:4–5; Isa. 10:20–22; 11:11).
  - ii. God’s salvation has come to the remnant of faithful Israel, as well as believing Gentiles, through the faithful preaching of the gospel.
  - iii. In Romans 10:13 Paul declares, “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Then the apostle asks rhetorically, “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?” (v. 14).
- f. In the New Testament, as in the Old, faithful preachers called for repentance and faith, offering all sinners the hope of forgiveness in Christ.
- g. Chief among those preachers was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:38).
- h. The ranks of New Testament preachers also included John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1–2), the Twelve (Matt. 10:5–7; Mark 6:7–12), Peter (Acts 2:14ff.; 3:12ff.), Stephen (Acts 7:1–56), Phillip (Acts 8:12, 35, 40), and the most prolific of them all, the apostle Paul (Acts 13:15ff.; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11).
- i. They in turn passed the truth of the gospel to a next generation of godly preachers, who passed it down to other preachers (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2), such as Timothy,

Titus, and the prophets and apostles of the churches, as well as the early church elders and overseers.

- j. Along with the many unknown preachers through the ages there have been notable proclaimers of the gospel, such as Wycliff, Huss, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, , Knox, Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, Spurgeon, and a host of others down to the present day.
- k. In the future, during Earth's darkest hour, God will raise up two exceptional and powerful preachers.
  - i. They will fearlessly proclaim the gospel during the last three and one-half years of the seven-year Tribulation, the period that Jesus called "the great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21; cf. Rev. 7:14).
  - ii. During that time of horrific divine judgments on the earth, of rampaging hordes of demons terrorizing and slaughtering millions of people, and wickedness rampaging unrestrained, their gospel preaching, along with that of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (7:1–10), the "angel flying in midheaven" (14:6), and the testimonies of other believers alive during that time, will be a final expression of God's grace offered to repentant and believing sinners.
- l. In addition to preaching the gospel, these two preachers will proclaim God's judgment on the wicked world.
  - i. Their ministry will likely stretch from the midpoint of the Tribulation until just before the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

- ii. That trumpet will herald the pouring out of the rapid-fire bowl judgments, the battle of Armageddon, and the return of Christ.
- iii. During that period, they will declare that the disasters befalling the world are the judgments of God.
- iv. They will participate in fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that the “gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).
- v. They will also be used by God to bring salvation to Israel (cf. the discussion of v. 13 below).
- m. But before introducing these two faithful witnesses, John records a fascinating incident in which he himself took part, an incident that sets the stage for the arrival of the two preachers.

## II. The Temple Measured.

- a. 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, <sup>2</sup> 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. .” (11:1–2)
- b. Occasionally in Revelation the apostle John plays an active role in his visions (cf. 1:17; 4:1; 5:4–5; 7:13–14; 10:8–10).
- c. After his renewed commission to write the prophecies yet to come in Revelation (10:11), John again became involved in one of the very visions he was recording. He was ... given a measuring rod like a staff, by either

the same angel who spoke with him in 10:8 or the strong angel he spoke with in 10:9–11.

- d. John was told to measure the temple of God, including the altar, and those who worship in it.
  - i. Obviously, this was not an effort to determine its physical dimensions, since none are given, but was conveying some important truth beyond architecture.
  - ii. It could have indicated, as on occasion in the Old Testament, that God sometimes marks things out for destruction (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:2; 2 Kings 21:13; Isa. 28:17; Lam. 2:8; Amos 7:7–9, 17).
  - iii. But John's measuring is better understood as signifying ownership, defining the parameters of God's possessions (cf. 21:15; Zech. 2:1–5).
  - iv. This measuring signified something good, since what was not measured was evil (v. 2).
  - v. It is best to see it as God's measuring off Israel, symbolized by her temple, for salvation and for His special protection, preservation, and favor.
  - vi. The prophecies yet to be given to John will thus distinguish between God's favor toward Israel and His wrath on the pagan world.
- e. That truth was no doubt very encouraging to John.
  - i. At the time he wrote Revelation, Israel's future looked bleak.
  - ii. A quarter century earlier, the Romans had brutally suppressed the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66–70, slaughtering over one million Jews, devastating Jerusalem, and burning the temple.

- iii. But in spite of that massive destruction, “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew” (Rom. 11:2), and will preserve them until that future day when the believing remnant of the nation will be saved (Rom. 11:4–5, 26; cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1, 8–9).
- f. *Naos* (temple) does not refer to the entire temple complex (cf. v. 2), but to the inner temple, made up of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.
  - i. The altar is probably the brazen altar, located outside the inner sanctuary in the courtyard, since that is where those who worship in the temple would have gathered.
  - ii. The people were never permitted into the inner temple; only the priests could enter the Holy Place (where the incense altar stood; cf. Luke 1:8–10).
  - iii. The worshipers in John’s vision depict a remnant of believing Jews alive during the Tribulation who are worshiping God.
- g. The presence of the temple in this vision of the time of great tribulation brought with it the encouraging realization that the temple, destroyed by the Romans many years before John wrote, would be rebuilt in the future.
- h. The Bible mentions five temples.
  - i. Solomon built the first, Zerubbabel built the second after the exile, Herod built the third (during the time of Christ), and the Lord Himself will build the fifth during the Millennium (Ezek. 40–48; Hag. 2:9; Zech. 6:12–13).

- ii. The temple John saw in this vision was the fourth temple, which will be built in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4), and, along with it, the Jewish sacrificial system will be restored (cf. Dan. 9:27; 12:11).
- i. The Tribulation temple will be built early in the first half of the Tribulation under the patronage and protection of Antichrist.
  - i. Many orthodox Jews today dream of rebuilding their temple, but its site is now occupied (and in the minds of many Jews desecrated) by the Islamic shrine known as the Dome of the Rock.
  - ii. Because Muslims believe it to be the place from which Muhammad ascended to heaven, it is among the most sacred shrines in the Islamic world.
  - iii. For the Jews to wrest that site away from the Muslims and build their temple there would be unthinkable in today's political climate.
  - iv. But during the Tribulation, under the protection of Antichrist (cf. Dan. 9:24–27), they will be able to rebuild the temple.
- j. The reinstitution of the temple worship will reawaken interest on the part of many Jews in the Messiah.
- k. But the reawakening of interest in the true Messiah will provoke the insane jealousy of the false one.
  - i. As more and more Jews return to the temple worship and begin seeking their Messiah, Antichrist will act.
  - ii. At the midpoint of the Tribulation, he will halt their worship, desecrate the temple (the

abomination of desolation; Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Matt. 24:15), and set himself up as the only acceptable object of worship (13:15; 2 Thess. 2:4).

- l. John's measuring of the temple symbolized the marking out of the believing Jewish remnant that God will spare from judgment.
  - i. Zechariah wrote of that coming day: In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested.  
They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'" (13:8–9)
- m. John's instructions on measuring the temple included a significant omission.
  - i. He was commanded, Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it. The reference is to the court of the Gentiles, located outside the courtyard containing the brazen altar.
  - ii. It marked the boundary beyond which Gentiles were forbidden to go.
  - iii. In New Testament times, the Romans had given the Jews the right to execute any Gentile who went beyond the court of the Gentiles.
  - iv. For a Gentile to do so was to defile the temple. In fact, it was the false charge that Paul had brought Gentiles into the temple that sparked the riot that

led to his arrest and imprisonment (Acts 21:28–29).

- n. God redeems Gentiles, and will continue to do so during this age and the time of tribulation (5:9; 7:9).
  - i. But He will reject those unbelieving Gentiles who have united with Satan and the beast and oppressed His covenant people, Israel.
  - ii. The sharp distinction in this vision between Jews and Gentiles suggests that the church, having earlier been raptured (cf. 3:10), is not present during the Tribulation, because in the church, “there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised” (Col. 3:11).
- o. By way of explanation, John was told not to measure the outer court because **leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months**
  - i. The forty-two months (1,260 days; three and one-half years) correspond to the overtly evil career of Antichrist, which dominates the last half of the Tribulation (13:5).
  - ii. That period will be the culmination of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24)—the thousands of years during which Gentile nations have in various ways occupied and oppressed the holy city of Jerusalem.
  - iii. Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the Turks, the British, and the Arabs have all ruled Jerusalem, and today Israel’s self-rule is fragile and under incessant attack.

- iv. But the devastating destruction and oppression by the rule of Antichrist and his demonic and human cohorts will surpass all other oppressors.
- p. During this same forty-two-month period, God will shelter many Israelites in a place He has prepared for them in the wilderness (some speculate the rock city of Petra).
  - i. Revelation 12:6 reads, “Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (cf. v. 14).
  - ii. Many Jews will heed Jesus’ warning to flee to safety: “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. (Matt. 24:15–20)
- q. The rest, however, who remain (some in Jerusalem; 11:13) will face terrible persecution from the forces of Antichrist.
  - i. At that time, God will bring salvation to Israel, using the two powerful preachers who will

appear in Jerusalem (v. 3), and will also suffer hostility and hatred (vv. 7–8).

- r. At the end of the 1,260 days (forty-two months; three and one-half years), Christ will return (19:11–16), destroy Antichrist and his forces (19:17–21; 2 Thess. 2:8), judge the nations (Matt. 25:31–46), and establish His earthly millennial kingdom (20:1–10).
- s. Daniel 12:11–12 indicates that there will be a seventy-five-day gap between the victorious return of Christ and the beginning of the kingdom to take care of the features just mentioned.
- t. So despite the maniacal efforts of Antichrist to destroy Israel, God will measure off Israel to save, preserve, and protect the nation.
- u. As Zechariah wrote, two-thirds of Israel will be purged in judgment and the remaining one-third will be saved and enter the glory of Messiah's earthly kingdom (Zech. 13:8–9).
- v. Instrumental in their conversion will be a unique, invincible two-man evangelistic team, which John introduces.

### III. **The Two Messengers.**

- a. (11:3–14)
- b. The connection between this vision of the two preachers and the previous passage (vv. 1–2) should be clear.
- c. They are among God's unique witnesses who will proclaim His message of judgment during the final stages of the Gentile trampling on Jerusalem—and will preach the gospel so that the Jewish remnant can believe and enjoy God's protection.

- d. Seven features of the lives and ministry of these two remarkable and powerful preachers unfold in the text: their duty, attitude, identity, power, death, resurrection, and impact.

#### IV. **Their duty.**

- a. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, 11:3
- b. Once again, the speaker who will grant authority to the two witnesses is not identified, but it could be only God the Father, or the Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. Witnesses is the plural form of *martus*, from which the English word *martyr* derives, since so many witnesses of Jesus Christ in the early church paid with their lives.
- d. Since it is always used in the New Testament to refer to persons, the two witnesses must be actual people, not movements, as some commentators have held.
- e. There are two witnesses because the Bible requires the testimony of two people to confirm a fact or verify truth (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).
- f. It will be their responsibility to prophesy.
- g. Prophecy in the New Testament does not necessarily refer to predicting the future.
  - i. Its primary meaning is “to speak forth,” “to proclaim,” or “to preach.”
  - ii. The two witnesses will proclaim to the world that the disasters occurring during the last half of the Tribulation are the judgments of God.
  - iii. They will warn that God’s final outpouring of judgment and eternal hell will follow.

- iv. At the same time, they will preach the gospel, calling people to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - h. The period of their ministry is twelve hundred and sixty days, the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation, when Antichrist's forces oppress the city of Jerusalem (v. 2), and many Jews are sheltered in the wilderness (12:6).
  - i. The fact that they are actual preachers and not symbols of institutions or movements is indicated by the description of their clothing and behavior which follows.
- V. **Their attitude.**
- a. ...clothed in sackcloth." (11:3*b*)
  - b. Sackcloth was rough, heavy, coarse cloth worn in ancient times as a symbol of mourning, distress, grief, and humility.
    - i. Jacob put on sackcloth when he thought Joseph had been killed (Gen. 37:34).
    - ii. David ordered the people to wear sackcloth after the murder of Abner (2 Sam. 3:31) and wore it himself during the plague God sent in response to his sin of numbering the people (1 Chron. 21:16).
    - iii. Job (Job 16:15), Isaiah (Isa. 20:2), and Daniel (Dan. 9:3) also wore sackcloth.
  - c. The two witnesses will put on sackcloth as an object lesson to express their great sorrow for the wretched and unbelieving world, racked by God's judgments, overrun by demon hordes, and populated by wicked, sinful people who refuse to repent.

- d. They will also mourn because of the desecration of the temple, the oppression of Jerusalem, and the ascendancy of Antichrist.

## VI. Their identity.

- a. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. (11:4)
- b. The question of who the two witnesses will be has intrigued Bible scholars over the years, and numerous possibilities have been suggested.
- c. John identifies them merely as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.
- d. That mysterious description is drawn from Zechariah 4:1–14:
- e. The olive trees and lampstands symbolize the light of revival, since olive oil was commonly used in lamps.
  - i. The connecting of the lamps to the trees is intended to depict a constant, spontaneous, automatic supply of oil flowing from the olive trees into the lamps.
  - ii. That symbolizes the truth that God will not bring salvation blessing from human power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Zech. 4:6).
  - iii. Like Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two witnesses will lead a spiritual revival of Israel culminating in the building of a temple.
  - iv. Their preaching will be instrumental in Israel's national conversion (Rev. 11:13; cf. Rom. 11:4–5, 26), and the temple associated with that conversion will be the millennial temple.

- f. While it is impossible to be dogmatic about the specific identity of these two preachers, there are a number of reasons that suggest that they may be Moses and Elijah.
- g. First, the miracles they will perform (destroying their enemies with fire, withholding rain, turning water into blood, and striking the earth with plagues) are similar to the judgments inflicted in the Old Testament by Moses and Elijah for the purpose of stimulating repentance.
  - i. Elijah called down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10, 12) and pronounced a three-and-one-half-year drought on the land (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17)—the same length as the drought brought by the two witnesses (Rev. 11:6).
  - ii. Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood (Ex. 7:17–21) and announced the other plagues on Egypt recorded in Exodus chapters 7–12.
- h. Second, both the Old Testament and Jewish tradition expected Moses and Elijah to return in the future.
  - i. Malachi 4:5 predicted the return of Elijah, and the Jews believed that God’s promise to raise up a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18) necessitated his return (cf. John 1:21; 6:14; 7:40). Jesus’ statement in Matthew 11:14 that “if you are willing to accept it, John [the Baptist] himself is Elijah who was to come” does not necessarily preclude Elijah’s future return.
  - ii. Since the Jews did not accept Jesus, John did not fulfill that prophecy. He came “in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers

back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

- i. Third, both Moses and Elijah (perhaps representing the Law and the Prophets) appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration, the preview of the Second Coming (Matt. 17:3).
- j. Fourth, both left the earth in unusual ways.
  - i. 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).
  - ii. The statement of Hebrews 9:27 that “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” does not rule out Moses’ return, since there are other rare exceptions to that general statement (such as Lazarus; John 11:14, 38–44).
- k. Since the text does not specifically identify these two preachers, the view defended above, like all other views regarding their identity, must remain speculation.

## VII. Their power.

- a. 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. <sup>6</sup>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. (11:5–6)

- b. Whether or not the two witnesses are Moses and Elijah, they will have miraculous power similar to those two Old Testament figures.
- c. If they are to have a singular impact on and capture the attention of the world during the terrifying events of the second half of the Tribulation, they will need to be capable of miraculous deeds.
- d. Like Noah before the Flood and Moses before the plagues on Egypt, the two witnesses will fearlessly proclaim God's judgment, wrath, vengeance, and the need for repentance.
  - i. Because of that, they will be universally hated (cf. vv. 9–10) and many will desire to harm them during the days of their preaching.
  - ii. When that harm is attempted, they will react with miraculous power—fire will flow out of their mouth and devour their enemies.
  - iii. There is no reason to assume that this is not real, literal fire, since God has in the past used fire to incinerate His enemies (Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1; 16:35; Ps. 106:17–18).
  - iv. Those who wish to harm the two preachers must be killed because God does not want their preaching stopped until their ministry is complete and will judge with death those who try to halt it.
- e. In both the Old and the New Testaments, God often used miracles to authenticate His messengers.
  - i. In the Tribulation time when the world is overrun by supernatural demonic activity, false religion, murder, sexual perversion, and rampant wickedness, the supernatural signs performed by

the two witnesses will mark them as true prophets of God.

- f. The extent of their great power will be revealed when they demonstrate power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying.
- g. That will greatly intensify the torment people are experiencing.
  - i. The third trumpet judgment resulted in the poisoning of one-third of the earth's fresh water supply (8:10–11).
  - ii. Added to that, the three-and-one-half-year drought lasting throughout the 1,260 days of their preaching (v. 3; cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17) brought by the two witnesses will cause widespread devastation of crops and loss of human and animal life through thirst and starvation.
- h. Further, like Moses the two witnesses will have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.
  - i. The havoc these two miracle-working preachers will wreak all over the earth will cause them to be hated and feared.
  - ii. People will no doubt search desperately for a way to destroy them, but to no avail. They will be invulnerable and unstoppable for the duration of their ministry.

#### VIII. **Their death.**

- a. (11:7–10)
- b. Sinful men will try desperately and unsuccessfully to get rid of the two witnesses throughout their ministry

in a kind of kamikaze effort that results in their own incineration.

- c. God, however, will protect them until they have finished their testimony, having achieved His purpose during the time He sovereignly determined for their ministry.
- d. At the end of that time, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will make war with them.
  - i. This is the first of thirty-six references in Revelation to the beast and anticipates the more detailed information about him to come in chapters 13 and 17.
  - ii. He is introduced here with emphasis on his origin.
- e. He is said to come up out of the bottomless pit , indicating that he is empowered by Satan.
  - i. Since Satan is depicted as a dragon (12:3, 9), this figure is not Satan.
  - ii. The revelation about him in chapter 13 indicates that the beast is a world ruler (often called Antichrist) who imitates the true Christ, rules over the people of the world, and demands their worship (13:1–8).
  - iii. The bottomless pit is the prison for certain demons.
  - iv. Though he is a man, the beast is energized by the demonic presence and power coming from the bottomless pit.
  - v. To the great joy and relief of the sinful world, the beast (Antichrist) will finally overcome the two witnesses and kill them.

- f. After their deaths, their dead bodies will be contemptuously left to lie as rotting corpses in the street of the great city where they ministered and where they were killed.
- g. In the ancient world, exposing an enemy's dead body was the ultimate way of dishonoring and desecrating them. God forbade the Israelites to engage in that practice (Deut. 21:22–23).
- h. The great city is Jerusalem, mystically (or better “spiritually”) called Sodom and Egypt due to its wickedness.
  - i. Tragically, the city of Jerusalem that was once God's city will be so overrun with evil that it will be like the wicked city of Sodom and the evil nation of Egypt.
  - ii. The description of Jerusalem as no better than Sodom and Egypt was to show that the once holy city had become no better than places which were known for their hatred of the true God and His Word.
  - iii. The footnote that the two witnesses will be killed in the city where also their Lord was crucified makes the identification of Jerusalem unmistakably clear.
  - iv. That the two witnesses will die in the same city as their Lord suggests that, as it was for Him, that city will be the focal point of their preaching.
  - v. It also appears that Jerusalem will be the seat of Antichrist's rule (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3–4).
- i. The use of the all-inclusive phrase peoples and tribes and tongues and nations (cf. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11) indicates

that people around the world will look at the dead bodies of the two witnesses (on satellite television or some other form of social media).

- i. In a morbid, ghoulish display of contempt and hatred, for three and a half days the world will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.
  - ii. The unrepentant, sin-hardened masses will want to gloat along with their leader, the Antichrist, and glorify him for his victory over the two irritating preachers, who brought the drought and proclaimed the hated gospel.
- j. The deaths of the two witnesses will touch off wild celebrations around the world.
- k. Incredibly, those who dwell on the earth (a technical term for unbelievers) will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.
- l. Ironically, this is the only mention in Revelation of rejoicing.
  - i. Sinners will be happy because those who declared to them God's judgments, tormented them with miracle power and messages condemning their sin and proclaiming God's impending judgment (vv. 5–7), and called for them to repent are dead. This emotional response graphically reflects the finality of their rejection.

#### IX. **Their resurrection.**

- a. 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. . (11:11–12)

- b. The partying and gift giving of “Dead Witnesses Day” will be suddenly and dramatically halted by a most shocking event.
  - i. After the three and a half days during which their bodies lay in disgrace on a Jerusalem street, the breath of life from God (cf. Gen. 2:7) came into the two witnesses, and they stood on their feet.
  - ii. Needless to say, great fear fell upon those who were watching them.
  - iii. Panic will seize the unregenerate world as their hated and reviled tormentors suddenly spring to life.
  - iv. Imagine the hits on u tube.
- c. They no doubt expected the two resurrected witnesses to resume their ministry of preaching and working miracles, but God had other plans.
  - i. There came a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.”
  - ii. This is likely the voice of the Lord, who summoned John to heaven in 4:1.
- d. Then the two preachers went up into heaven in the cloud, as their enemies watched them in awe.
  - i. This two-man Rapture will no doubt also be replayed endlessly for the entire world to see.
  - ii. It is reminiscent of the ascension of Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and the mysterious death and burial of Moses (Deut. 34:5–6).

- e. Some may wonder why the two witnesses were not permitted to preach after their resurrection.
    - i. But signs and wonders do not make the gospel believable, because “if [unbelievers] do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31).
    - ii. After hearing the teaching and observing the miraculous ministry of the Son of God, unbelievers rejected and killed Him.
  - f. Their ministry completed, the two ascended with the whole world watching up to God’s glorious presence, where they no doubt heard Him say, “Well done, good and faithful slave[s] ... enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21).
- X. **Their impact.**
- a. 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. (11:13)
  - b. Punctuating the resurrection of the two witnesses, in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake.
  - c. The term people in the Greek text is literally “names of men.” That unusual phrase may indicate that the seven thousand who were killed were prominent people, perhaps leaders in Antichrist’s world government.

- d. As a result of the violent earthquake, and the astonishing resurrection of the two witnesses, the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.
- e. The rest must refer to inhabitants of Jerusalem, Jews who will come to faith in Christ.
- f. Supporting that interpretation is the fact that giving glory to the God of heaven is a mark of genuine repentance in Revelation and elsewhere in Scripture (cf. 4:9; 14:7; 16:9; 19:7; Luke 17:18–19; Rom. 4:20).
- g. This passage, then, describes the reality of the salvation of Jews in Jerusalem, as God fulfills His pledge of blessing for Israel (Rom. 11:4–5, 26).
- h. On that positive, hopeful note, the interlude ends.
- i. For the unbelieving world, however, it ends with the sobering warning that the second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.
- j. The seventh trumpet (the third woe; cf. 9:12) will soon sound, bringing with it the final, violent bowl judgments and the return of Christ in glory to set up His kingdom.
- k. *Tachu* (quickly) means “soon” (cf. Rev. 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20) and expresses the imminency of the last woe, which is the seven bowl judgments ushered in by the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Revelation 1–11*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 290–307.