

Revelation 11: 4-7; "The Testimony of the Two Witnesses", Sermon # 81 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 25th, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Last week I introduced to you the Two Witness of our text. They are not two literal men as the Premillennial Dispensationalists would tell us. As I shall show you this afternoon, the descriptions of these witnesses and their ministry tell us that it is impossible that they should be two actual human beings. They are instead, the mystical witnesses of Church teaching and government during the entire time of the 1260 days prophecy. When I say "mystical" I do not mean it in the sense of "mysticism". A Christian is to avoid dabbling in the occult in all of its forms. I mean that they are mystical witnesses in the sense that they are spiritually symbolic. Like so many things shown to us in the visions of John; these witnesses are no different. Their meaning is not literal physical but rather representative of literal spiritual realities. Many of the words which make up the visions which are given to prophets, in relation to prophetic matters in the Word of God, are this way. Last week I turned you to the book of Zechariah to see more of what the meaning of these two witnesses was, in relation to the pictorial description given to us in Revelation 11: 4, "These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." This afternoon I want to add to your understanding concerning these two witnesses by showing you first; that all true Christians during this time period of the 1260 days are witnesses. And then, secondly, I want to show you that our witness does involve a great spiritual battle. And then, the next time that I preach to you I want to show you that this battle will appear to be lost toward the end of the 1260 days, but it will not really be lost. Let's look at this passage together, once again, more closely.

1st- The fact that all Christians during this time period of the 1260 days are witnesses. (Verse 4)

"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." I hope that I have established to your satisfaction the truth that the two olive trees represent Church teaching and Church government. But perhaps I have not, so let me review and add to what I said last week. The Church teaching that I believe is being represented here is the wholesome doctrine of the Word of God being preached and proclaimed by preachers and ministers, by the Spirit of God, which brings conversion to the soul and right views of Christ, the great and only Savior from sin. The Church government that I believe is being represented here is the Biblically right view that Christ is the only Head of the Church. The pastors and teachers that He calls to minister are the only true under-authorities that He has appointed in His Church in relation to her teaching. The Church submits to Christ as her head, first, and then to all true pastors being raised up to that work in local churches, through the authority of Christ's written Word. For a

true Christian witness to exist in any church there must be these two things; sound doctrine coming from the Word of God and the true gospel of Jesus Christ at the center of it. And also there must be a righteous administration of church government so that the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are correctly administered and discipline enacted upon those members of the church who sin, and continue in it, and are unrepentant. Where these cease to exist, the Church's true witness is at an end. Both are needed. Authority being exercised in any church without the Bible defining the limits of that authority is tyranny. On the other hand, sound doctrine and teaching from the Bible which has no pastoral authority to apply those doctrines in a way that holds the members accountable, will lead to licentiousness.

There are some commentators who believe that these Witnesses mentioned in our text refer to Church teaching and the Civil government or the magistrate. This what William Bridge believes, as is evidenced in his sermon on the 1260 days. But really there has been such little support, in a general sense, for the teaching of the gospel that has been evidenced coming through the magistrates, the political rulers of various countries, in Western Europe, down through history during this 1260 years, that I am not inclined to think of these rulers in government as witnesses to the truth, but rather it seems that there are many of them are persecutors of it. There have been exceptions to this during and after the time of the Reformation, which in some ways have set the stage for the further destruction of the Antichristian powers and the advent of the Millennium, especially in Great Britain and the United States, but it still falls far short of something that would bring in the Millennium by that instrumentality. It is not Civil governments that have been the chief witness for our Lord. It is not Civil governments that will be slain at the end of the 1260 days. It is the witness and testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ that is being talked about as being slain, here in verse 7. The teaching and ruling ministry of the Church is pictured well as "two olive trees." Turn with me once again to Zechariah Chapter 4.

Here in Chapter 4, the Lord through His prophet, is trying to bring encouragement to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah in terms of how he should go on to complete the building of the 2nd temple. Zerubbabel is the governor, the magistrate over the Jews who have returned from their captivity. But He typically represents the Lord Jesus Christ in the way that He shall build His Church. The Church, just as this Old Testament temple, will be finished and completed in accordance with the working of the Spirit of God. He was working in and through all the believing people of God in that day. In the days of this prophecy it included Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the governor and everyone who would believe in the word of the prophet to them to continue in this good work of building. All opposition would eventually be overcome and the temple built. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts." "Who are you, O great mountain?" "Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!" "And he shall

bring forth the capstone with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" These Old Testament saints faced much opposition, in the building of the temple, from the people who had come to live in the land while they were away in their captivity. Many of these were enemies to the Lord's cause, even while professing to be friends. You can see examples of their tactics in the book of Nehemiah. But in verse 2, the angel in Zechariah's vision is asking what he sees. And he answers, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps." "Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."

Now I believe that the lampstand of solid gold is none other than the Church of Jesus Christ. This is evident, if you will recall that back in the 1st Chapter of Revelation in verse 20 it says, "The seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches." The Church is meant to shine forth with the light of the glory of Christ and the light of the truth of His Word to all the nations of the earth. This is the reality of her commission. Light has come to us, the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and we as the churches of Jesus Christ are the lampstands which hold forth that light. The passage continues in verse 12 and says, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two golden pipes from which the golden oil drains?" Verse 14 says, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth." It appears that this unusual candlestick was fed with oil which came from these 2 olive trees, the oil flowing from each tree together into a golden bowl which received the golden oil from both, and then dispensed it to all of the candlesticks. This appears to mean that the wisdom and the truth of the preciousness of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ were, and are, conveyed through the ministers of the gospel who as preachers and elders of Christ's Church dripped their instructions into one bowl where they flowed together and were dispersed to the churches by this means. The true Church is the one golden bowl; but she is composed of many churches, represented by the 7 sticks of the candelabra. The Two witnesses stand before the Lord of the earth. They are the human means which Christ uses, to supply and nourish God's people. They feed this bowl with many wholesome instructions from the Word of God, anointed by the Spirit of God. The Spirit's good influences and conveyance of grace is the oil that gives both pastors and people the strength and wisdom to help build the temple of the Lord by their united work and witness. The temple was a physical building in the Old Testament in Zerubbabel's day, and it is a spiritual building of living stones in our days, in the New Testament times. Christ is the King and governor of His Church. Christ is the High Priest of the Church interceding and giving grace. Christ is the Prophet of the Church as well, teaching the Church through His ministers and governing matters in relation to worship and the practice of the churches. So we now see that all of this together forms the Witness of the 2 Witnesses that we are considering in this passage before us. The instructions of the Word of God are preached by God's servants, His

pastors and ministers, who are the 2 olive trees, and they flow together into the golden bowl on top of the candlestick to be mixed together into the one common discipline of living a Christian life accountable to Christ and to His Word. This holy grace, this golden oil, in the working of Christ's Spirit in this way, through the preaching and administration of truth, in the Churches of Jesus Christ, suitably supplies and flows into the lives of the saints in the churches, in such a way that they can be a good witness to their Lord. This will take place, our text says, during the whole time of the 1260 days. Every single faithful Christian helps support these Two Witnesses in their witness. The Two Witnesses are the Two Lampstands and the 2 Olive trees it says in verse 4. Both the ministers who preach and the people who respond to the Word of God in order to do it are the faithful witnesses. **Now 2ndly- We need to understand that this Witness involves a great spiritual battle.** (Verses 5 and 6)

"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." This description shows us the spiritual battle which these Witnesses are engaged in. There are people that want to harm them. The way that they defend themselves is by fire coming from their mouth which devours their adversaries. It cannot be literal fire or otherwise we would be seeing a lot of fire-breathing pastors in our day and a lot of dead adversaries as well. It must be spiritual fire. This we can see in the faithful pastors of yesterday and today. The picture refers spiritually to what literally took place in the days of Moses and Elijah. In Numbers chapter 16 if we read verses 1-40 we see that there was a rebellion going on against Moses and Aaron. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram persuaded 250 of the most renown men, men who were representatives of the congregation, to gather together with them and to protest the authority of Moses and Aaron over them, to lead them and give them the commandments of the Lord. When Moses heard of it, he fell on his face; and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying "Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him." "That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him." "Do this: Take censers, Korah and all his company; put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow and it shall be that the man whom the Lord chooses is the holy one." "You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi." These rebels were seeking to be the leaders and priests in Israel when the Lord had not called them to it. The Lord had a special judgment prepared for them. He created a new thing and the earth opened up and swallowed up them and their households alive. And in verse 35 it says, "a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense." This came about in accordance with the Word of the Lord spoken through Moses to these rebels.

Another instance of this kind is found in 2 Kings 1. Here in this passage, Ahaziah, a wicked king in Israel, fell through the lattice of his upper room in

Samaria. He was injured and he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, as to whether he would recover. But Elijah, being told by an angel to give him a message about this wrong way of proceeding, gave him this message. "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?" "Now therefore, thus says the Lord: 'You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" The king when he heard these words, sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. It says, "So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill." "And he spoke to him: 'Man of God, the king has said, "Come down!"' So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, 'If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.'" "And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty." This happened two times more. And on the third captain's arrival he said to Elijah, "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight." "Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties, with their fifties." "But let my life now be precious in your sight."

These two passages are typical in their meaning of the one that we are studying this afternoon. The incident which took place in Moses' day represents his witness in preserving the true and righteous and holy governing of the church of God. Moses' authority was the true authority. It was challenged, but it was not overcome. Fire came down from heaven and "devoured the enemies." The incident which took place in Elijah's day represents his witness in preserving the true teaching of the Lord, declaring His Word and His will to not only the people of God, but also to kings and nations. Fire came down from heaven and consumed those who sent to take him. The fact that fire comes out of their mouths in Revelation 11: 5 indicates that in the New Testament times, the judgments of the Lord are being declared by the mouths of His preachers and ministers, against those who would destroy their Witness concerning the truth of the Word of God and the salvation which is found in Christ alone. There will be real judgments which will come upon both individuals and nations who challenge and try to destroy the Church's Witness and her government under the headship of Jesus Christ. You can find a good example of this in Jeremiah 5, verse 14 and following. "Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them." "Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel, says the Lord." "It is a mighty nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say." "Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty men." "And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat." "They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; they shall destroy your fortified cities, in which you trust, with the sword." You can see from this that the Lord's words were made to be fire in Jeremiah's mouth. He was declaring the Lord's judgment against them for their refusal to receive

correction. It is very much the same during the 1260 days prophecy. During these 1260 years, God's preachers and His people will bear their witness for Christ. And God's judgments have always come upon those people and those societies that refuse the gospel. God's blessings and help and especially His salvation have come to the people who have received the testimony of the Witnesses, the testimony of Christ's Church when she is teaching and governing under Christ's authority and His Spirit's guidance. In our days, there are no longer prophets like Jeremiah giving revelatory messages. No, there is no need for that. We have the completed Scriptures. But there is still a crying need for God's true people to be faithful witnesses for the truth as it is in Jesus; those who will teach, and walk, and live to the glory of God and in accordance with the truth laid out in His Word. Will you not be one of them, my listener? Will you not be sons of oil and sons and daughters of light to our crooked and perverse generation? Let us pray and think and speak together of how we can be this, to everyone around us.