

The Two Tribulation Prophets

Text: Revelation 11:1-19

Introduction:

1. In the seven-year tribulation period (Daniel's 70th week) there are two distinct 3 ½ periods. We are now at the midpoint of the tribulation and the Divine pause button is on in order that our attention might be drawn to some important characters in the tribulation and events that take place at the half way point.
2. Revelation 11 presents a confusing enigma to those who try and interpret the Book allegorically. But when taken literally, its message unfolds simply and clearly.
3. The focus of the chapter is on two prophets who will be powerful witnesses for the Lord for 3 ½ years in the tribulation.
4. We will divide the chapter into 5 segments for our study.

I. The Area of the Two Witnesses (Vs. 1-2)

A. The Area Included to Measure (Vs. 1)

1. "rise and measure" = see Zech. 2, Ez. 40 & Rev. 21:15-17. "The act of measuring seems to signify that the area belongs to God in some special way. It is an evaluation of His property." (Walvoord)
2. By the time of John's exile and the writing of Revelation, the second temple in Jerusalem had already been destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans. This is clearly a temple that exists in the tribulation period.
3. Five Jewish Temples
 - a. **Solomon's Temple** – Built in 966 B.C. and took 7 years to build. Was destroyed by the Babylonians.
 - b. **Ezra's Temple** – took 21 years to rebuild.
 - c. **Herod's Temple** – Herod enlarged and embellished Ezra's temple to gain favor with the Jews. Work began in 19 B.C. and took 46 years to complete being finished during the reign of Agrippa II, great-grandson of Herod I.
 - d. **Tribulation Temple** – described here in Rev. 11 and assumed in passages such as Dan. 9:27 and Matt. 24:15.
 - e. **Millennial Temple** – described in Ezekiel 40-46
4. The Tribulation Temple
 - a. Built during the first part of Antichrist's reign. This is clear as it has to be in place before the abomination of desolation that occurs at the midpoint of the tribulation.
 - b. Very likely will form a part of antichrist's peace treaty with Israel (See Dan. 9:27).
 - c. Since soon after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, orthodox Jews have recited the following prayer three times a day: "May it be Thy will that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our own time."
 - d. In 1986, the Temple Institute was founded with the goal "to see Israel rebuild the Holy Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem."

Revelation Series

Founder and director Rabbi Yisrael Ariel was a member of the paratrooper unit that liberated the Temple Mount. (Cloud)

B. The Area Excluded from the Measure (Vs. 2)

1. "the court which is without the temple leave out" = Gentile area, similar to what existed in Herod's temple. Prophetically, it could indicate that the temple coexists alongside the Muslim Dome of the Rock, an idea that is already being fielded in Israel.¹
2. "forty and two months" = 3 ½ years. Speaks of the Gentile dominion of Jerusalem. Seems to refer to the second half of the tribulation when Antichrist turns hostile towards the Jews.

II. The Authority of the Two Witnesses (Vs. 3-6)

A. The Power of their Message (Vs. 3-4)

1. The Source of their Message (Vs. 3a)
 - a. "I will give power" = they are Divinely called and empowered men with a message from God to deliver.
 - b. Principle: God provides a witness in every dispensation.
2. The Season of their Message (Vs. 3b)
 - a. They will minister for 3 ½ years of the tribulation (half). Their time of ministry is Sovereignly ordained of God.
 - b. Question: Will it be the first or second half of the tribulation? Appears to be the first half for the following reasons:
 - i. The seventh trumpet sounds after the death and resurrection of the two witnesses (Vs. 14-15).
 - ii. If it was the final 3 ½ years, then their death would be around the same time as the second coming of Christ.
3. The Symbols of their Message (Vs. 3c-4)
 - a. Sackcloth – the rough attire of a prophet but also a token of needed repentance and symbolic of coming judgment. Their clothing preaches a message of judgment against sin and the need for men to repent!
 - b. Olive trees – imagery drawn from Zechariah 4. Symbolic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Zechariah 4:6 "...*Not by might, nor by power, but **by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.***"
 - ii. Walvoord: "the olive oil from the olive trees in Zechariah's image provided fuel for the lampstand that shed light in the darkness. The two witnesses of this period of Israel's history, namely Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, were the leaders in Zechariah's time. Just as these two witnesses were raised up to be lampstands or witnesses for God and were empowered by olive oil representing the power of the Holy Spirit, so the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will also execute their prophetic office and shine for God in earth's darkest hour."
 - c. Candlesticks – the supply of oil to the lampstand makes it burn brightly. The life of the olive tree produces the light of testimony.

¹ <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/70460/top-rabbi-joins-growing-list-pro-temple-politicians/> Viewed 1/5/20

Revelation Series

In like manner, when we are filled with and anointed by the Holy Spirit, our witness burns brightly for the Lord.

B. The Power of their Miracles (Vs. 5-6)

They have power over...

1. Their Enemies (Vs. 5)
 - a. "fire proceedeth out of their mouth" = similarity with Elijah (2 Kings 1:10-14) except the fire actually comes out of their mouths in a supernatural way.
 - b. "be killed" = the fire from their mouths will consume their enemies.
 - c. It means for the period of their witness; they will be invincible.
2. The Earth (Vs. 6)
 - a. Drought (6a) Resembles the prophet Elijah.
 - b. Destruction (6b) Resembles the prophet Moses.
 - c. Note: While these two prophets are stationed in Jerusalem, they have a global impact.

III. The Assassination of the Two Witnesses (Vs. 7-10)

A. The Determination of their Death (Vs. 7)

1. "finished their testimony" = the timing of their death determined by God Almighty. God's servants are immortal until their work is done!
2. "the beast" = first direct reference to the Antichrist in Revelation.
3. "the beast...out of the bottomless pit" = indicates the Satanic inspiration and possession of the man of sin. The word 'beast' is "a word for a beast of prey, one with a ravenous appetite, a carnivore like a lion or panther." (Thomas)
4. "shall make war against them" = imagine the hatred of these men and the truth they preach
5. Note: This world is diametrically opposed to God and God's Word. There is a war on to silence the truth even now in the world! Unrepentant man hates the truth.

B. The Celebration of their Death (Vs. 8-10)

1. Their Mockery (Vs. 8-9)
 - a. The witnesses' bodies are displayed.
 - i. "the great city" = the city from man's standpoint
 - ii. "which spiritually is called" = the city from God's standpoint. Jerusalem a wicked city now but remember context. We are now in the midst of the tribulation period and Jerusalem is Antichrist's headquarters.
 - iii. "shall see their dead bodies three days and an half" = before the advent of modern technology Bible students found it difficult to envisage how this would be literally fulfilled. With the invention of T.V., the internet, smartphones, tablets, social media and live streaming, it is easy now to see how this will be easily fulfilled. The world's media will be full of coverage of these events in Jerusalem (See Dan. 12:4).
 - b. The witnesses' bodies are desecrated. The bodies are left unburied to enhance the insult. The worst indignity perpetrated on a person in that culture was to be left unburied. (Thomas)

Revelation Series

2. Their Merriment (Vs. 10)
 - a. The manner of their rejoicing (10a)
 - i. They will 'rejoice' and "make merry". Imagine the godless parties! The music will play and the wine will flow.
 - ii. They will "send gifts one to another".
 - iii. Cloud: "From a human perspective it sometimes appears that God loses battles, but those who believe His Word know that it is impossible for Him to lose the war."
 - b. The reason for their rejoicing (10b)
 - i. "tormented them" = tormented by the plagues but also by their preaching. For the unrepentant sinner, the truth preached is torturous for him to listen to.
 - ii. Walvoord: "A righteous prophet is always a torment to an evil generation. The two witnesses are an obstacle to evil, unbelief, and satanic power prevalent in that time."

IV. The Ascension of the Two Witnesses (Vs. 11-13)

A. The Spirit's work of Resurrection (Vs. 11)

1. "the Spirit of life from God" = a reference to the Holy Spirit who is the agent of their resurrection.
2. "they stood upon their feet" = they are resurrected.
3. "great fear fell upon them" = imagine the scene. The world has been rejoicing over the death of these two prophets and now they come back to life!

B. The Summons to their Ascension (Vs. 12)

1. "a great voice from heaven" = presumably the voice of God
2. "ascended up to heaven in a cloud" = similar to Christ's ascension (See Acts 1:9).
3. "their enemies beheld them" = means it wasn't an instantaneous ascension. It was slow enough to be viewed by men on earth.

C. The Sign after their Ascension (Vs. 13)

There is a great earthquake the same hour as the prophets ascend into heaven. This is one of 5 great earthquakes in Revelation.

1. A tenth of the city of Jerusalem is destroyed.
2. Seven thousand perish.
3. The living are fearful and acknowledge God.

V. The Announcements after the Two Witnesses (Vs. 14-19)

A. The Announcement of Woe (Vs. 14-15a)

1. "the second woe is past" = a summary statement similar to Rev. 9:12.
2. "the third woe cometh quickly" = "a dramatic announcement that sets the stage for the next step in chronological movement, the sounding of the seventh trumpet."

B. The Announcements of Worship (Vs. 15-19)

"The sounding of the seventh trumpet brings a great heavenly celebration over the anticipated establishment of God's kingdom on earth." (Thomas)

1. The Worship of the Great Voices (Vs. 15)

Revelation Series

- a. The blowing of the 7th trumpet sets in motion the final judgments that take place before Christ's return. Heaven erupts in thunderous worship in joyous anticipation of the soon coming kingdom.
 - b. "great voices" = multiple voices make this announcement.
 - c. "are become" = even though there are still some events to transpire, from God's perspective, it is a completed thing.
 - d. "he shall reign for ever and ever" = Christ's kingdom eternal
 - i. Psalm 145:13 *"Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."*
 - ii. Psalm 146:10 *"The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD."*
 - iii. Dan. 7:13-14 *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him **dominion**, and **glory**, and a **kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: **his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.**"*
 - iv. Luke 1:32-3 *"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; **and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**"*
2. The Worship of the Twenty-Four Elders (Vs. 16-19)
The emphasis of the praise is on Christ as Conqueror and King.
- a. The posture of their worship (Vs. 16)
 - b. The praise of their worship (Vs. 17)
 - i. The Omnipotence of God (17) – "Lord God Almighty"
 - ii. The Eternality of God (17) – "which art, and wast, and art to come" This "focuses upon God's uninterrupted existence in the past, present and future." (Thomas)
 - iii. The Rulership of God (17c-18) "taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned"

Verse 18 "is a "table of contents" for the remainder of the Book of Revelation. These events did not take place the instant the angel blew his trumpet; he simply signaled the beginning of the process, and now these events would take place as planned." (Wiersbe). "It is a comprehensive statement that gives the main features of the transition from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of God." (Walvoord)

- iv. "nations were angry and thy wrath is come" = word play in Greek. The contrast is clear: the wrath of humanity is impotent, but the wrath of God is Omnipotent. (Walvoord)

Conclusion: Do you know Christ as Saviour? Are you bold and unashamed for God's truth?