

THE TWO WITNESSES

KEY BIBLE READINGS

Rev 11:1-13.

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles.” [The court outside the temple was not part of the original temple design, but an addition of Herod for the use of the Gentiles, or worldly unbelievers. This tells us that there is a worldly component in the modern church that is opposed to the Spirit.] **“And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.”** [In biblical prophecy, this time period of *‘forty two months’* is also referred to as *‘one thousand two hundred and sixty days,’* or *‘three-and-a-half,’* or *‘time, times, and half a time.’* It is an indefinite time of tribulation or hardship which is under God’s control.] **“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”** [The Two Witnesses have prophesied during the church age clothed in sack cloth because of the apostasies in the Church.] **“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. 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** [their opposition eliminated] **in this manner.”** [Fire is a symbol of judgment, and so this is saying that the Two Witnesses may pronounce judgment on a person opposing their ministry. We have an example in this reading: *“But Elymas the sorcerer [for so his name is translated] withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”* Acts 13:8-12.

“These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.” [We were told in Revelation 13 that Antichrist will make war with the saints and overcome them. The demise of the ministry of the Two Witnesses is a major part of this overcoming] **“When they finish their testimony, the beast [Antichrist] that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem, which is a symbol of the Church] which spiritually is called Sodom [representing wickedness and homosexuality] and Egypt [symbolizing worldliness], where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies [ministries] three-**

and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven."

THE IDENTITY OF THE TWO WITNESSES

The Nature of the Book of Revelation

Speaking generally, the Book of Revelation presents series of symbolic visions, presented in highly figurative language. The key to unfolding the real meaning of this book is to trace the source of the symbols, and uncover their true meaning. The main source of the clues to understanding are to be found within the Old Testament, and their true meaning may be revealed by diligent searching with the necessary guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The first clue to the identity of the Two Witnesses is the statement, **"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth."** This imagery is taken from the vision of Zechariah in the Old Testament.

"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. The two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." Zechariah 4:2-3. The angel told Zechariah **"These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."** Zechariah 4:14.

The imagery from Zechariah relates to the restoration of the Jewish temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of Babylon. The restoration of the Old Testament temple is a type of the restoration of the end-time Church, which has been decimated by Antichrist. The olive trees impart oil [which is a consistent symbol of the Holy Spirit], to the golden lampstand [which is used by Jesus as symbols for the churches in Revelation]. The angel of the Lord explained to Zerubbabel that this vision showed that the temple would be restored **"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit", says the Lord of hosts.**" Zechariah 4:6.

The source of the oil which brought restoration was the two olive trees, which are said to be **"the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."** These "anointed ones" were anointed by God to impart the Holy Spirit to Zerubbabel and Joshua to enable them to restore the temple. Because this account is a type of the restoration of the Church, we will now return to the Key Bible Reading to discover the identity of the 'anointed ones,' or the 'Two 'Witnesses' who dispense the oil of the Spirit into the Church

In the Key Bible Reading we are told **“These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”**

This major clue to the identity of the two witnesses is the symbolic reference to Moses and Elijah. The first phrase of this verse is a reference to the prophet Elijah, who declared God’s judgment of drought to King Ahab of Israel. **“As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”** 1 Kings 17:1.

The latter phrase is a reference to Moses dealing with the pharaoh of Egypt so that he would let the children of Israel go. Chapters 7,8,9 and 10 of the book of exodus detail nine plagues, beginning with the turning of the waters of the Nile to blood, through frogs, lice, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, and finally darkness.

The two witnesses that point to Elijah and Moses are the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY and the WORD OF GOD. From a symbolic point of view, Elijah, the first major prophet, represents the ministry of prophecy, and Moses, who brought the law and commandments to Israel, represents the presentation of the word of God, or the ministry of teaching, in which the meaning of the prophecies are revealed. The Two Witnesses who breathe life and restoration into the Church are not actual persons who will appear at the close of the age, but are the God ordained ministries of prophecy and teaching.

We see the relevance of the ministry of the Two Witnesses brought out in the account of Jesus being transfigured on the mountain in the presence of Elijah and Moses. Later, when coming down the mountain with three of His disciples, Jesus prophesied that in the last days the spirit of Elijah would return to restore all things.

“And His disciples asked Him, saying ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptist.” Matthew 17:10-13.

Notice that Jesus used two tenses here. First he said, **“Elijah truly is coming first and will restore all things”** [which is a statement concerning events to take place sometime in the future]. Then He said, **“But I say to you that Elijah has come already,”** which is clearly a statement made in the past tense. The disciples understood that when Jesus said that **“Elijah has come already”** He was talking about John the Baptist, who had already come to **“prepare the way of the Lord.”** (Isaiah 40:3). In fact, at the time Jesus made this statement, John had already been executed by Herod Antipas.

Jesus’ words are therefore a statement that Elijah’s spirit of prophecy was on John the Baptist. They are also a promise that the same spirit of prophecy would be manifested at some time in the future **“and will restore all things.”** Just as the spirit of prophecy was on John the Baptist preparing the way for the Lord’s first coming, so also will the spirit of prophecy rest on anointed prophets to prepare the way for the Lord’s second coming.

The relevance of the two witnesses being related to Moses and Elijah is brought out in the last chapter of the last book in the Old Testament. **“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”** Malachi 4:4-5. The **“great and dreadful day of the Lord”** mentioned here is the Day of Judgment to take place at the second coming of Christ.

Preparing the Way

John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord’s first coming by presenting a message of repentance. The Two Witnesses will have the same responsibility of disclosing the apostasies, idolatries, worldliness, and all other misdemeanors of the end-time Church, warning of the judgment to come, so that hearts are turned to repentance, paving the way for restoration. The Lord’s Spirit will enter a church well prepared for Spirit empowered ministries that will bring millions of lost souls into the Lord’s kingdom.

When will this Happen?

Only God knows the time of the close of this age, but Jesus repeatedly warned us to watch for the signs of the end so that we might be prepared. We can say that the Two Witnesses are being revived, and the truth of the Church’s faults are being brought out into the open. Because these truths are being presented through the convicting power of the Spirit, many hearts will be brought to repentance. The preparation and moving of the Spirit may appear to be slow, but referring to growth in the Church God has said, **“A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time.”** Isa 60:22.

Our Preparation

When the truth has been revealed to us, we have no other option than to reject all of the apostasy and worldliness Antichrist has imposed on the Church, and to be renewed in our spirits to live in union with Jesus Christ as He intended.

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” Rev 18:4-9.

What is involved in coming out of her?

- We have to restore the power of the Spirit in the Church. As individuals we have to receive the Baptism of the Spirit so that we may receive the gifts of the Spirit, and minister through them to the members of the body of Christ. We have to be continually filled with the Spirit to be ready for the end time ministry.
- The flesh opposes the Spirit, and so it is imperative that we consign our carnal natures to the cross daily so that they may be put to death by the Spirit.
- We have to break all ties to the things of the world that captivate us.
- We should clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ daily so that we might live in union with Him, through Him, and for Him.