

“The saving death of the two witnesses.”

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. ²But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for* forty-two months. ³And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” ⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. ⁵And 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. ⁶These 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. ⁷When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹Now 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. ¹²And 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. ¹³In 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. ¹⁴The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

Introduction

Chapter 11 of the book of Revelation focuses mainly upon two witnesses. These witnesses are going to be sent from heaven for a special mission on this earth.

They are going to prophecy for 1,260 days. This is approximately 3 and a half years.

Eventually these witnesses will be killed and their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem and not be buried.

Everybody will party and rejoice at their death.

However, after three and a half days their bodies will be raised from the dead.

People will witness this amazing event.

There will probably be world- wide T.V. and face book video clips for everybody to see.

At the same time of their resurrection there will be an earthquake in Jerusalem and 7,000 people will be killed.

The rest of the people who survive this earthquake will repent and give glory to God.

Going by the present population of Jerusalem this could be as many as 800,000 people saved in one day.!!!

To make it very simple for us to understand today I am going to ask and answer three questions about these witnesses.

1. Who are these witnesses?
2. Why did they come?
3. What was the result of their 3.5 year ministry?

Before we start to answer these questions we need to look at verses 1-2 of chapter 11.

We are told that John is given a reed like a measuring rod, and the Angel told John to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

He was told to leave out the court which is outside the temple and not to measure it.

The reason for not measuring this part of the temple was that it was given to the Gentiles who would abuse the Holy City for 42 months. (This is three and a half years)

Q. What is this all about?

The picture of measuring is common in the visions of the prophets.

We find this picture in Ezekiel, Zechariah and Amos.

Turn with me to Ezekiel Chapter 40: v. 3-6.

³ He took me there, and behold, *there was* a man whose appearance *was* like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway. ⁴ And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you *were* brought here so that I might show *them* to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see." ⁵ Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man's hand was a measuring rod six cubits *long, each being a cubit and a handbreadth*; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod; and the height, one rod. ⁶ Then he went to the gateway which faced east; and he went up its stairs and measured the threshold of the gateway, *which was* one rod wide, and the other threshold *was* one rod wide.

Zechariah Chapter 2: v. 1-2.

Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what *is* its width and what *is* its length."

We do find the idea of measuring used in more than one way.

It is used as a preparation for building or for restoration.

It is also used as a preparation for destruction.

However, the meaning here lies in preservation.

The measuring is like the sealing which is described in chapter 7: v. 2-3.

The sealing and the measuring are both for the protection of God's faithful ones when the demonic terrors descend upon the earth.

We have a little problem here because when John was being revealed these things, the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and has never been re-built.

So in order to understand this prophecy literally, the temple in Jerusalem at some time needs to be re-built.

I happen to know that the money is available for this project and the material is also available.

There is one big problem. On the temple site is a Muslim place of worship called the "Dome of the rock"

This is a sacred site for Muslims. They claim that the prophet Muhammed ascended into heaven at night from that spot.

In order for the temple to be re-built to its original size, this Muslim worship building would need to be destroyed, or removed to another place.

Now this is going to cause a big problem.

However, hear this from Israeli News recent press release.

A group of leading Israeli rabbis see in US President Donald Trump and Russia President Vladimir Putin echoes of King Cyrus of Persia, who 2,500 years ago assisted the Jewish people in rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

Prof. Rabbi Hillel Weiss, a spokesman for the Sanhedrin, a modern effort to revive the ancient Jewish religious court, noted in remarks reported by Israel National News:

"The political conditions today, in which the two most important national leaders in the world support the Jewish right to Jerusalem as their spiritual inheritance, is historically unprecedented."

The Sanhedrin sent letters to both Trump and Putin urging them to work together to fulfill a project that will benefit all mankind - **the rebuilding of the Holy Temple on top of Jerusalem's hotly contested Temple Mount.**

If you are watching N.H.K. news at some distant future time and you hear a report about work starting to re- build the temple in Jerusalem on the "Old Site" then be warned problems are ahead.

The second coming of Jesus is not far away. It also means that the "Rapture" is not far away too.

Now we need to answer these questions.

1. Who are these two witnesses?

There are two commonly held views by Biblical scholars on the identity of these two witnesses. One train of thought is Moses and Enoch and the other train of thought is Moses and Elijah.

It is my personal conviction that the two witnesses are going to be Moses and Elijah.

The reason for this conviction is the Biblical evidence that we have in v. 6.

Verse 6 is there for a reason and I believe the reason is to identify the two witnesses.

We are told that they have power to shut the heavens so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy which is 1,260 days.

We are also told that they have power over the waters to turn them to blood and to strike the earth with plagues as often as often as they desire.

It is very clear to anybody who has read through the Bible that these two people are mostly likely to be identified as Moses and Elijah.

Let us go back into a few passages in the Old Testament so we can identify these people in their historical settings.

1. Moses - Exodus 7: v. 14-17.

¹⁴ So the LORD said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the people go.

¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand. ¹⁶ And you shall say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear! ¹⁷ Thus says the LORD: "By this you shall know that I *am* the LORD. Behold, I will strike the waters which *are* in the river with the rod that *is* in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood.

This was the first judgement Moses pronounced upon Egypt. If you read on up to chapter 12 you will discover that Moses brought more plagues upon Egypt with the final plague of the death of the first born.

So the only person in the Bible that is directly connected to turning water into blood and bringing plagues upon the earth is Moses.

2. Elijah -

1 Kings 17: v. 1

And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "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 18: v.41-46.

⁴¹ Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for *there is* the sound of abundance of rain."

⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, ⁴³ and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, and said, "*There is* nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again." ⁴⁴ Then it came to pass the seventh *time*, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare *your chariot*, and go down before the rain stops you.'" ⁴⁵ Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

These incidents in the life of Elijah directly connect him to v. 6 in Revelation chapter 11.

As I said last September before we started the book of Revelation, you need to have a knowledge of the Old Testament to correctly understand Revelation.

In fact, the book of Ezekiel seems to be a key book in understanding Revelation.

One thing to note before we leave the question of who these two witnesses will be, is to note v. 4.

We are told that these witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands. We need to go back to the prophet Zechariah where they are foretold. Turn with me to Zechariah 4: v. 11-14.

¹¹ Then I answered and said to him, “What *are* these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?” ¹² And I further answered and said to him, “What *are these* two olive branches that *drip* into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden *oil* drains?” ¹³ Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these *are*?” And I said, “No, my lord.” ¹⁴ So he said, “These *are* the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.”

Although Zechariah doesn't identify these two witnesses as Moses and Elijah, they are definitely identified as being the “anointed ones” who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth. One thing is sure and that is that God has planned the events of the second coming of Jesus long ago and He will bring to pass the events that He has revealed through His people.

2. Why did these witnesses come ?

It may seem strange to us why God has bothered to send two witnesses to this earth during the tribulation period. Surely the 144,000 sealed Jews that we covered in chapter 7 were enough to evangelise the earth at this time?

So why bother with these two witnesses?

I think the answer can be found in the text.

Turn with me to v. 9.

⁹ Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

When these witnesses were dead it appears that the whole world will be able to view their dead bodies.

It is also likely that the whole world would have heard their gospel message.

We are perhaps the first generation where it is possible that at any one time, through the media of the internet that everybody in the world can have access either through their computer, smart phone or some device to view one event that is happening in the world.

Even in the desert and the jungle today people have smart phones.

Never before in history could one person be heard and seen by everybody in the world.

In the future it is not hard to imagine that everybody in the world will have a smart phone and access to the internet.

It is very clear from the text that these two witnesses came to be a witness to the world.

It was the world's last chance to hear the gospel message about Jesus Christ.

So it seems that the whole world was clearly presented one last time with the gospel message.

Everybody could see and hear these two witnesses.

Not only was the gospel presented, but the world could view the resurrection of these two men.

So it appears that the reason that these two witnesses came was that God is going to give the world one last chance before He pours out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth that are mentioned in chapter 16.

3. What was the result of the ministry of these men?

The answer to that question can be found in v.13.

¹³ 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.

There were 7,000 people in Jerusalem killed and the rest who survived gave glory to the God of Heaven.

The only way to give glory to God is to repent.

So it is clear that the rest of the Jews living in Jerusalem repented of their sins.

So the result of the ministry of these two men was, after their resurrection to Heaven, about 800,000 people were saved in one day.

The first time the gospel was preached to a crowd of Jews in Jerusalem, 3,000 souls were saved.

We discover that in Acts chapter 2v. 41.

⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

The last time there will be a declaration of the gospel and a resurrection in Jerusalem, lots more will get saved.

I don't know how many, but if we take the population of Jerusalem today then the figure of 800,000 would be about right.

The greatest thing in this passage lies in the fact that the unbelieving Jews were won to Jesus Christ by the sacrificial death of the witnesses, and by God's vindication of them.

Here is the story of the Cross and the Resurrection all over again.

And I believe it will be for the last time.

Evil must be conquered and men and women won to Jesus, not by force, or might, or by power, but by the Holy Spirit working through the witness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The power is in the gospel message and that is the message we need to proclaim to the evil world that we live in today.

Romans Chapter 1: v. 16-17 to close.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."[[]