

12. The Two Witnesses

Revelation 10-11

As we come to the tenth chapter of the Book of Revelation, there is a second interlude. The first interlude came at the end of the events of the sixth seal in the sixth chapter. Chapter seven took our eyes off the devastation on earth and focused our attention on the 144,000 Messianic believers saved and sealed from Israel and a great multitude of Gentiles (non-Jews) standing clothed in white before the throne of God. The second interlude happens at the end of the blowing of the sixth trumpet. In chapter ten, John's vision focuses our attention on a mighty angel (vv. 1-7) and a little scroll that the Apostle must eat and allow the Words of God to be internalized and spoken under the anointing of the Spirit. In chapter eleven, John then writes of his vision of two witnesses' ministry before the blowing of the seventh trumpet (11:1-19).

We begin our study with John seeing an awesome sight – that of a mighty angel descending to earth:

¹Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. ²He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ³and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. ⁴And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.” ⁵Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. ⁶And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, “There will be no more delay! ⁷But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:1-7).

Why do you think the angel is shown as having one foot on the earth and one foot on the sea?

The description of the angel robed in a cloud reminds us of Daniel's vision of the Messiah coming on the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13). His face is like the sun (v. 1), he has a rainbow above his head, and he speaks with a loud shout like the roar of a lion. The roar is not *like* that of a lion, but the emphasis is on the *mighty* shout, signifying that it can be heard from a long distance. It is a sound that sends shivers down the spine of all who listen to the voice.

Due to these observations, some people have suggested that this mighty angel coming down from heaven could be the Lord Jesus. This writer disagrees with that interpretation for the following reasons: In the first verse, John describes him as *another* mighty angel. The Greek text brings out that the word *another* means another of the same kind. There is none like the Lord Jesus, and so if this person were the Lord Jesus, John would not have compared him to the other angels of the same kind. Secondly, this angel swears by someone greater, *viz.* the Creator of the heavens (v. 6), whereby Jesus, being God, cannot swear by anyone higher (Hebrews 6:13). He is the great *I AM*—the One by which all things were created. Paul the Apostle wrote the following about the Lord Jesus:

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

The angel's stance is significant. We see that he has one foot planted on the earth, one foot on the sea, and his right hand raised to heaven. This may symbolize the three spheres of the created order (Gen. 6:1-10). Whatever is about to happen will affect *ALL* of creation. We are not told who this mighty angel is, but he speaks with the authority that there will be no more delay (v. 6).

The Apostle John heard the seven thunders' voice, but when he went to write down what they said, he is prevented from doing so (v. 4). John is told that only when the seventh angel is about to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished (v. 7). When the mystery of God is finally revealed, it will unite all things under the headship of Christ. We are left to wonder what the mystery is that will be clear to all at the end time.

Certain things were not for us to understand when John wrote the Book of Revelation in A.D. 95. As we get closer to the end of the age, it is possible that humanity will realize that the earth has been under a spiritual conflict for man's mind and will. Jesus' Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds taught us that, as the wheat (believers in Christ) and the weeds (the ungodly) grew together, the cloak of deception covered the identity of the weeds until just before the harvest (Matthew 13:24-30 and Matthew 13:36-43). Before the coming of the Lord, the enemy will no longer be hidden but made manifest. Yes, there is coming a time when all things will be revealed! That which has been going on in the spiritual realm, i.e., the war between God and Satan, will be visible.

Why has God delayed intervention for approximately two thousand years? Was it only for a greater harvest, or was there more going on than a larger number of people?

So, why has God not intervened before this point? The answer is that God has been calling and preparing a body of people, the Bride of Christ, to rule and reign with Christ on earth. Their training in overcoming evil and preparation for ruling and reigning with Christ will be complete when God's people, the elect, are caught up to heaven as in what we read in chapter seven. The Father alone knows the timing of this event (Matthew 24:36). The Body of Christ, the Bride, has been in training over the last 2,000 years to overcome the darkness through prayer and spiritual warfare, living not for themselves but for their King. Soon will come the time of receiving the rewards they have earned, i.e., when every enemy is put down (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). John then receives further instruction from heaven.

⁸Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and the land." ⁹So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'" ¹⁰I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but

when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. ¹¹Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings” (Revelation 10:8-11).

What do you think is the significance of the scroll being both sweet to the taste and bitter to the stomach after eating?

John hears the voice from heaven, telling him to take a little scroll that lies open in the angel's hand. When he draws near the angel's intimidating presence, he asks the angel to give him the scroll, but the scroll is not given; it must be taken from the hand of the angel (v. 9). God puts some ministries before men that can be compared to a sweet taste of honey in service to God; however, with the sweetness also comes pain and hardship to those that take up such a service. God never forces anyone to take up the cross; it must be a willing service from His people. Our hearts must be willing to take up the task, though it is at the same time sweet and bitter. Paul the Apostle, for instance, writes about the ministry he was given in this way:

¹⁰We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are honored, but we are dishonored. ¹¹To this very hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹²We work hard with our own hands. When we are vilified, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³when we are slandered, we answer gently. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world (1 Corinthians 4:10-13).

The preacher must internalize the message of God. Some minister God's word today whose hearts are not touched by the message the Lord gives them. God's message must burn in the preacher's heart before we can expect God's message to touch people's hearts. Jeremiah the prophet said, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty” (Jeremiah 15:16). The worst parts of John's writing and prophesying are still ahead for him, i.e., the spiritual war written about in chapter 12 and the writing down of the Antichrist's war against the saints in chapter 13 (specifically in verse 7). The writing also of the seven bowl judgments in Revelation 16 is still ahead for him as well. Such a message will weigh heavily on John's heart as he continues to write down the prophecy.

The Two Witnesses (Chapter Eleven)

At the beginning of chapter eleven, John's view of chronological time is paused until the seven bowls of wrath are begun to be poured out in chapter 16. Chapters eleven through fifteen focus our attention to explain events on earth that precede the Day of the Lord, i.e., the coming of Christ for His people and the Judgment of God poured out. This explaining of specific events is similar to what Jesus taught the disciples on the Mount of Olives when they asked Him what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). From verses 3-31, the Lord talked chronologically of the significant events until His coming for His elect. He then focused His teaching on making themselves ready for His coming, e.g., the Lesson of the Fig Tree (vv. 32-35), the Day and Time Unknown (vv. 36-51), the Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1-13), the Parable of the Talents (25:14-30), and the Separation of the Sheep and Goats (25:31-46). This writer's view is that Revelation chapters 11 through 14 focus similarly on specific incidents in the second half of the seven-year period, commonly known as Daniel's Seventieth Week. The

link to the below chart might help some people as we focus specifically on some of the events of the second half of the seven-year period.

Chart of events that take place before Christ sets up His Kingdom (See <https://prewrathresources.wordpress.com/free-pre-wrath-charts/#jp-carousel-430>.)

Now that we have an idea of John's focus, let's view these events up close as he describes them:

¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. ²But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months (Revelation 11:1-2).

John is given a measuring reed and told to measure the temple and the altar and its worshipers. Scholars have difficulty with this chapter, and especially as to the measuring of the temple. Suffice it to say that a new temple will be built in Israel, a temple that will be desecrated according to Paul the Apostle (2 Thessalonians 2:4) at the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27), i.e., the last seven years before the end of the age.

John writes that, for forty-two months, three and a half years, the second half of the seven-year period, the Gentile armies (likely to be the Antichrist's armies) will take control of the temple mount at the mid-point and control the city of Jerusalem for forty-two months (v. 2). Jesus warned His disciples to get out of Jerusalem when they saw the Antichrist's desecration, i.e., the event called the Abomination of Desolation:

¹⁵So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), ¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. ¹⁸And let no one in the field return for his cloak.

The city of Jerusalem will be under the dominion of the Antichrist's armies, but the enemy will not have everything going his way. The Lord says that He has two witnesses prepared for that very time:

³And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth." ⁵If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have the power to turn the waters into blood and strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want (Revelation 11:3-6).

Who Are the Two Witnesses?

The Scriptures do not tell us who the two witnesses are, so we are left to look at different Scriptures that give us possibilities. There are two opinions about the witnesses. Some believe

the two witnesses represent the nation of Israel that cling to the *Tenakh*, the Old Testament, i.e., those who will not go along with the Antichrist's new world system and worship him by taking his mark upon their hand or forehead (Revelation 13:12, and 16). The other witness is the true church that walks with the Lord and also will not take Antichrist's mark.

The other view is that the two witnesses are two powerfully anointed individuals chosen by God to witness to the Gospel and the Lord Jesus during the Great Tribulation or persecution. This view of the two witnesses being just two individuals is strengthened by the fact that, while these two witnesses cannot be killed for three and a half years, other believers are being beheaded because they refuse the mark: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). When one reads of the two witnesses, the enemies of God try as hard as they can to kill these two men, but they cannot kill them until the three and a half years of their prophesying and preaching is concluded (1,260 days or forty-two lunar months or three and a half years). Only at the end of their testimony is the beast (the Antichrist) allowed to kill them (v. 7).

So, let's look at who the two witnesses could be. Scholars point first of all, to Enoch and Elijah. The reason for these two men is that the Bible tells us, "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27), there are two people in the Scriptures that have yet to die. Enoch is one: "By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: He could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5). Elijah also did not die: "Suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind" (2 Kings 2:11). Once to die is not always a hard and fast rule, though, for Lazarus died twice. The Lord resurrected him, and he lived on and died a second time.

Elijah certainly seems to be one of them because the prophet Malachi prophesied his return before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. In the last two verses of the Old Testament, here's what Malachi wrote: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:5-6).

The second view is that the two witnesses are Moses and Elijah. These were the two individuals seen speaking with Jesus when Christ was transfigured before His disciples, Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:1-8). This view also gains credence due to the miracles that the two witnesses can do. Chapter 11, verse 6, says that they will turn rivers to blood and bring plagues on the earth, which Moses did during his ministry. On three occasions, Elijah brought fire on the earth: once on Mount Carmel in a spiritual dual with 400 prophets of Baal, and twice destroying a band of fifty soldiers who had come to arrest him (2 Kings 1:9-15). In our passage in Revelation, the two witnesses destroy those who attack them with fire (v. 5) and have the power to shut up the heavens so that it does not rain for the period of their prophesying, which is something that Elijah also did (1 Kings 17:1). At God's timing, the enemy is allowed to kill them:

⁷Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth (Revelation 11:7-10).

At the end of the three and a half years, the beast (the Antichrist) is allowed to kill them. A festival similar to the western Christmas tradition of giving gifts begins at the two witnesses' death, showing us the world's hatred towards these men. Verse nine says that people all over the world will see their dead bodies and gloat over them. This prophetic passage could not be fulfilled until only recently. With satellite and cable T.V. everywhere, all that is happening at the temple mount in Jerusalem is broadcast live. It is interesting that, even as I write these words, I am watching a live cam focused on the Temple Mount's Western Wall in Jerusalem.¹

¹¹But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. ¹²Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. ¹³At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon (Revelation 11:11-14).

Imagine the T.V. newscasters' shock in Jerusalem, when they suddenly see the two dead bodies come back to life and stand on their feet. I think the newscasters will be awestruck and step back in fear of them. Instead, they hear a voice in heaven, calling them up. Imagine seeing the two ascending into the sky together as a severe earthquake rocks the city. No wonder the survivors will be terrified.

Since we are not told the identity of these two witnesses, it is possible also that they are unknowns and readied for this time. We only know that they will be invincible until their job is completed, i.e., carrying out plagues and judgments until they finally accomplish all that God has for them to do. We can say with confidence that these two witnesses appear to sum up the miraculous and prophetic ministry that has marked other periods of biblical history. These two witnesses will mark the end of an era. The window of repentance for all humanity is closing quickly; the final judgment time is swiftly approaching.

The Seventh Trumpet

¹⁵The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever." ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have

¹ <https://www.skylinewebcams.com/en/webcam/israel/jerusalem-district/jerusalem/western-wall.html>

taken your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.” ¹⁹Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm (Revelation 11:15-19).

What do you think a believer's response should be as we consider the seventh trumpet and what is to follow, i.e., God's impending wrath?

In the above passages, we see the twenty-four elders worshiping God, and even though there was such hatred shown to God’s saints and the two witnesses, we see that justice will prevail. Those who have been active in destroying the earth (v. 18) will themselves be brought to destruction. God's temple is opened, and the Ark of the Covenant is seen to remind people that all of what He has spoken will come to pass. Mercy and judgment will be seen in the time of the wrath of God being poured out.

Like John the Apostle, we all have a responsibility to internalize God's Word's truths and allow it to become part of our lives. God has a plan for all of us, and if we are open, He will be faithful to show those who take up the cross, internalize it, and work out their part. Even though these are hard truths to swallow, i.e., the sweet and sour, the Lord is always in control and sovereign over His people's affairs.

If you are not yet a true believer and part of this glorious salvation plan, you can be. **“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).** How about you? Do you have full assurance in your heart, i.e., that inner witness of the Spirit that you are born-again and a child of God? Is it possible that you feel you are missing something? To be born-again of God's Spirit and enjoy peace with God, you need to repent of sin and ask Christ to come into your life and have your life's steering wheel from this time onward. Here's a prayer you could pray:

Prayer: Father, I now come to You, believing that You love me and have a plan for my life. Thank You that You so loved me that You sent your Son into the world to pay the penalty for my sin, which has kept me so long from enjoying Your presence. I repent and turn away from sin and ask Christ to come and live in me and control my life. Thank You, Father, for the gift of eternal life. Amen!

Keith Thomas

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com

Email Address: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com