**The Two Witnesses in Revelation**

By Arlen Chitwood

*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*. *And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*.

*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days*, *clothed in sackcloth*.”

*These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth*.

(Revelation 11:1-4)

Revelation chapter (Revelation 11) opens with introductory remarks concerning the Temple which will be constructed by the Jewish people during the first year of the Tribulation. Daniel 8:11-14 reveals that sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple will commence seven months and ten days (220 days) following the beginning of the Tribulation, following the man of sin ratifying a seven-year covenant with “*many*” in Israel. Then, sacrifices in accord with the Mosaic economy will continue for two years ten months and twenty days (1,040 days) before the man of sin breaks his covenant and stops the sacrifices by and through a desecration and subsequent destruction of the Temple (cf. Daniel 9:26-27; 11:31; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

(To arrive at the preceding figures, subtract the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14 from 2,520 days [the total number of days in the seven-year Tribulation, using thirty-day months]. This will leave 220 days, or seven months and ten days, the time that it will take to rebuild the Temple, establish the priesthood, and begin offering sacrifices. The 2,300 subsequent days, the days in Daniel 8:14, form the total time from that point to the end of the Tribulation, which is divided into two parts referred to by “*the daily sacrifices*” [first part] and “*the transgression of desolation*” [second part] in the previous verse [Daniel 8:13].

The words “*the daily sacrifices*” has to do with that part of the 2,300 days during which sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple will be offered [from the time they begin until the middle of the Tribulation, for two years ten months and twenty days, or 1,040 days].

Then, “*the transgression of desolation*” has to do with the time following the man of sin breaking his covenant, causing the sacrifices to cease, and not only desecrating but destroying the rebuilt Temple. This will occur exactly in the middle of the Tribulation [after three and one-half years, after 1,260 days, with three and one-half years left, with 1,260 days left].

Thus, the 1,040 days, during which sacrifices will be offered, comprise the first part of the 2,300 days; and the 1,260 days [or, as in the text, “*forty-two months*”], during which there will no longer be sacrifices, for the Temple will have been destroyed and the Jewish people dispersed, comprise the last part of this period.

And *the cleansing of the sanctuary* [Daniel 8:14] will occur at the full end of the 2,300 days, which is synonymous with the time Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy in the next chapter ends [Daniel 8:24-27]. This *cleansing of the sanctuary* will occur at the same time and be inseparably related to the things enumerated in Daniel 8:24 of this subsequent Seventy-Week prophecy.)

Following introductory remarks concerning the rebuilt Temple, Revelation chapter eleven (Revelation 11) leads into events during each of the three-and-one-half-year parts of the Tribulation. That which occurs during *the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation is mentioned first* (Rev. 11:2). This is then immediately followed by a number of verses detailing that which occurs during *the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation* (Rev. 11:3-14). Thus, though this part of the chapter begins by briefly mentioning that which occurs during *the last half* of the Tribulation, the chapter is centrally about that which occurs during *the first half*.

Mentioning or dealing with *the last first*, *and the first last* (*cf.* Matthew 20:16) is seen in different ways, at different times, in Scripture. One way is by and through God rejecting the first and establishing the second (*e.g.*, rejecting the earth’s first ruler and establishing the second, rejecting the first man and establishing the Second, rejecting the first birth and establishing the second, etc.). But the text concerns itself more with the manner in which things are listed, which can be seen in the manner in which individuals and undoubtedly other things are listed at the beginning of Scripture (e.g., the order in which the birth of sons listed in Genesis 5:32; 11:26 occurred, or the order in which cities listed in Genesis 10:10 were apparently built).

Note that the three sons of Noah in Genesis 5:32; 6:10 and the three sons of Terah in Genesis 11:26-27 are listed in the reverse order of their birth. *The first* (*oldest son*) *is listed last and the last* (*youngest son*) *is listed first*. This can easily be shown through that stated in other verses about one or more of these sons (*cf.* Genesis 5:32; 7:6; 10:21; 11:10 for Noah and Genesis 11:26, 32; 12:4 for Terah).

And this same reverse order would apparently hold true as well for such things as the order in which the four cities listed in Genesis 10:10 were built. All four cities are said to form the beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom, with the last city listed (Calneh) probably being the first of the four built and the first city listed (Babel) probably being the last of the four built.

(To illustrate how knowing the preceding can sometimes help in biblical interpretation, note that this reverse order would exist as well for the order of the birth of the four sons of Ham listed in Genesis 10:6. “Canaan” is mentioned last. Thus, Canaan would be Ham’s *oldest son*, *his firstborn*. And this fact is quite evident from Noah’s curse concerning “*a servant of servants* [i.e., ‘*the lowest of servants*’]” pronounced upon Canaan, resulting from an act committed by Ham, Canaan’s father [Genesis 9:20-25].

Noah didn’t look down a line of four sons [the way they are listed in Genesis 10:6] and curse the youngest son. No! It appears evident that Canaan was the only son that Ham had at this time, which would apparently have been no more than several years following the Flood [giving Noah time to plant a vineyard and grow grapes, and giving Ham time to begat one son]. And knowing that Canaan was Ham’s firstborn [probably born during the Flood (*cf.* Genesis 7:13; 9:18)] and evidently the only son Ham had at this time is vital to a correct, contextual, understanding of the passage.

Why didn’t Noah curse Ham since he was the one who had committed the act? The reason is given in the context. God had previously blessed Noah and his three sons [Genesis 9:1], and Noah couldn’t curse the one whom God had blessed. Thus, Noah did the only thing that he could do. Noah cursed Ham’s son, Canaan. And it is evident from the context that this was a curse *upon Ham*’*s entire seed*, not just upon his firstborn.

Three inseparably related prophecies are seen in that which Noah stated about each of his sons in Genesis 9:25-27. These prophecies, as evident from their contextual setting and content — dealing with a new beginning in the human race, necessitating all-inclusiveness — have to do with *federal headship and the prophetic destinies of races comprising nations*, *with the prophecies in this respect not limited to the three individuals in the prophecies but to their descendants as well*.

And to understand how God has worked out the preceding in these prophecies, note the prophecies in Genesis 9:26-27 concerning both Shem and Japheth. Shem is seen as *the only son with a God* [Genesis 9:26], and Japheth is to be *enlarged* [Genesis 9:27]. This is seen today in and through a nation descending from Shem [the Jewish people] being the only nation with a God [Exodus 3:6; Psalm 72:18; 96:5; Ephesians 2:11-12], and in and through Japheth’s descendants populating a large part of the globe.

For more information on the preceding, refer to the author’s two pamphlets, “The Sons of Noah” [www.lampbroadcast.org].)

**Forty-Two Months**

**Twelve Hundred Sixty Days**

As previously seen, the expression “*forty-two months*” is used *first in chapter**eleven* (Revelation 11) *relative to events during the last half of the Tribulation* (Rev. 11:2). Then the expression “*a thousand two hundred and sixty days*” is used *last relative to events during the first half of the Tribulation* (Rev. 11:3). These are just two ways of expressing the same length of time, and they should not necessarily be thought of as ways that the Spirit used to show that events having to do with one belongs in a different half of the Tribulation than events having to do with the other. This is determined and made plain by the events themselves, not by two different ways of saying the same thing.

Remaining within the order seen in verses two and three (the last first, and the first last), Jerusalem is to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles for forty-two months, 1,260 days. At the beginning of this period (beginning in the middle of the Tribulation), following the man of sin breaking his covenant with “*many*” in Israel and desecrating the Temple, both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed (Daniel 9:26; *ref*. The Time of the End, Chapter 12).

Matthew’s and Mark’s Olivet Discourse accounts surrounding events during this time center on *the Temple and the people in Judaea* (Matthew 24:15ff; Mark 13:14ff). Luke’s account though is different. Luke’s Olivet Discourse account centers on *the city of Jerusalem*, *the people of Judaea*, *and provides information surrounding Jerusalem being trodden under foot by the Gentiles in* Revelation 11:2*.* Note the way Luke’s account reads:

*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies*, *then know that its desolation is near*.

*Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains*, *let those who are in the midst of her depart*, *and let not those who are in the country enter her*.

*For these are the days of vengeance*, *that all things which are written may be fulfilled*.

*But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days*! *For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people*.

*And they will fall by the edge of the sword*, *and be led away captive into all nations*. *And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*. (Luke 21:20-24).

The preceding verses *are not* dealing with events in 70 A.D. (the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his Roman legions), as advanced by many commentators. These verses in Luke’s Olivet Discourse account parallel the referenced verses in Matthew’s and Mark’s Olivet Discourse accounts, which have to do with events during *the future Tribulation*.

Aside from the preceding, these verses in Luke have to do with a time when “*all things which are written may be fulfilled*,” something that *didn’t* occur through the events of 70 A.D.

And, beyond that, these verses have to do with a time when Jerusalem is going to be “*trodden down of the Gentiles*, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*.” This perfectly parallels Revelation 11:2, which has to do with the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation, with the Times of the Gentiles ending with the end of the Tribulation and the corresponding end of Man’s Day.

One need only look at conditions in Jerusalem today to know that Luke 21:20-24 cannot have to do with events of 70 A.D. From the beginning to the end of events depicted in these verses, Jerusalem is to be trodden down by the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles is brought to an end.

*Man is still living during the Times of the Gentiles today*, *and Jerusalem is not presently being trodden down of the Gentiles*. Thus, all that is stated in these verses has to be placed at *a future time*, *in line with that which is seen in corresponding Scripture*.

On the other hand, the ministry of the two witnesses can’t occur during the last half of the Tribulation. There would be no Jews in Jerusalem or the surrounding area to which they could minister during this time. Their ministry can only occur during the first half of the Tribulation, for their ministry will be to the Jewish people, and it will be centered in the capital of Jewry, in Jerusalem.

This is evident, if for no other reason, by how they are first described in the chapter:

*These are the two olive trees* *and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth*. (Rev. 11:4)

This is a reference drawn from the fifth of eight visions recorded in the opening part of the book of Zechariah (Zechariah 4:1-14). These are visions revealed to and recorded by Zechariah following the return of a remnant from the Babylonian captivity. And the subject matter of the eight visions (Zechariah 1:7-6:8) is governed by the manner in which they are introduced (Zechariah 1:1-6), which, in turn, governs the subject matter of the book itself.

These eight visions are introduced by the Lord’s statement surrounding *Israel*’*s past disobedience*, *the result of this disobedience*, *the call for repentance*, *and that which will occur following Israel*’*s repentance*.

*Disobedience* resulted in the Times of the Gentiles, and *repentance* would ultimately be effected by and through Gentile persecution during this period.

Then, the visions begin immediately following this and continue uninterrupted until all eight visions have been completed.

These visions have to be understood *in the light of the manner in which they are introduced*. They have to be understood in the light of Israel’s past disobedience, which has resulted in the Times of the Gentiles; and they have to be understood in the light of the reason for the Times of the Gentiles — Israel not only reaping the consequences of her actions, but the nation ultimately being brought to the place of repentance — and that which will occur once God’s purpose for this period is realized. These visions, understood contextually, *must* be looked upon as having to do with *Israel and the nations during and at the end of the Times of the Gentiles*.

Though God drove His people out among the nations, to effect *repentance*, the principles set forth in Genesis 12:3 remain. God will use *Gentile persecution* to bring about *repentance*, but He will also subsequently *judge the Gentiles* because of this persecution.

Summarily, these visions bridge the centuries of time between the first and last kings of Babylon during the Times of the Gentiles. They have to do with different facets of Israeli persecution at the hands of the Gentiles, with the principles set forth in Genesis 12:3 ultimately being worked out and realized. They have to do with Israel ultimately being brought to the place of repentance, the Times of the Gentiles being brought to an end, and Gentile persecution of Israel being fully dealt with.

Only then will Israel occupy her proper place at the head of the nations in a restored theocracy, with the nations being blessed through Israel.

That, in short, is how the eight visions in Zechariah must be understood. *Each* presents a different facet of the matter, and *all of the visions together* form a composite picture of that which God revealed through Zechariah concerning Israel and the nations.

Thus, knowing that the ministry of the two witnesses will be the fulfillment of Zechariah’s fifth vision, and understanding the subject matter of these visions, one can know that their ministry will have to do with the same people and subject matter as seen in all eight visions. It will have to do with *the Jewish people*, *their past disobedience and the result*, *a call to repentance*, *and that which awaits both Israel and the nations following Israel*’*s repentance*.

Furthermore, the two witnesses appear textually to be the ones directly responsible for the conversion of the 144,000 Jews who will minister worldwide to the Gentiles during the last half of the Tribulation. And bringing about the conversion of this remnant might very well be the central focus of their ministry. Note that there is a point when the two witnesses will have finished their testimony (Rev. 11:7), which may very well have to do with the last of the 144,000 being saved and sealed (Revelation 7:1-8).

(Two subsequent chapters in The Time of the End [Chapters 21, 26], dealing with material in Revelation chapters twelve and fourteen, center on the ministry of the 144,000 and show an inseparable connection with Revelation chapter eleven. In one sense of the word, chapter eleven provides introductory material for that seen in these two following chapters.)

**Ministry of the Two Witnesses**

*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*.

*And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*, *and the hearts of the children to their fathers*, *lest I come and strike the earth with a curse*. (Malachi 4:4-6)

Different, though similar, expressions are used in Scripture to depict *all of Scripture* — *e.g*., “*To the law and to the testimony*” (Isaiah 8:20); “*Moses and all the prophets*,” “*the law of Moses*, *and the prophets*, *and the psalms*” (Luke 24:27, 44); or “*Moses and the prophets*” (Luke 16:29, 31).

By placing Moses and Elijah together in the last three verses in the Old Testament, *all of Scripture* is once again in view. *The Law* was given through Moses, and Elijah was one of *the prophets*.

Then there are a series of events of equal significance concerning these two men that will occur yet future, at two different periods of time.

One has to do with a manifestation of *signs* by two prophets (the two witnesses) during the Tribulation, along with an evident counter manifestation of *signs* by the false prophet (Revelation 11, 13). And, comparing Scripture with Scripture, these two prophets could only be identified as Moses and Elijah.

(These two prophets are “*the two anointed ones*” in Zechariah’s fifth vision [Zechariah 4:1-14].

Because of the importance of Elijah’s future ministry to Israel, as seen in Malachi 4:5-6, it would appear strange indeed if he were not mentioned someplace in Revelation 6-19a [that section of the book covering the Tribulation]. And, in the light of other Scripture, it would appear equally strange if Elijah appeared unaccompanied by Moses.

And Revelation 11:3-12 is the only place throughout these fourteen chapters of the book where we have two men of this nature appearing to Israel during this time. Also, signs associated with their ministry reflect back on signs performed by Moses and Elijah [Rev. 11:6].)

Also, inseparably connected with the preceding and inseparably connecting these two men for all time in relation to *Israel and the theocracy*, there are only two instances in all of the Old Testament (in Moses and the Prophets) where God empowered individuals to perform supernatural “*signs*.” The first occurred under *Moses and his successor Joshua*, and the second occurred under *Elijah and his successor Elisha*.

The first occurred in connection with *the Jewish people and the theocracy* — the Jewish people leaving Egypt with a view to realizing an inheritance in a theocracy in another land. Thus, a first-mention principle was established at this point in Scripture regarding *signs*, which can never change. Accordingly, any future manifestation of signs, through individuals empowered to perform these signs, could only have to do with *the Jewish people*, *with the theocracy in view*.

Remove either (*the Jewish people* or *the theocracy*), and signs of the nature seen in Scripture *cannot exist*. Both *Israel* and *the kingdom* must be in view *together* for these supernatural signs to exist.

This is why exactly the same thing is seen by and through a manifestation of signs during Elijah’s and Elisha’s ministries. This was one of the darkest days in Israeli history. Ahab and his wife Jezebel had led the people completely away from God, into Baal worship. The theocracy was in existence, though in a divided kingdom. And the manifested signs had to do with *Israel and the kingdom* (a call for the people to return to the God of their fathers).

The same thing was seen in the gospel accounts and the book of Acts during the offer and reoffer of the kingdom to Israel — an unparalleled manifestation of signs.

And the same thing will again be seen during the first half of the Tribulation, by and through the ministry of the two witnesses, by and through the ministry of Moses and Elijah to Israel during this period. And the signs will, they *must*, have to do with *Israel and the kingdom* during this future time. The kingdom will be in the offing. The time will be at hand when the kingdom will be restored to a repentant and converted nation.

1) John and Elijah

Many Bible students have trouble understanding that John only came “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*” and did not fulfill any of the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Elijah.

John clearly stated that he wasn’t Elijah (John 1:21). Jesus, on the other hand, said that he was Elijah (Matthew 11:10-14; 17:10-13). But there was an “if” in connection with John being identified as Elijah by Christ in Matthew 11:14 — “*if you will receive* . . . .”

Elijah is to be Christ’s forerunner at the time *Israel receives her Messiah*. God, in His foreknowledge, knew what the nation would do at Christ’s first coming. Thus, John was sent “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*,” but not in fulfillment of any prophecies about Elijah.

(Scripture sometimes has near and far fulfillments of events in the preceding respect. Note Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15 for example — “*Out of Egypt have I called my Son*.” The prophecy in Hosea is clearly about *Israel*, God’s firstborn son, at the time of the Exodus. In Matthew though, the prophecy was fulfilled by God’s other firstborn Son, at the time He was removed from Egypt as a child.)

The fulfillment of that which is seen in Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6 can only occur at *a time when the Jewish people receive their Messiah*. Note the context of Isaiah 40:3; it is millennial. Also, note that which Elijah will do in Malachi 4:6, which John didn’t do in his ministry.

Elijah, exactly as he did with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18:25ff, will turn “*the heart*” of the Jewish people back to their fathers (back to believing the prophets), and “*the heart*” of their fathers (the prophets) back to the Jewish people. Note the direct statement regarding this in the historical account following the fire falling from heaven on Mount Carmel (*cf*. 1 Kings 18:37-39; Malachi 4:5-6).

John, as Christ’s forerunner at His first coming, aside from a near fulfillment of **Isaiah 40:3**, failed to fulfill any of the prophecies pertaining to Elijah. Thus, through any sound system of biblical interpretation, *John cannot possibly be seen fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies concerning Elijah*.

Elijah will come yet future, fulfilling Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6. And, once again, he will be instrumental in turning the people *from unbelief to belief* in Israel, possibly in a similar manner to the way he accomplished this on Mount Carmel over 2,800 years ago (1 Kings 18:25-39).

2) Moses and Elijah, During the Tribulation

When Elijah returns to minister to the Jewish people before “*the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*,” he will be accompanied by Moses, both during the Tribulation and with Christ following the Tribulation. And his fulfilling the passages in Isaiah and Malachi may very well occur both during and following the Tribulation when both he and Moses return with Christ, for events throughout this period will occur prior to “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

(For information concerning when the Day of the Lord begins, which will follow the Tribulation and Christ’s return, refer to The Time of the End, Chapters 4-5.

“*The great and dreadful day of the Lord*” would refer more specifically to that time when Gentile world power is destroyed following Christ’s return. See Chapter 15, p. 188 in The Time of the End.)

During the Tribulation (first half), Moses and Elijah will minister to Israel. They will evidently be instrumental in the conversion of the 144,000 Jews who are to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles worldwide during the last half of the Tribulation (Revelation 7, 12, 14). As well, they will evidently confront Antichrist and his false prophet, through supernatural powers, *signs* (*cf*. Revelation 11:3-6; 13:13-15).

But the entire nation being brought to the place which Elijah brought them in history on Mount Carmel will await Moses and Elijah’s return with Christ at the end of the Tribulation.

At the end of their ministry during the Tribulation, Moses and Elijah will be slain. And this may very well be the time when Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and turns against the Jewish people in all his fury, as seen in Matthew 24:15ff (*cf*. Revelation 11:13).

Three and one-half days following their death, Moses and Elijah will be raised from the dead and be removed into the heavens, waiting for Christ’s return three and one-half years later.

(For additional information pertaining to Moses and Elijah returning with Christ at the end of the Tribulation, refer to the author’s book, Coming in His Kingdom, particularly Chapters 1, 4.)

Biblical prophecy places Israel’s repentance near the end of the Tribulation and the birth of a nation following Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation.

Moses and Elijah’s ministry to Israel during the first half of the Tribulation may very well be of such a nature that over three years following their ministry, near the end of the Tribulation, in Israel’s darkest hour, their prior ministry will play a part in the entire nation turning to and calling upon the God of their fathers (exactly as seen in the type in Exodus 2:23). And, exactly as seen in the type, when the Jewish people do this, God will hear, remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and send the One greater than Moses back to His people (Exodus 2:24ff; *cf*. Zechariah 12:10ff).

[Bible One - Arlen Chitwood's The Time of the End, Ch. 20](http://bibleone.net/TOTE_20.htm)