

The Revelation – The Two Witnesses

Before I get into today's lesson I want to say that I hope that each of you has had a very merry Christmas and that you have remembered that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. I also hope that you will forgive me for missing last week's lesson. Finally, I want to wish you a happy New Year.

Today we will continue on our study of the Revelation of Jesus Christ by looking at another aside occurring between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments. Revelation 11:1-14 says:

- (1) And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.
- (2) But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.
- (3) And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
- (4) These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.
- (5) And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.
- (6) These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.
- (7) And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.
- (8) And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.
- (9) And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.
- (10) And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.
- (11) And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.
- (12) And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.
- (13) And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
- (14) The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

It is interesting to note here that John does not tell us anything about the measurements that he made of the temple. It would appear, though, that the real reference here is to point out that the Jews did not measure up. For this reason the Gentiles would tread the court for 42 months. Now 42 months is 3 ½ years and appears to refer to the first half of the tribulation period.

We are next introduced to two witnesses who will prophecy for 3 ½ years measured in days. This would appear to occur during the last half of the tribulation period as measured in days. These witnesses are the focus of this chapter and of our lesson today.

The first thing that we notice about these two witnesses is that they are clothed in sackcloth. This is a symbol of their humility and submission to God. Their example, as well as their message, is a warning to the world.

Next we see that these witnesses are said to be the two olive trees and the two candlesticks. We have already seen that candlesticks were used to represent the Church. Now the word church is literally the assembly. So, then, we could say that these are representative of the two assemblies, the Jews and the Church. This is further supported by the use of the olive branch reference. To see this let's look at the apostle Paul's writing in Romans 11:13-24, which says:

- (13) For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:
- (14) If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them.
- (15) For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving *of them be*, but life from the dead?
- (16) For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.
- (17) And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
- (18) Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.
- (19) Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.
- (20) Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:
- (21) For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.
- (22) Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.
- (23) And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.
- (24) For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Once again we see that the olive tree is here representative of the two different people of God, the Jews and the Church. It is apparent, then, that these two witnesses are representative of these two groups. These are not Moses and Elijah as some have said. There is no Scripture which says that Moses will come, and the prophecy that Elijah will precede the coming of the Lord has already been fulfilled in John the Baptist.

Are these two witnesses individuals or groups? I do not know. This is a Scripture where the symbolic and the literal collide. Since they represent the assembly through all ages it could be an indication of the Jews and the Church uniting against the antichrist, although I doubt this since Jesus indicated in John 5:43 that the Jews would, by and large, accept the antichrist, who will come in his own name, as the Messiah.

My personal view is that these two witnesses are select individuals from these two groups of people, but especially representatives of God. These are not afraid to stand before the god of this world and state the truth. They have boldness to tell the world that it is because of their sin that all of these things have come upon them. The world, though, does not want to hear their message. Nobody wants to be told that they are sinful. They have been taught all of their life that if it feels good it is OK. Satan has deceived them, and they have wholeheartedly followed him.

One thing that is interesting in this Scripture is the fact that everyone in the world is watching the witnesses. In the days of John this would be unthinkable, but today we have 24 hour news channels which can in an instant carry the image throughout the earth. John actually predicted the advent of TV with satellite feeds!

In concluding today's lesson I would like to make note of the fact that there is still a remnant upon earth at this time. While they are afraid they give glory to God for his miraculous victory. This has given them new hope in these perilous times. We, also, should take hope in these words of comfort that God has given to us.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich