

The Two Witnesses (Part 3)

Their Testimony

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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The last time I spoke I gave "The Two Witnesses, Part 2." That seems like forever ago, but it really wasn't. Anyway, the sermon was primarily about the last verse of Revelation 10 - in which John was told that he must "prophesy again." Then it went on into chapter 11, in which he was given a reed like a rod; and he was told to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshippers that were there. We basically just discussed those two verses in that sermon.

We saw that God could not be speaking about John, the apostle. That is, about him "prophesying again." He was already ninety plus years old. Obviously, history has shown us that he died very soon thereafter. He reached his mid-nineties or so, and God let him die. And so he never really did prophesy again. So we have to think then that John the apostle (one of the "sons of thunder") represents someone in the future - or some persons in the future - that will do this. That is, that will prophesy again and take up that work that he is a representative of, or that he symbolizes.

Maybe I should not say that "work," but that "position;" and then the commission that was given to that particular person in that position. What we saw, in looking through that, is that this **"prophesy again"** means basically to **preach the gospel**. That's what we have narrowed it down to. It's what we consider the work of the church. It's really the work of the apostle (or whatever the title may happen to be) of the person that God calls to do that.

The church then supports that person in his work. Of course, the church does a great deal to make sure that goes out and goes on in the strength that it needs to. As Paul said, he asked for the prayers of the people so that the work could go out in boldness (even when he was in chains). So the church does a great deal - not just physically, let's say in being part of the church and giving tithes and offerings and whatnot; but in the support, the encouragement, and the prayers that are made for the one that God has called to do the work.

We also briefly examined John and James, the sons of Zebedee - called by Jesus Himself "Boanerges" or "the sons of thunder" - and what that could mean to this particular passage of Scripture. John the apostle (being one of these) is told to prophesy again just **after** the seven thunders sound. Once their rumbling goes off into the distance, God calls another - a son of thunder, let's say - to pick up the torch and carry

on.

So we looked at what this "sons of thunder" means, and saw the **fiery zeal** that God put into John and James. They exhibited it very clearly by wanting to call down fire from heaven and just wipe the Samaritans out. This illustration showed just exactly what was in them, but it was uncontrolled. It did not have God's Spirit to channel it in a proper direction. When they were converted though, we saw particularly in the example of John that they did quite a bit of preaching and quite astounding miracles [recorded] in the first few chapters of Acts. We see that this zeal (as Ezekiel calls it "of bitterness") is **a type of anger** that is there, which God uses in order to get the work done and get the message out.

We also considered what it meant to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshippers. I concluded that it represented the overall task of **feeding the flock**. God just basically breaks it down into (1) evaluating the church as a whole in general, (2) its quality of worship, which would be "the altar," and (3) the individual members, which would be the worshippers that are there - and specifically their relationship with God. So we have the church, the worship, and the individual members in their relationship with God.

We also took some time to show that this wasn't just a flimsy little measuring stick that John was given. It was **a reed like a rod**. It was a cudgel. It was a very stout stick that in the Bible is shown to be something of punishment almost. It forces people to do things. What I concluded, then, was that even though these witnesses are going to measure the church - they are not going to just hold up the standard and say, "You guys need to measure up to this. Okay?" They will have some sort of **power** behind that measuring rod **to motivate** people to conform to the standard, and to live their lives according to that standard.

That's basically where we got to in the last sermon. So we will just continue on from there, beginning in Revelation 11:2. This is the last part of this about measuring.

Revelation 11:2 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.

This is interesting. God tells John particularly to *leave out* the court, which is outside the temple. "Leave out" is a very strong word. It's what in Greek would be called emphasized. It's an emphatic word, and it means **to cast out**. It's not just "leave it out" or

"ignore it." It means, "throw it out!" Get it out of here! It's almost like a very violent rejection of the outer court. And it's very specific here where it says "the court which is outside the temple." It means that there is a space, let's say - a place where people go - that has nothing to do with the temple except that its proximity is close to it. It has nothing to do with God, nothing to do with the church.

And so God tells the messenger here (John in particular, but also we would say the Two Witnesses) that "You need to **reject** the world." Disregard it - is probably the least violent way of looking at it. That is, to simply disregard it. Maybe to throw away, to throw out, to cast out, or eject. Get it out of here! These are bolder, sterner, ways of looking at it.

This can have two senses. I think that the first one, which I have already mentioned, is the correct one. That is: Don't concern yourself with the world at all. It's not your job to save the world. You have to leave it where God has put it - which is outside the church. In fact, if the Two Witnesses were to spend their time worrying about all the people in the world, then they could not do the measuring of the temple.

And so God says, "Don't even think about it. Totally disregard it. Throw it out of your area of responsibility - because the world is not your concern." In a way He's telling them, "The world is My concern, and I've already planned to deal with the world - at another time." So, this is basically forcing the two witnesses into a very narrow work - solely to the church at this point, because that's where it needs to start. We'll see a little bit more about that later.

The second thing that it means (and I think that it means less this than the other) is "get worldliness out of the church." Of course, that would be part of measuring the temple. That would be just an obvious part of the measuring. But I believe the first one here is much more direct and emphatic - that you are supposed to totally ignore going to the world at this point. God has that reserved for another time, for other servants, or whatnot. He's going to take care of most of them in the second resurrection.

It's never really been the job of the church to try to save the world. It's been the job of the church to preach the gospel as a witness, but not to actually try to "save" the people there. The **saving** is done by God. He's the one who makes an individual call - an invitation, a summons - to the person, the individual, whom He wants saved at this point. So the church's job then is to go out and preach the message. And if any respond to it, then to teach, to baptize, to bring them into the fellowship of the church for the support of the work that is going on at the time.

This idea that we must save the world is an entirely Protestant and Catholic idea. They have this idea, of course, that if you don't save them now they are never going to be saved. And that's not the case! God has already reserved a time and a way, a method, to save them. He says that many, or most, of the people who have lived on this earth WILL BE saved. He says that specifically about Israel, and I'm sure it applies to most of the Gentiles as well - once they understand and are brought into contact with the truth; and, of course, the Holy Spirit is available for them to use.

This is emphasized then to the Two Witnesses: "Look. This idea of saving the world, of going out and having a crusade to bring in the millions, is not your job. Leave it out. It's not a part of your work." And He says, "Do not measure it. Don't do what you do for the church for the world. It's just going to be a waste of time. It's going to be a waste of resources. They are not going to be able to measure up to it. It is just going to go right over their heads and where will you be?" Where will the church be? How far will God's plan have moved forward? "Not very much" is the answer. So He's very strong about this here. Remember that I said this is an emphasized word. Leave it out! Cast it out of your mind, let's say. Don't even try to go there.

"The court which is outside" - we've already really explained that. That's the world, and it has no part with the church. As I said before, He will work with those people in the Millennium. That is, those who live through the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. And He'll also work with them in the second resurrection - the time of the Great White Throne period.

The word *Gentiles* here - "for it has been given to the Gentiles." This is the word *ethnos*. You've probably heard it. You probably heard it today, or yesterday. "Ethnic" comes from it. It simply means the nations. It could also mean heathen people, or pagan people, or simply peoples. But in many places its best translation would be just simply "the nations." That is, the different kinds of people in this world. That's who have the court that is outside the temple. The nations! And it's very clear here that he's talking about nations who do NOT know God - people who do not know God. Thus, pagans or heathens would also be an appropriate way of looking at it. They are nations cut off or apart from God. Maybe in a more general way we could say **the unconverted**, or **the uncalled**.

Let's look at this word *tread*. They are going to tread the holy city under foot for forty-two months. The holy city, of course, would have to be Jerusalem. If we are going to look at the Bible simply for our interpretation of these things, the only city that is called "the holy city" in the entire Bible is Jerusalem. So we know what that is, but let's look at **tread** for a minute. Luke 21 is Luke's version of the Olivet Prophecy. Jesus uses the term tread,

and I want to go there.

Luke 21:20-24 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation [destruction] 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.

He used the word "trampled" here, but it is basically the same word. It's the same understanding that you are supposed to get out of it. It's connected with armies that are conquering and destroying, and particularly here we are talking about Jerusalem. This is actually the prophecy of what will go on then in Revelation 11:2 throughout the Two Witnesses' ministry. That is, the trampling underfoot - or the treading underfoot - of Jerusalem by foreign armies.

We know this to be the armies of the Beast, who come in and in some way cause the "abomination of desolation" - the armies surrounding the city. And the people of God who are there must flee. They have to get out, and get out quick. There'll be a problem (it says in verse 23) with those who are pregnant or nursing babies in those times just because the times are so bad and you have to move fast. Little babies like that are (I hate to say it) a burden, when you are on the run. They can slow you down. They can give you away - however it happens to be. Try to keep a baby quiet in the midst of consternation.

This is going to be a revolting, horrible, terrible time. We had an article about this: Should we not be having babies? We had that back in 1994 or something like that. But it is something to think about as we get closer and closer. I think we figured there that from impregnation to weaning it could be upwards of two years or so. So you have to think about something like that as far in advance as you possibly can - to those who are still able to have children, or who want them. I'm out of that now. I don't want to have any more. Four is enough. But it is something to think about.

That is how terrible the times will be. Even having children about - not able to take care of themselves, or not able to run with you (let's say) to where you are trying to flee,

would cause you to be burdened and could put one in danger. That's what **woe** usually means. Watch out! Be careful! Things could get really bad. So it's something to think about. And this is the time that is being talked about there in Revelation 11:2.

In the book of Revelation, every time *tread* is used, it means something very horrible. It's used in Revelation 14:17-20.

Revelation 14:17-20 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

So when you are talking *trampling*, when you are talking *treading*, you're talking **blood!** Blood will flow. One other place, Revelation 19:15, where it speaks of Jesus Christ Himself.

Revelation 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

So in this case and in chapter 17, we are talking about a God-induced horror on the earth - with blood, and guts, and a lot of fear and destruction, devastation and punishment for all the sins of the world. God will have it 'up to here.' Then He'll say, "Okay, I've had it! Get the winepress going and start trampling."

So this is the time of the work of the Two Witnesses - this time of great horror. It's not going to be a joy-ride in the least for these two men. They are going to be dodging this **horror**, and witnessing amidst all of it. I have no desire to do anything like that. It'll be better people than me, I'm sure. Just thinking about it - trying to put yourself in that place - is just awful to think about. But this is the milieu, the setting, of what's coming up here for the Two Witnesses.

Just for a short time, let's look at this forty-two months business at the end of verse 2.

Revelation uses three different time periods that are all the same - 1260 days, 3½ years, or 42 months. If you do the math, they all come out within a day or so of one another. If you use 30-day months (like prophecies are normally constructed of), they come out exactly 3½ years to the day. This specific 42 months is found in only one other place. That's in Revelation 13:1-5, where it is talking about the Beast rising out of the sea.

Revelation 13:5 He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue forty-two months.

These **time periods** are in various places in Revelation - but particularly in chapters 11, 12, and 13. In Revelation 11:2, the Two Witnesses prophesy for 1260 days. In Revelation 12:6, the woman goes into her place in the wilderness; and she's fed there 1260 days. And then, at the end of the chapter (Revelation 12:14), the woman flees with two wings of a great eagle; and she flies into the wilderness where she is nourished for "a time and times and half a time." I didn't mention that one before, but it is basically 3½ years. A *time* is a year. *Times* is two years. And half a time is, obviously, half a year. So, add them together; and you get 3½ years. So obviously she is protected from the presence of the serpent for 3½ years. So we have those time periods.

The book of Daniel also mentions various time periods of about that length as well. It is quite difficult to sort out. That's one way that a lot of people who study prophecy get messed up with the timing of things. The one there in Revelation 13:5 seems to be *dual*. The Beast power that has gone through history was given forty-two months - or 1260 years - of sway over basically the lands of Europe. That was seen in the power of the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire during that time. But it also will probably be dual. We see that in Revelation 11:2-3. This same period of time is when the Gentiles - the nations - will have rule over the city of Jerusalem. So, at the end, there will be a time of a literal 3½ years (not 1260 years) in which the Beast will have sway.

This is also mirrored in Revelation 12 - which shows one period of 1260 days, which are 1260 years in which the church flies into the wilderness. Then, at the end of the chapter, there is a specific time of "time and times and half a time" (or, really, 3½ years) in which the church is protected from the presence of Satan. So we are going back and forth between a **literal** time of 3½ years and a **figurative** time of 1260 years. This has been something that most people who study prophecy get their heads whirling about in confusion over. But it is really simple.

Here in Revelation 11, we are talking *literally* 3½ years. This is an inset chapter. It's not going basically with the flow here. It has now reached the point where the 3½ years of

the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord, and the final end of all things at this present configuration will occur - ending with the return of Jesus Christ.

So you don't need to worry about these forty-two months or 1260 days in verses 2 and 3 because they are the same period. That is, the 3½ years of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord - ending with Christ's return (as far as we know). I don't want to get too dogmatic. I don't want to get away from my statement in the first sermon. This is just the way that it seems to me, and I hope you'll at least give me that much credit - that I tried to put all of this together, and tried to give you **possibilities** for how things might go.

Now we are ready to get into Revelation 11:3.

Revelation 11:3 "And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

It is a very interesting way that this is laid out here. The wording, that is. Notice that the word **power** in most Bibles is in *italic* and that is correct. The word is not there in the original. If you just take it out, it says "I will give to My two witnesses and they will prophesy." Power is an okay addition there because that shows the result of what is given. We have to look at this - if you take the word "power" out - "I will give to My two witnesses" puts itself in the form of **a commission**. "*I will commission My two witnesses.*" Another place has the word *endow*, which gives the idea not only of giving a commission but also giving certain gifts, or talents, or strengths, or whatever it happens to be that they need for their ministry.

Now, we have to remember something here. Who's speaking? We saw that - all the way back in chapter 10 - the speaker was the one with the little book in His hand, who was standing on the land and the sea; and that was Jesus Christ. It could only be Him when we see all the symbols and compare them with Revelation 1 and also compare them with Ezekiel 1 as well. It can only be Christ. So, He has not really stopped talking except for a few of the things that John has put in there. He's the One who says, "Rise and measure the temple." He's the One who says, "Leave out the outer court." He's the One that says, "Gentiles will tread it under foot." And then He's the One who says, "I will give to My two witnesses."

Jesus has been talking this whole time. And, in fact, He continues talking all the way down through verse 10 (at least). He's the One. This is so important that He didn't give it to an angel to relate to us. He Himself decided to relate this directly to John, so that there would not be second-hand or third-hand. This is direct. First-hand from God, about

these two people - these two very important people - servants of His who would do this work for 3½ years.

So this gives you an idea of the relative importance of this work. It's the smash-bang ending to the thunders, given by the sons of thunder. We'll see that "sons of thunder" fits very well when we get into Zechariah 4, which I hope to do today. But I just wanted to make it clear that it was Jesus who was speaking. It was He who was giving the powers, the authority, the commission; and that this is something directly from Him that He sets up to make a grand, overwhelming, irrefutable witness in the last 3½ years of this world as we know it.

This insertion of "**power**" here (like I said) is okay. "**Authority**" would be just fine as well, because I think that is the real meaning of power that the translators are trying to get us to understand. They are NOT trying to give us the idea of power in terms of strength or might - but power in terms of authority. "I will give authority to My two witnesses." That is, that they have the okay from God to do this prophesying. But probably even better than "power" and "authority" would be a more general insertion - such as "**gifts**." Or, giving gifts. "I will give gifts to My two witnesses." Or, "I will give abilities to My two witnesses." Or (very similar) "I will give powers."

Probably the best one though (from how we understand it) would be **grace** - meaning favor and all that comes with it. All the things that they would need to do. They would all come from God, of course; and so they were just gifts from God. But, obviously, Jesus Himself left the word out. So any insertion that has to do with powers, and gifts, and authority would work there - just depending on how you were coming at it, and what you wanted particularly to emphasize.

The main thing that we want to get out of it is that, whatever it is that these men need to do their job, it's going to be given to them - whether it's power, or gifts, or grace, or favor, or what have you. It's going to be given to them, and they will use it. God gives nothing that should not be used; and He gives it at the time that it should be used.

One literal version that I saw (and I think this is probably the best overall) and I mentioned it once before is that they have this as "*I will endow My two witnesses.*" Meaning, "*I will give to them.*" And then you supply all the things that they will need. "*I will endow My two witnesses.*"

Now let's go on to the words *My Two Witnesses*. I've mentioned before in one of the other sermons that this is really "**Two witnesses of Me.**" It's very interesting. But before we get to that, let's look at the word **witnesses**. This is the word *martyrs* or *martus*, and

it's found ten times in this particular book [of Revelation]. It corresponds to the Hebrew word *ed*. That word is used fifty times in the Old Testament. But it always refers to a person. A witness - when these two words are used - always refers to people.

The reason why I say that is because there are many commentaries and people (I don't know that there's anyone in the church who thinks this.) who think the Two Witnesses are various things or institutions - such as the Old and New Testaments. Or, in the same vein, they say that one is the Christian church and the other one would be the church in the wilderness, or the church of Israel. Some people think that the Two Witnesses are the church made up of Israel and then the church made up of the Gentiles. And there are various other things that people have thought of that the Two Witnesses could be.

But the word *martus* here pretty much specifies that they are people. And we could go on further, as it's pretty easy to show. These Two Witnesses do miracles. They die. Churches, we know, don't die. At least, God's church doesn't because the gates of the grave won't prevail against it. Of the Old and New Testament: you would hardly say that they die, or perform miracles necessarily. It has to be people. It has to be individuals. So it's NOT any of those groups, things, or institutions. It must be two physical people. And He calls them "prophets" later on. So it must be individuals.

"The two witnesses of Me." Down in verse 7 it says that the message that they give is called **a testimony**. We often think of testimony, when we look at it in the Bible, in a very religious sense; and that tends to get confusing. But it really is not confusing at all! It just means *evidence*. You give evidence. Normally, we would call it *eyewitness proof*. It's something that you saw, or something that you experienced, that you are called before a judge to talk about - to testify about. So these two witnesses are called upon to give an account of what they've seen, what they've experienced, what they've learned.

Their **witness** is primarily given by word. They are told to prophesy. They preach. Of course, some of the things that they go on and do will also give a witness. Their miracles will back up their speech. But a witness is primarily done by word. Normally, when you go into a court of law and someone is called as a witness to give their testimony, someone asks questions; and they respond **in words**. They say what it is that they saw, or they experienced.

This is very similar to what the Two Witnesses will be doing. They will be giving evidence - proof - their testimony of the God of the whole earth (as it says there in verse 4). That is, the Creator God - the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. They will be revealing God to this world, and giving their eyewitness testimony of the things that He has taught them, the things that they have experienced because of Him, the things that

He has led them through. And it will make an astounding witness to the entire earth, because they have a god that does not do things like that. And, of course, they will back it up with miracles.

I said that their witness is primarily given by words. Paul called it "the foolishness of preaching" in I Corinthians 1:21. It's the way that God has always gotten His Word out. The patriarchs did it. The prophets did it. Some of the kings even did it - David being the chief example with all the psalms that he wrote. He may not have spoken them, but he certainly sang them; and he wrote them down. So this **witness by word** doesn't necessarily have to be all preaching. It can also be in terms of **written** things as well - or even in **singing**. We kind of group it all under the umbrella of *communication*. They will communicate this experience and their knowledge to the world.

Let's go to I John 1. I want to show you how the eyewitnesses - particularly in the New Testament, but also in the Old - did it. Here's John's experience. And I started with John because he is one of the sons of thunder.

I John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was made manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

I think this gives a pretty good template for a great deal of the witnessing of the Two Witnesses. In the case of the witnesses, (as far as I know) I don't think that the Bible says that they will have touched and seen Jesus Christ physically. But they certainly will have heard Him, and they certainly will have been 'worked with' by Him. And they will have plenty of experiences to let the world know just what this God is - what He does, what He plans.

And, as John says, the ultimate goal here is that we may have **fellowship with Him**. So these Two Witnesses are going to, in a way, bring Christ into the eyesight - into the knowledge - of the people of this world. They are not going to like that because it's going to put them in a very bad light. Ultimately this is supposed to bring joy. But for the Two Witnesses it is not going to bring joy. It's going to bring a great deal of hurt and death eventually - but, in the end, glory.

Let's go to II Peter 1. This is another apostle who had personal experience with Christ.

II Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Now remember that Peter, James, and John were the three who were allowed to go up on the mountain and view the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. That is, have that vision. And two of them were sons of thunder. By this time, one of them had died - James. And so it was left to Peter and John to give an account of this from their memory; and this is what he is thinking about here. They saw with their own eyes the majesty of Jesus Christ as He would appear when He came.

As in John's case, Peter's case is also a nice template to what the Two Witnesses will be saying. They are going to make known to the world the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But they'll do it from their own experiences with Him.

II Peter 1:17-19 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed [made more sure], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

This also indicates that not only will they be giving it from their own experience but they will also be preaching the prophetic word - the Bible. So their own experiences will be backed up with what has been revealed to them in God's Word.

Let's go back to the book of Isaiah now. When you are talking about the Two Witnesses, you need to go to this scripture. Think of this in terms of the world being the blind people.

Isaiah 43:8-9 Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, "It is truth."

He is obviously talking to Israel. They should have known these things. But I am taking this and kind of putting it into the realm of the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation, and the world.

Isaiah 43:10-13 "You are My witnesses," says the LOORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LOORD, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved. I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you. Therefore you are My witnesses," says the LOORD, "that I am God. Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand. I work, and who will reverse it?"

This is somewhat the message that will be delivered by these Two Witnesses to the world. "Look. There's witness all around you that God is God." They will declare Him, and the world won't like it.

Isaiah 40:1-10 "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LOORD's hand double for all her sins." The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LOORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth. The glory of the LOORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LOORD has spoken." The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LOORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain. O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength. Lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.

I think that is also part of the message of the Two Witnesses. They will be preaching

comfort to Jerusalem - that the end is about to come, that she's been repaid for her sins but there's a time coming that will be better for her. Then, the preparing the way of the Lord, because that's exactly what is going to be done by this ministry. Also, that the Day of the Lord is coming when all flesh is grass; and lots and lots of people are going to be wiped out for their sins. And then a message to the church and its part in bringing good tidings of the coming Kingdom of God - giving them encouragement to do it with strength and boldness in Judah (evidently where most of them are). And then, of course, the bold enunciation of the return of Jesus Christ and His coming government.

That, I think, encapsulates in a way **the witness** of the Two Witnesses. That is, the testimony that they will be giving to the world. This will be true evidence that provides a conviction. In a way, you could say that the Two Witnesses are the two star witnesses of this trial in which God judges that the world must be punished, and that He must send His Son back, and wrap things up. So, as I say, they will give their evidence; and it will bring a conviction.

We have one other thing to look at there in Revelation 11:3. It says there "clothed in sackcloth." If you will flip back to II Kings 1, I just want to pick out one verse. This is the people who came back and reported to the king, Ahaziah.

II Kings 1:8 So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Now let's go to Matthew 3:4.

Matthew 3:4 Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locust and wild honey.

The reason that I went to those two [verses] is because Elijah and John the Baptist both wore sackcloth; and, in a way, they are types of these two witnesses. How much, I'll let you decide at this point. But this has several meanings in the Bible. They are all kind of similar, but they have nuances that we need to think about.

Sackcloth was worn by those who were in **mourning**. I just wanted to refer you, at this point, about that and back to Ezekiel where the angel was supposed to mark all those who sighed and cried for all the troubles of Jerusalem. That is a sign of woe, of mourning, or of being sorry for the fall of this once great nation - that sort of thing, or their sins.

Sackcloth also can mean **repentance** - as an outward sign of the inner repentance of a person; and therefore it also has another meaning of being humble. A repentant person should be a humble person at this point. He has seen his sins and turned from them.

Another meaning is **austerity**. This is one that the world often uses for John the Baptist and Elijah - that they were "poor" men. But that is not necessarily the case. Austerity does not necessarily mean that you are poor. It can mean though that you lead a very simple lifestyle, and that you have removed things that complicate one's life. And so this idea of austerity comes forward of having stripped off all the complications of life. That is, having stripped down to just the simplest essentials of one's physical life.

And then, of course, the other one that goes with this would then be **poverty**. But if we look at it as not physical poverty (meaning that you don't have much money) but as spiritual poverty (meaning poor in spirit), that's a better way of looking at it in terms of both the Two Witnesses, and Elijah, and John the Baptist. They were poor in spirit. They were ready to be filled and given the riches of God because they had considered themselves very lowly and needy. They needed what God could give.

So, take your pick of what you feel that means to the Two Witnesses. It could mean all of them. That they are in mourning for the troubles that this world is going through. They are repentant and humble themselves. They are austere and don't have any of the bangles and things that complicate most people's lives. They have stripped themselves of these things that would weigh them down - as in Hebrews 12:1 - so that they can run. And also that they are very poor in spirit.

Revelation 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

Here is the verse that gives the biblical identification of the two witnesses, and it's very interesting. It's put in here like "You should know this. You should know who these two witnesses are. They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before God. Don't you read your Bible? Haven't you read Zechariah 4?" Obviously, that's what this reference is to - specifically, Zechariah 4:14 where almost the exact same thing is said. In answer to Zechariah's question, the angel says:

Zechariah 4:14 "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."

It's not quite a word-for-word repetition, but it is pretty close. And so you say, "Well, you just go to Zechariah 4 and find out who these two characters are." But that's where it starts getting tricky because Zechariah 4 is in no way simple, or easy, to figure out. Back in Zechariah 4, we'll start with verses 1-5, where the vision is explained.

Zechariah 4:1-5 Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "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. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

"Didn't I just say that I didn't know what they were?" That's the impression that you get. But the angel's answer to him is very similar to how it is written in Revelation 11:4. "Don't you know who these are? Haven't you figured this out yet? Isn't it obvious what these are?" Zechariah was obviously perplexed, and I think the rest of us have been perplexed ever since (even with Revelation 11). It's not easy to figure out.

For starters, what did this lampstand look like? Most of us are familiar with the menorah - the candelabra with a central post and seven branches, that radiate out. In the menorah that is shown in history, they just come out in one plane - like branches of a tree that has been sliced off all the other branches except on this one plane. There are seven of these branches - or six and then the top one also has a bowl on top of it.

This is similar, but not exactly the same. It has a central post, like the menorah. But this central post is topped by a very large bowl. A golden bowl it is called here. That's in verse 2. It's a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it.

Now, it has on the stand seven lamps - meaning it has seven branches (not six, but seven branches); and each branch has a lamp on the end of it. So this is a little bit different from the regular menorah. [This has] a central post and on the top of it is a very large bowl. And then it has seven branches that have bowls on the end of it. I don't know if all these branches are all on one plane. I don't think so. I think they are radiated around the entire central post.

The reason why I say this is because each bowl has seven pipes, or tubes, that go from

the bowl on the top to it. So there are forty-nine tubes. If we are trying to do this logically, the best way that could be done is that they're radiated around the central post (rather than on one plane). So we have a central pole, or post, with a very large golden bowl on the top. Out of this golden bowl at the top are forty-nine tubes of gold. Seven of those forty-nine tubes run to each of the seven lamps. So I think we have an idea of what that is. The large bowl at the top contains oil. The oil runs down these pipes, or tubes, into the seven smaller lamps. It supplies them constantly with oil.

Let's just take the time to go to Revelation 1 and read this, and then we will finish for today. In the New Testament, here in Revelation 1, there is a similar configuration of things.

Revelation 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands.

So now, instead of there being lamps on the end of arms, they are individual lamp stands.

Revelation 1:13-20 And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters [or thunders, you might say]; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

That's pretty specific. What we have are seven lampstands that, in verse 20, He very specifically says are **the seven churches**. They are radiated about Him. He is in the midst of them. You could look at it as seven individual candelabra around Him. He's

standing in the midst of them. In Revelation 2:1, He says that He walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

So the figure in Zechariah 4 is very similar. The central post is Jesus Christ. The seven lamps that radiate out from the central post are the seven churches. Like I said, this figure here in Revelation 1 is a little bit different, but it's basically the same. The reason for it is different. The purpose for showing it is different. I think here in Revelation 1 it is showing to John particularly - and to us - that Jesus Christ Himself is in the midst of the churches. He is in control. As Paul says in Colossians 1:18, He is the Head of the Body - the church. And everything that He was going to say from this time forward in the book of Revelation was **a revelation**, a revealing of things that were to come. And He needed to emphasize to John the authority of what was being said and what he would see. So it not only helped John but, of course, it also helps to interpret what's there in Zechariah 4:1-5 very well.

I do want to add one thing here before I close, and that is just something to think about in the next few weeks. That is, the bowl on top of the central post is NOT Christ. That is my own interpretation. The bowl is NOT Christ. He is the post that supports the bowl. The bowl is on top of His head, let's say, in the figure. He holds it up. You can think about what that means in the intervening weeks. He is NOT the bowl. He supports it. He is the foundation of the bowl. He holds it up.

So, more on the bowl later. More on Zechariah 4 later. And then, after that, back to Revelation 11.