

THE REVELATION

JUNE 23, 2024

Chapter 11:4 - 12

As we ended the last lesson, we were had come to the “Two Witnesses to Prophecy 1260 days (11:3-14)” and found out about “Their Authority (11:3).” John said,

Rev 11:3 "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Moving on in Chapter 11 with these two witnesses, John tells us about “Their Look.”

(a) Their Look (11:4)

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

The LORD identifies these two witnesses as “the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.” We are forced to consider the same wording in Zechariah 4.

The Two Anointed Ones

Zec 4:1 Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. ² He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; ^{Zec 4:3} also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."... ¹¹ Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?" ¹² And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?" ¹³ So he answered me, saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." ¹⁴ Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth."

Here, we see Zechariah in chapter 4, but many commentators use chapter 3 to prove the identity of the two witnesses as the “two olive trees.” Chapter 3 tells the story of Joshua, the High Priest, rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem after his return from exile in Babylon. Satan was at the Throne of God, accusing Joshua of being unfit to serve in the rebuilt Temple. The LORD rejected Satan’s attack on Joshua.

In chapter 4, between verses 3 and 11, Zerubbabel, the governor, is promised that because he laid the foundation stone on the Temple, he would be the one to put the capstone on it to complete it. Because of human interference from neighboring clans and the dysfunction in the Persian government, the building of the Temple was stalled and ultimately took 20 years to complete.

Many commentators name Joshua and Zerubbabel as the two anointed ones, the two olive trees and, therefore, the two witnesses of the Revelation. Actually, Joshua and Zerubbabel were aided in their attempts to serve the LORD by the two anointed ones rather than being the anointed ones. Other commentators name Moses and Elijah, while others name Enoch and Elijah. However, the

issue is that these “two anointed ones who are standing by the LORD of the whole earth” were in operation here and at least 2,500 years later in the storyline of the Second Coming of the LORD.

Zechariah’s vision indicates that the “two olive trees” fill the pipes and the bowls with oil that feeds the flames for light from the lampstand. It also indicates that these “two olive trees” are the “two anointed ones.” In Hebrew, *“the two anointed ones”* is rendered as *the two sons of oil*. As *sons of oil*, these are the ones who aid servants of the living God in their ability to accomplish the tasks He has assigned to them. Joshua and Zerubbabel were not the “two anointed ones” of Zechariah nor the Revelation.

The best conclusion must be that these two witnesses who arrive in Jerusalem at the beginning of the Tribulation will be sent by the LORD, whether earthly humans or heavenly creatures, to protect the nation of Israel for 1260 days, arriving at the beginning of the Tribulation. If they are humans, the LORD will endow them with great power as he did Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and the Apostles. If they are heavenly creatures, the LORD will present them in human form as He did the angels who visited Lot in the village of Sodom and seemed human to the town folk. He also allowed them to die as if they were human and be resurrected – neither being impossible with God.

(b) Their Power (11:5)

Rev 11:5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

Powerful might be an understatement when describing these two anointed ones. The world is full of those who hate Israel; therefore, they would naturally hate these two who have arrived in Jerusalem to protect Israel. Just as there are nations that want to annihilate Israel today, there will be nations that want to annihilate these two witnesses. But, these two will be given authority from God to strike back with a flaming force, resulting in immediate death.

(c) Their Ability (11:6)

Rev 11:6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

But the power of these two witnesses would not stop with the flames from their mouths; they could stop the rain “during the days of their prophesying” – 1260 days. These two will have the power to turn water to blood and “strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.” The LORD allowed Moses to do the same but with one big caveat: the LORD told Moses what to do, when to do it, and how to do it; here, the witnesses are totally in control of when they turn the water into blood and the plagues they choose to use and when they wish to use them. Stopping the rains for the 1260 days will bring economic hardship to Israel. As hated as Israel is among the nations, if Israel cannot produce its own food and no other nation has food to sell to it, or if no other nation willingly sells food to it, it will put Israel in a time of stress and tribulation nationally.

(d) Their Death (11:7)

Rev 11:7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

With the task of the two witnesses completed on earth, the LORD will allow “the beast that comes up out of the abyss” to kill them. Here, we must ask the question, “Which beast?” Those who have read the rest of this book know that two beasts will come shortly that will control the nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. They will join to form what we call the Revived Roman Empire because they will unite into a new nation, the remnants (10%) of the ten countries formed by their conquerors after the fall of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream prophesied them as ten toes that would one day reunite into an empire controlled by evil leaders. One beast would be seen coming out of the sea. The other would be seen coming from the land.

However, to this point in the story, John had not seen these beasts arrive and take their places of power. Specifically, the important point here is that he had not seen a beast coming out of the abyss. He had, however, seen the door to the abyss opened by a star that fell from heaven and allowed creatures to come out of the abyss to torment mankind. Is John speaking of a beast that has already come (9:1) or a beast that is still to come in the future (13:1)? What is the answer? It is found in the context of this section, which began in 10:8, where John was instructed to eat the little book and then prophesy about the ministry of the two witnesses (10:11). Therefore, when John says, “the beast that comes up out of the abyss,” he is speaking of the beast that is yet to come out of the abyss beginning in 13:1. It is a prophesy of the beast that will soon appear in the story which will be one of the rulers of the new nation comprising the ten nations spoken of above.

(e) Their Viewing (11:8)

Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

The city is Jerusalem; it was the place of the LORD’s crucifixion. No other city can make that claim. Why, then, is it called “Sodom and Egypt?” It is a very strange metaphor! Sodom indicates a *vice*, and Egypt indicates a *vanity or emptiness*. Sodom was guilty of the sin of homosexuality; Egypt was guilty of the emptiness of the worship of every god in the book except the true LORD God. Both are detested by the LORD! Not to get too far ahead in the story, soon the beast will be in control of Jerusalem, with his throne established there and his new worship imposed by the false prophet. Then, Jerusalem will be a center of vice and vanity.

(f) Their Enemies (11:9)

Rev 11:9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

Upon their deaths, they will not be buried. Their bodies will lie where they died for three and a half days so that the people of the world can see their decomposing bodies.

(g) Their Rejection (11:10)

Rev 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

In a gruesome tale, the dead bodies of the two witnesses will become the focus of great joy to people throughout the world, even to the point of sending gifts to each other in delight. Why? The Scripture answers, “...because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.” It means what it

says. We must not miss the magnitude of those words. The ministry of these two witnesses may have been focused on Jerusalem, but their ministry affected the people of the world. Specifically, no rain! It may even indicate that during the 1260 days of their ministry, they visited other parts of the world because of the “torment” they inflicted on the world’s population.

We must not miss an important point at this juncture. These two witnesses were the enemies of the world and the enemies of the defiant Israel, too.

(h) Their Resurrection (11:11)

Rev 11:11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

Two witnesses were dead in the streets of Jerusalem for “three and a half days.” Jerusalem sits on the earth at the longitude line of 31° 46’ 48” North. For comparison, north on Highway 45 from Houston, Jerusalem would sit just a few miles north of Centerville, Texas, or at mile marker 170. But it is also on the same longitudinal line as El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Centerville and El Paso temperatures have average highs of around 98° in July and average lows of around 33° in January. But the average highs in Jerusalem are around 85° in July, and the average lows are around 44° in January. Quite a difference! Depending on the time of year of the deaths of these two witnesses, the decomposition should start very rapidly regardless of the season. But these are no normal beings – these are the LORD’s anointed ones. The expectation of their following the normal rate of decay is unlikely!

Only recently has the technology been in place to allow the entire world to see and celebrate their deaths in real time. Even now, webcams can be directed at them, and the world can log in with portable devices to see them on the ground. What a surprise will take them by storm when the two witnesses stand to their feet, alive with the “breath of life from God.” It is the same breath of life mentioned by Ezekiel concerning the dry bones (Eze. 37:5, 9-10). It was the same breath breathed into Adam (Gen 2:7), life eternal – life to a soul that never dies. Imagine the dread felt by their dissenters! They knew the tribulation they felt while the two were alive. What kind of tribulation came with these two resurrected beings?

(i) Their Ascension (11:12)

Rev 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

The enemies really had nothing to worry about at the resurrection of the two witnesses, but they did not know that. The witnesses were through with their duties here on earth. The same loud voice that had called to John at the beginning of the REVELATION called to these anointed ones and said, “Come up here.” It was time for them to return to heaven to stand with the LORD. Just as Jesus ascended into heaven through the clouds from the Mount of Olives, these two ascended into heaven from the streets of Jerusalem, in clear view, in sight of the whole world who were “*their enemies*.” Imagine the fear that gripped the hearts and souls of the world’s people! What would come next? It would get worse, but not because of these two anointed ones.