

## God Always Gives a Witness (or Two)

Stand up to read text: Tom and Colt come in, saying, “Time to repent is running out; Turn to Jesus before it’s too late!”  
They stand behind me...

Read Revelation 11:1-14            PRAY!            They go down

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, four black college freshman from North Carolina A & T State University sat down at a lunch counter in an F.W. Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, North Carolina, and asked to be served. They were told no – the counter was for white people only. The four sat quietly until the store was closed, and the next day they came back. Again they were refused service. Again they sat quietly at the counter until the store closed, and returned the next day.

The four students, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, Ezell Blair, Jr., and David Richmond, knew they were running a risk of being arrested, beaten, or worse. Across the South, black people were supposed to stay away from whites-only restaurants, drinking fountains, and restrooms. But the four freshman were determined to be a witness for their constitutional rights and to challenge segregation.

By day four, the store was still refusing to serve them, and many people were stopping by to heckle or stare. But there were also hundreds showing up to support their silent protest. As word of the sit-in spread, black students in towns across the South began politely asking to be served at whites-only lunch counters. Whenever police arrested them, more protesters stepped forward to sit in their place.

The sit-ins gradually had a big effect. In July 1960, Woolworth’s decided to integrate its stores. Across the South, racial barriers gradually began to fall. The sit-ins helped bring about the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned the segregation of public facilities. And less than 50 years later, America became the first major nation to elect a minority person to be President of the United States.            Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> entry, *The American Patriot’s Almanac*

All the gains of the last fifty years were made possible by the courage of people like Franklin, Joseph, Ezell and David.

**I believe the difference between you and I making a modest impact for Jesus and a huge impact for Jesus can be defined by one word: COURAGE!**

Today we come to a passage in The Book of Revelation that shows two courageous witnesses speaking the truth of God in the dark days of the Tribulation.

And their courageous witness to come challenges us to be a courageous witness in our own day, because the souls of men and the soul of our nation is at stake!

This is thought by many to be the most difficult passage in Revelation to explain!

But I think that’s probably truer for those who try to spiritualize this and many other passages of the Bible. For those of us who take the scripture literally, it seems to lay out fairly nicely.

The problem for those who spiritualize it is they want to take anything related to Israel and apply it to the church. But in this chapter we are clearly dealing with things that mean more to a Jewish audience.

## **V. 1-2      God Measures Israel's Worship**

John is given a reed commonly used in those days to measure things out, and he is told to measure three things related to the Temple.

He is told to measure the sanctuary of the Temple, which probably means the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place.

He is told to measure the altar, which is probably the altar outside the Holy Place in the Jewish courtyard.

And he is also told to measure the Jews who worship there.

In this place the Holman translation unhelpfully adds a word that is not there, the word 'count.' But it is not a count that is going on, it is a measurement!

**I think the point is that God is getting a comprehensive measure of what's happening in the externals of their worship and the internals of their worship!**

Most of the time we focus only on the externals: what the building is like, the style of songs we sing, what kind of instruments we use, how long the pastor preaches.

When God measures worship He also includes what's going on inside the minds and hearts of the worshippers. He cares deeply that our internal worship is right!

**If your heart was measured this morning, would God find a heart that is glowing and growing, or would He find a heart that is shriveling from lack of time spent with Jesus?**

Now let's talk about the Temple a minute.

If you ask a Hasidic Jew what he is praying for at the Western Wall, he will tell you that he is praying for Messiah to come and for the temple to be rebuilt.

-Rogers 134

In 957 BC Solomon built the first Temple as a home for Israel's Tabernacle. In 587 BC it was destroyed during the Babylonian captivity.

In 516 BC the Jews who returned from captivity built the second Temple, although it was pitiful in comparison to the first. In 20 B.C. the Roman Puppet King Herod built it up to be glorious.

When Jesus' disciples marveled at Herod's Temple, Jesus assured them not one stone would be left on another at the Temple Complex; In A.D. 70 the Roman General Titus fulfilled that promise by destroying the Temple after putting down a Jewish revolt.

There are some Bible interpreters that say that since John is measuring the temple in Revelation 11 that John must have written the Revelation before 70 A.D.

But the clear testimony of the early church was that Revelation was written later, around A.D. 95. So in his vision here, John is measuring a temple that is to come.

That fits with what the prophets tell us.

**In Daniel 9 we read that the coming Antichrist will desecrate the temple at the midpoint of the tribulation. Perhaps the relative calm during the first seal will allow the Antichrist to help Israel build its temple back. Or perhaps it will be built back before the tribulation begins.**

**In Ezekiel 40 Ezekiel has a vision of a man with a measuring rod in his hand who goes on to measure out a temple for him bigger than any temple yet built, and the context makes clear this is the Temple that will be in place when Messiah reigns from Jerusalem. That will happen in the millennium.**

Now we are told in Revelation 15:5 that there is actually a Heavenly sanctuary, so there are those who suggest John is measuring that Temple.

But since verse two clearly excludes him from measuring the court of the Gentiles, it is clearly speaking about the Temple area on earth in Jerusalem.

**John is told not to measure that area because of how the heathen nations will trample the holy city for 42 months.**

**This probably is referring to the last half of the seven year tribulation, when those left on earth will terribly persecute the Jewish people. Jeremiah 30:7 calls the tribulation the time of Jacob's trouble.**

Now here's why this is important!

For those who say verses one and two are about the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, understand that they believe this happened because God was now done with Israel as a separate entity, and the church now replaces Israel forevermore.

**In my view, the exact opposite of what "replacement" theology says is happening here: in these verses God is letting Israel know He is not done with them forevermore, but is bringing to pass all of the things the prophets prophesied about Israel's reclamation in the last days!**

I think what happens next confirms that!

### **V. 3-14                    God Raises Up Two Witnesses!**

If your primary concern in encountering these two witnesses is to identify who they are, you have missed the greater point!

**The greater point here is that even during dark days, God always gives a witness!**

There has never been a time on earth, nor will there ever be until the Great White Throne judgment, when God will be without a witness of His glory.

The Heavens declare the glory of God!

The beauty of the created earth witnesses to His glory!

He set up the law of Israel so if they obeyed it they would be a lighthouse to the nations!

He gives the natural law inside of each of us to be a witness to our conscience!

Jesus came to show how much God loves the world and to save us from our sins!

His Holy Spirit is in the world convicting people of their need of Him!

The Church is taking the gospel to the nations!

When the church doesn't do its job, He sends people dreams and visions!

We saw in chapter 7 that during the tribulation, God will send out the 144,000 Jewish witnesses!

Here we read of Him raising up two courageous witnesses!

**Why does God go to all this trouble?**

**Because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent!**

Don't miss that!

Now, who are these two witnesses?

You won't be surprised to hear me say, "We don't really know!"

Some who spiritualize the text say they represent Israel and the Church. Some who take the text literally like I do say they will be two ordinary men raised up during the tribulation!

But most who take the text literally believe one of two options:

One option is that they are Elijah and Enoch, because both of them did not die in the Old Testament, but went directly to Heaven!

Others say they are Elijah and Moses, for a couple of reasons.

First, the miracles they do in verses five and six are miracles that Elijah and Moses did while on earth.

Second, it was Elijah and Moses who spoke with Jesus when he was transfigured!

As for me, I think Elijah is one of them, because Jesus reinforced the idea that Elijah would come before His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, and my guess is that Moses is the other!

Well, Danny, it says they prophesy 1,260 days, or three and a half years.

Is that the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation, or the second 3 ½ years?

Would it surprise you to hear me say, "we don't really know?!"

But if it is the first three and a half years, that would be cool because perhaps that helps explain why 144,000 Jewish guys would want to follow Christ and be his witnesses to the end of the earth! They had seen Moses and Elijah!

If it's the second three and a half years, that would also be cool, because even as Antichrist is persecuting Jews, he won't be able to do anything to stop these guys from telling it like it is!

Verse 7 tells us when they finish their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss, who later we learn is the Antichrist, comes against them and kills them.

**This is the first of 36 references to this beast in Revelation; we are going to learn a lot more about him! But don't miss the key thing said: the Beast will not be able to harm the two witnesses until they finish their testimony!**

That is so cool!

Now these guys do get a special protection during the tribulation, but part of what's said here is true for you as well!

**God has a mission for your life, and you can live life courageously knowing that you are going to be here until His plan for your life is complete.**

That should give you confidence and courage as you live and do God's will.

The apostle Paul expressed this confidence in Philippians chapter one.

**"For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me...I have the desire to depart and be with Christ- which is far better- but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you." -Philippians 1:21-24**

Paul lived his life knowing that death would be his gain because being with Jesus in Heaven is better than being here on a sin-stained earth. But he also knew that every day here was God's gift to bless others in the name of Jesus!

Friend, if you have that kind of perspective you will be a 3-D saint:  
Devoted, Delightful, and Dangerous!!!

In Romania during communist days, the communists tried to kill Pastor Joseph Tson for preaching the Word. They sent a man who said, "Joseph, if you don't knuckle under, we are going to kill you."

Joseph responded, "Before you kill me, I want to say that your chief weapon is killing, but my chief weapon is dying." They asked him what he meant.

He responded, "If you kill me, you will sprinkle every sermon I've ever preached with my blood, and people will know I love the Lord enough to die for Him. So your chief weapon is killing, but mine is dying. I want to warn you that if you use yours, I will be forced to use mine."

They went away saying, "Leave Joseph alone. He is crazy."

**But there's something else that will happen if you are a courageous saint who does not fear death: you will tick off people who haven't repented yet!**

As these two witnesses share, those who are unrepentant on earth hate their guts.

When the Beast kills them, the people of earth act like it's Christmas time!

*Ding Dong, the witnesses are dead!*

Now it's really interesting when you read commentaries on Revelation from the early centuries of the church. Commentators couldn't understand how the whole world could view the dead bodies of the witnesses!

**"How could those "who dwell on the earth" rejoice at the death of two men if they died in only one city?"  
-Tyconius, who lived 330-390 AD, ACC, page 166**

Because of TV and YouTube, we no longer ask such questions!

But would the whole world really hate these two witnesses? Absolutely.

Remember after September 11<sup>th</sup>, Jerry Falwell was talking with Pat Robertson, and basically said that a nation blatantly sinning against God can expect such things to happen...

His words were poorly chosen and featured incredibly bad timing, but they had a lot of truth in them! There was a firestorm and Dr. Falwell quickly apologized.

**When the two witnesses are here they'll be speaking truth and they won't be apologizing. When things like the trumpets are happening, they'll keep preaching from Jerusalem that people better repent because God's wrath is falling. An angry world will want to shut them up but be unable to do it.**

When they are finally killed, an unrepentant world will leave their bodies to rot while they rejoice!

But our God has a flare for the dramatic, so three and a half days later, he'll restore them to life and they'll be mini-raptured to Heaven! At the same time an earthquake will hit Jerusalem, and all over the world people will know they've seen a God thing!

God always gives a witness! Right now, you and I are the main witnesses!

**When you step out in faith and speak up in courage, God does the rest!**

Let's Pray!