

THE TWO WITNESSES OF REVELATION

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"And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 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. 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" (Rev. 11:3-6).

A lot of speculation and differences of opinion surround the identity of these two witnesses. The two witnesses are called "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." This clearly identifies them as Zechariah's two olive trees, also referred to as "the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." Zechariah describes his vision of the two witnesses:

"I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof; And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof... Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Know-est thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:2ff).

Zechariah's question suggests that he was as puzzled about the identity of the two olive trees as some people today are about the identity of the two witnesses of Revelation. The angel's reply to Zechariah's question, that they are "the two anointed ones, that stand

by the Lord of the whole earth," leaves many readers still scratching their heads and wondering who exactly these guys are.

Because of the powers that the two witnesses possess in Revelation, many Christians believe that they will be Moses ("power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with plagues") and Elijah ("power to shut heaven, that it rain not"). Other Christians believe they will be Elijah and Enoch because according to Hebrews 9:27, "it is appointed unto men once to die." Since both of these men were taken up to heaven without dying, they must return to earth for an appointment with death. Their appointment with death will take place in the context of their role as the two witnesses, the argument goes.

Various rabbis commenting on Zechariah 4 have suggested several different pairs of candidates: Joshua the High Priest and Zerubabel; Aaron and Moses; Moses and David; Aaron and David; Aaron and the Messiah; Messiah ben Yosef and Messiah ben David. David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* discusses the various candidates, then adds this interesting comment: "Meanwhile, believers in Jerusalem have grown used to being presented with other candidates. They appear every few months, often dressed in sackcloth like the Prophets of the *Tanakh*, and claiming to be 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' or even to be Elijah himself." (I know what David Stern is talking about. My wife and I saw and heard about such people when we lived in Jerusalem in 1976. When our daughter Shoshanna lived there a few years ago, she met a nice lady who claimed to be the wife of Jesus Christ. Psychologists in Israel have a name for this affliction. They call it "The Jerusalem Syndrome.")

So, who exactly are the two witnesses? I do not get real dogmatic about the details of end-time prophecy, because there are usually several possible ways that a yet-unfulfilled

prophecy can be legitimately understood and interpreted. And until the prophesied events actually happen, there is no way to prove with 100% certainty whose understanding is the most accurate. So I have a wait-and-see attitude when it comes to the details of end-time prophecy.

One thing to remember about Revelation is that it is a book filled with symbolic language. Everything in Revelation does not need to be taken literally, and some things *cannot* be taken literally. (For example, Jesus does not have a literal metal sword coming out of His mouth.)

Without getting into all the details and without being dogmatic, I would like to suggest that perhaps the two witnesses are not two individual men, but rather two *corporate* men, i.e., two distinct bodies of people. The angel told Zechariah that they are "the two anointed ones [*b'neiha-yitzhar*, 'sons of clear oil'], that stand by [or, stand *upon*] the Lord of the whole earth." If Yahweh's two witnesses are indeed two distinct bodies of people, let me ask a question: Which two groups of people historically have stood by Yahweh, the Lord of the whole earth (stood by Him in the sense of standing with Him and for Him, and stood "upon" Him in the sense of trusting Him as the foundation of their faith)? Which two groups of people could be called "sons of clear oil" because their anointing has its origin in clear Divine revelation, unlike the muddled, contaminated "anointings" that exist in pagan religions? Which two groups of people have historically borne witness to Yahweh, the one true God of the Holy Scriptures? The obvious answer is Jews and Christians.

Both of these groups have made many serious mistakes and continue to do so, but they are the only two collective bodies of human witnesses that Yahweh has. A witness does not need to be perfect in order to be a true and reliable witness. To be a true and reliable witness, one only has to testify of the truth that he has seen and heard. John wrote, That which we have seen

and heard declare we unto you" (1 Jn. 1:3). "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Peter said (Acts 4:20). It was not the sinless perfection of the Apostles which made them true and reliable witnesses; it was the truth of that which they had seen and heard.

As I stated earlier, I am not dogmatic about the details of end-time prophecy. The two witnesses may very well be two individual men (though even this does not rule out the possibility of Jews and Christians now functioning as God's two witnesses in a collective sense until the appearance of the two individuals.) If two individual men do appear as the two witnesses, I believe Moses and Elijah are the most likely candidates. (Enoch's deathless translation can be explained as a simple exception to the rule. If he was translated so that he "should not see death," then he *should NOT see death*. In other words, he should *not* die -neither then, nor in the future. If the "appointed unto men once to die" statement is taken so literally that it leaves no room for exceptions, then that would mean that Lazarus, Tabitha, Eutychus, and all the other people who were raised from the dead would still be living somewhere on earth today, because they all kept their appointment to once die. Yet we know that all these people had to die a second time after their [temporary] resurrections. It was appointed unto these particular individuals to *twice* die, as an exception to the rule. Therefore it could be appointed unto Enoch *zero times* to die, as an exception to the rule.)

Even if the two witnesses turn out to be Moses and Elijah in the end of days, Yahweh still has His two collective witnesses composed of Jews and Christians today. Moses and Elijah can be seen as representative heads of these two bodies of people, Moses representing the Jews and Elijah representing the Christians.

Moses was not a Judahite (Jew) of course, but he is known as the one through whom the Torah was given, and Jews are the ones who have preserved the Torah.

Elijah was not a "Christian" in the modern sense of the word, but he was certainly anointed (which is what the

generic sense of the word *Christian* implies). Elijah was from Ephraim, the ten northern tribes whose descendants are now scattered among the Gentile peoples, including Christian people.

So just as Moses represents the Torah and the Jewish people, so Elijah can represent the Prophets and the Christian people, because the spirit of prophecy is now among Christians, not Jews. The Jews freely admit that the spirit of prophecy departed from them: "When the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel" (Sanh. 11 a). Christians, on the other hand, have been blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of prophecy, for "the testimony of Yeshua is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

Yahweh has two witnesses on parchment, namely the Torah and the Prophets, which are fully revealed in the Gospel of the Messiah Yeshua. Yahweh's two individual human representatives of the Torah and the Prophets are Moses and Elijah, who are embodied in the Person of the Messiah Yeshua. Yahweh's two human witnesses in a collective sense are Jews and Christians, who will eventually be (re)united into one Body, with Messiah Yeshua as the Head.

I do not claim to know all the details of the how, the where, the when, etc. Like others, I merely "know in part" and I "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). But I *do see!* I see that the Lord is doing something in our generation that He has not done in previous generations. Do you not see it too? He is awakening Jews to see that Yeshua is their Messiah, and He is awakening Christians to see that Israel's Torah is for them, because they are now part of "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12) and part of the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11:17ff).

As a remnant of Jews awakens to see the revelation of their Messiah and a remnant of Christians awakens to see the revelation of the Torah, the Lord is bringing together His faithful remnant, His two bodies of anointed witnesses, His sons of clear oil, in preparation for the end of days. The woman with a crown of twelve stars, the Israel of God, is once again travailing in birth to bring forth a manchild. Satan's anger is

directed not only at the woman Israel, but also at "the remnant of her seed": "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah" (Rev. 12:17).

Though I see through a glass darkly, one thing I see very clearly in this verse is that Satan is angered by two things: 1) people keeping the commandments of God, and 2) people having the testimony that Yeshua is the Messiah. Satan has hated the Jews for doing the former (even though they have not done the latter), and he has hated the Christians for doing the latter (even though they have not done the former). Whenever he sees a body of people doing both, he will be doubly angered.

In the end of days, God's faithful remnant will be identified by both marks: keeping the commandments of the Torah and testifying that Yeshua is the Messiah. This is how "saints" are defined in Revelation 14:12, as "they that keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Yeshua." After it is all over, we will stand on a sea of glass with the harps of God and sing two songs: the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rev. 15:2f).

Zechariah calls the two witnesses "the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." In the following chapter he gives some indication of the destiny of those who *don't* stand by the Lord of the whole earth, who *dont* want to be a part of the anointed ones. Those who are not embodied in the anointed ones are pictured as being embodied in a woman sitting inside an ephah, a large basket. Two other women, with wings like a stork, lift the ephah and fly away with it.

"Whither do these bear the ephah?" Zechariah asked the angel.

To build it a house in the land of Shinar," the angel answered.

Shinar is the old name of Babylon, the place God's people are called to come out of in Revelation. As we approach the end of days, people will have to choose which body they want to be a part of - the body composed of the witnesses who keep the commandments of God and testify of Yeshua, or those who remain in Babylon. O