***Moses and Elijah

RV146-01***

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Revelation 11:3-14 as we begin the section on "The Two Witnesses." This is segment number one.

**Measure the Temple**

John, in his vision at this point in the book, sees a temple rebuilt in Jerusalem during the tribulation period. Revelation 11:1-2 have described that for us. John is told to measure the area of the temple proper. The act of measuring symbolizes divine evaluation of the temple's holiness and of its ownership. The tribulation temple will not measure up to God's standard of righteousness, so it will receive His condemnation. John is also told to measure the tribulation temple altar of sacrifice, and the worshipers before that altar. When he does this, these too are found to be apostate, so they are rejected by God. The temple area; the altar; and, the worshipers are all operating on a religious system which rejects the authority and the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, it is rejected by God. It is, in fact, a temple and a worship system of Jews who are apostate from God, and of the gentile world under the leadership of the antichrist.

John is specifically told, however, not to measure what is described as the court of the gentiles which we have shown you previously, and which will be governed by them for a period of three-and-a-half years. This court was a large area of about 26 acres in the original temple. It was part of the temple precinct, and it was the area in which the gentiles were permitted to enter. The three-and-a-half years that is referred to in Revelation 11:1-2 is probably the last half of the tribulation period.

**Rebuilding the Temple**

The court of the gentiles is, in fact, the area today on which the Moslem mosque, the Dome of the Rock now stands. So, it is under non-Jewish control. However, recent archeological discoveries in Jerusalem have established that the location of the holy of holies of Solomon's Temple was actually 150 feet north of where the Muslims built that mosque, indicating, therefore, that the Jews can indeed rebuild their temple. This place is just an open courtyard, and it will in no way conflict with the Dome of the Rock, which, of course, would have worldwide repercussions if the Jews were to try to bring it down in order to rebuild their temple.

So, the truth of the matter is that the Jews are in the very process today of resuming their temple sacrifices according to the Mosaic Law; they are preparing all of the utensils which were originally used in that sacrifice; and, they are preparing men to act as priests to perform these temple ceremonies.

**The Two Witnesses**

So, we come to Revelation 11:3. Here we are introduced to two men who are called simply the two witnesses: "And I will grant the authority to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth." These are two witnesses of prophecy. The Word of God says that God is going to grant to them (that is, He is going to enable them) to deliver something. This is at some point in the future. The word "authority" is added in the text in order to convey the understanding and to smooth out the translation. But God says, "I'm going to grant a very special authority to two men," whom He calls "My witnesses." The word "witness" in the Greek Bible here is the Greek word "martus." You immediately see that that's where we get our English word "martyr." A martyr is a witness who pays for his testimony with his very life.

Here we have two ambassadors who are true to God, who are living in the tribulation era. It refers to these two human beings as the true messengers (or witnesses) of God. What they are doing is prophesying. They're going to prophesy. This is the Greek word "propheteuo." The word "prophesy" in the Bible means two things. It does indeed mean foretelling future events, but it also very often means proclaiming the mind of God upon some current event (a current situation). So, what these men are doing is that they are prophesying not in the sense of proclaiming future events that are to come, but in terms of giving a message to the tribulation world from God concerning what God is about to do, and particularly the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Their message will be warning of imminent destruction of the antichrist, and all those who are loyal to him. This word is in the future tense, so it's going to be done in the future in the tribulation. This has never happened yet in the history of the world, and it is going to be done by these two men.

These two witnesses proclaim a message of great salvation. That's the only kind of salvation that God has ever proclaimed. It is completely wrong to suggest that under the Old Testament, the Jews were saved by means of their ritualistic works, or by means of their sacrifice. The Bible makes it very clear that shedding the blood of an animal will never take you into heaven. Performing any ritual will never get you saved. Reciting prayers will never satisfy the justice of God against your sins. So, again, salvation, from the time of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, to this very day has always been by a free grace gift from God. The vehicle for receiving that salvation has always been your deciding in your own mind that what you have found from Scripture concerning God's statement as to how he has covered your sin through His Son, and how He will take you into heaven on the basis of accepting this covering. You intellectually, in your mind, make a decision that God is really telling the truth. Therefore, you take Him at His word. And when you do that, at that moment, you are transformed into the body of Christ; you are sealed to God forever; and, in fact, the dead life of Adam (the old Adam that was in you) suddenly is removed, and the eternal life of God is placed within you.

You and I may not very often act like we're on top of the world; that we're in command of things; that things are going well for us; or, that we're very happy. But you should remember that you are a unique body of people on the face of this earth, because those of you who accepted Christ as Savior have eternal life residing in you at this point in time. The results of that eternal life will be fully developed in eternity.

So, these two witnesses are very simply telling the world that: "God is about ready to shut things down. We're giving you an opportunity of grace salvation, and we want to tell you that there are coming judgments on the unbelievers who follow the world leader, the antichrist." God says that He is going to allow these people to prophesy for three-and-a-half years.

Please remember in the Bible that a year is 360 days. The Jews operated on a lunar month. Therefore, what he is referring to is 40 30-day months, and that produces the 1,260 days. This is probably the last half of the seven-year tribulation period that Daniel 9:27 referred to. It is possible to view the ministry of the two witnesses in the first three-and-a-half years. But I think it fits more properly, because of the devastation they create, in the last three-and-a-half years where things really begin to come apart on a worldwide scale.

**Sackcloth**

These two witnesses, in order to indicate the seriousness of their message, are also robed in what the Bible calls "sackcloth." Sackcloth was a coarse, dark material made from the hair of goats or camels. In the ancient world, it was worn as a sign of a person's mourning. It was a sign of his penitence. You have many passages in the Scripture that portray that to us. For example, you have: Isaiah 37:1; Daniel 9:3; Joel 1:13; and, Matthew 11:21. All of these passages indicate that when people wanted to portray their personal repentance and sorrow over sin before God, they put on this very uncomfortable clothing, which is known as sackcloth.

It will be a fitting garment for the two witnesses in the tribulation, because what they are speaking to that world is the doom of mankind. They are in grief for humanity because they are the prophets of doom. Therefore, it is understandable that they will stand before these people dressed in that way. Yes, we are talking about a literal presentation. These will be two men. They will be dressed in this garment of mourning, and people will look at them and, of course, that's going to catch your attention.

If you were to go to your place of business tomorrow morning dressed in a black robe from top to bottom, your employer probably would notice you. If he hasn't been noticing you recently, go to work in your sackcloth, and he'll give you a double-look. It'll obviously catch people's attention. People would say, "Why are you dressed like that?"

These two witnesses will explain to the people that: "This is a sign of our sorrow over what is going to happen to you if you don't take us seriously, and if you don't believe our message, because we are the spokesman of the Most High Living God. And people are going to say, "Oh, yeah. Sure," However, God has prepared these men with credentials that are going to come through loud and clear. And pretty soon, no one's going to be making fun of them. Pretty soon, no one's going to be ignoring them. I assure you that they will be on the news every night. The news broadcasters will be there talking about them every night, because these people are going to be the big news of the day.

**Moses and Elijah**

That brings up an interesting question that I'm sure you've begun to think about. Just who are these two men? Do we have any way of knowing who they are? They are not specifically named, and we cannot, therefore, speak with certainty. There is, however, as we will see in a moment, at their disposal, some very impressive, miraculous powers. In fact, they have the very specific kinds of miraculous power that do bring to our mind two great biblical personalities: Moses; and, Elijah.

One of the things that they will do is create a drought for three-and-a-half years in the antichrist world. Another thing that they will do is that they will be bringing fire down from heaven. These miraculous expressions (creating a drought condition in the environment, and dealing with their enemies with fire) do indeed recall to us the power of Elijah in the day of King Ahab, and of his wife Jezebel. You may read about that 1 King 17:1, James 5:17, and 1 Kings 18:36-38. The most dramatic of these events, of course, was the confrontation of Elijah with the prophets of Baal, and the fire that came down from heaven to burn up the offering which he had prepared on the altar, as well as all the water which was around the altar.

Another thing that these men will be doing is turning water into blood, and causing a variety of plagues to come on the people of the tribulation world. This certainly reminds us of Moses as, for example, in Exodus 7:19, where he did this very thing.

There's another thing that is significant about Moses and Elijah. Jesus took Peter James and John up on what we call today the Mount of Transfiguration. As they were up there alone, Jesus, for a moment, took away the shield of His humanity that hid His deity. Suddenly, before the eyes of Peter, James, and John, Jesus Christ burst forth in the glory that is characteristic of the presence of God. They fell back in fear and amazement. When they looked more closely, they discovered that Jesus, in all of His glory, was standing there speaking to two men. They immediately recognized those men in some way. One was Elijah, and the other was Moses. And what they saw was Jesus in the glory of His millennial kingdom.

This is Talk to us in 2 Peter 1:16. Peter says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter says, "We have taught you about the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come again, and He's going to come again in enormous power, and He will be surrounded by great, glorious light." Peter says, "That's impressive. We did not read this in somebody's novel (somebody's book). We didn't make it up. These are not tales which we have created." This is something of which he says, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty." What's he talking about?" When was he an eyewitness of the majesty of the deity of Christ? Right there on that Mound of Transfiguration.

Then verse 17 says, "For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to him by the majestic glory: "This is My Beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." And we know that that was the occasion on the Mount of Transfiguration. So, we know what he is referring to.

Furthermore, verse 18 says, "And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." And indeed, what Jesus was giving them was a preview of what He would look like once He was in His millennial kingdom.

So, here we have two important Old Testament characters joined together in connection with an event that deals with the millennial kingdom, which is exactly, of course, what these two witnesses in Revelation are dealing with. The two witnesses of Revelation 11 are dealing with a coming millennial kingdom. They are in the suffering part of what is called in the Bible "the day of the Lord." The day of the Lord has a suffering part, the seven-year tribulation; and, then it has a glory part, which is the 1,000 years of the millennium.

So, these two witnesses are two men who come as forerunners in the tribulation to proclaim that Jesus Christ is about to return and set up His millennial kingdom on earth. We have some reason, then, to maybe wonder if perhaps indeed Moses and Elijah are not the two witnesses. Some teachers of the Bible are very explicit about that – that indeed they are.

**John the Baptist**

There is one other thing that may come up here. Those of you who know the Bible well enough know that Elijah had another person who was very much like him, and to whom he was compared, and that was John the Baptizer, the cousin of Jesus. In Malachi 4:5, the prophet says, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." Here is the last book of the Old Testament making a prediction where God says, "I'm going to send you Elijah the prophet." Elijah has been dead for a long time, yet here we are told that before the millennial kingdom comes in, Elijah is going to come back as a witness to the Jews.

John the Baptist, we are told in the New Testament, indeed came on the scene, and his ministry was described as one which was in the spirit and the power of Elijah. Of course, he came specifically to try to prepare the Jewish people to receive their Messiah which had been promised from the days of Abraham. His message was that the Messiah is at hand, and John was sent as a forerunner to announce His coming. Notice Matthew 11:10: "Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, among those born of women, there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist. Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

Malachi 3:1 says, "Behold, I'm going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me." Malachi 3:1 is obviously talking about John the Baptist. God says, "I'm going to send my messenger, John the Baptist. He will clear the way before Me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple." He is going to come in preparation for that coming Savior.

In Luke 1:17, we have this reference, speaking about John the Baptist, before he is born, announcing to his parents: "And it is he (John) who will go is a forerunner before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedience to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." John's specific responsibility was to come as a mighty prophet of God, the way Elijah came, with all the power and evidence that Elijah demonstrated, and to announce to the people. Remember that after 400 years when there had been no prophet in Israel (400 silent years), John comes on the scene and says, "I have been sent by God to announce to you that the Messiah is on the way." And Jesus was now 30 years old, prepared to begin His ministry. John was the forerunner, doing exactly what Malachi 3:1 said he would do.

What John was supposed to do was get the Jewish people of that day to come to national repentance. That's what he was asking them to do. He was calling upon them to turn from their sins, and to admit that, as a nation, they had violated the laws of God. They had turned their back upon God again and again, and he was to call them to come to national repentance. He said, "And those of you who are ready now to publicly declare your repentance, and your turning back to confidence and faith in God, I want you to come down to this river (the Jordan River), and I'm going to immerse you in this water as a demonstration of your identification with the Messiah who is to come."

**The Gospel of John the Baptist**

The gospel that John preached was a gospel of salvation, but its emphasis was a little different. We don't call it the gospel of the grace of God, such as Paul preached. We call John's gospel the same one that Jesus and the apostles preached: the gospel of the kingdom. That gospel was: "Here is good news. The Messiah Savior is on the horizon. Those of you who will turn to Him in saving faith will be born again. And if this nation turns to Him: He will be established; He will take His throne; and, our kingdom will be established over the nations of the world."

So, Elijah came on the scene. He caught the attention of people. He caught the attention of the religious leaders and of the rulers, and they sensed in this man that indeed he had the power and the spirit of Elijah in his own ministry.

In John 1:21, we may add this: They go to John and they ask him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." They said, "Are you that prophet – the one that Moses promised would come?" And he says, "No," referring to Jesus. Then he said to them, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" And he said, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord as Isaiah the prophet said." John says, "I am the one calling you back to the message of Isaiah to straighten out your lives, and to repent and to turn to God, and in repentance, to prepare this nation for the coming of the Messiah."

However, I want you to notice that John was not a reincarnated Elijah. John never said that he was Elijah. He was compared to Elijah – the Elijah that was to come. What Jesus indicated, interestingly enough, was that if the people had received John the Baptist and his message, he would have fulfilled the Elijah ministry. That's what God was promising – "An Elijah-like ministry is going to come to you."

In Matthew 11:14, Jesus said, "And if you care to accept it, he himself (that is, John the Baptist) is Elijah, who was to come. If you had accepted his message, he would have fulfill the promise of the witness coming in the power and the authority and the message of Elijah." Well, you know what happened. The Jews rejected John's message, so he was unable to fulfill the prediction of Malachi 4:6 to turn the people to the coming Messiah, and to usher in the day of the Lord and the millennium.

The mount of transfiguration event took place after the death of John the Baptist. It indicated that an Elijah-like prophet would come in the future to the Jews to turn them back to Jesus Christ. Matthew 17:10-13: "And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Jesus, why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' And He answered and said, 'Elijah is coming, and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatsoever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist." They understood from the rabbis that Elijah was to return to speak (to prophesy) to the nation. And the disciples asked Jesus why they were saying that. And Jesus said, "The Elijah personality has already come. It was John the Baptist, but they refused his message. They would not turn to repentance. Instead, they killed him." And He said, "This is exactly what they're going to do to Me. They will not accept My message, and the Messiah, who is at hand, will be rejected."

So, John the Baptist was rejected; abused; and, killed by the Jewish leaders, and Jesus was also.

So, the point of all this is that another has to come in the future, like Elijah, to do the job of calling the people of Israel back to God to bring in the kingdom. That's the point. There is an Elijah to come. As you learned from our recent demonstration of the Passover meal, what the Jews do in connection with that meal, at one point, is send a youngster out, to look out the door to see if Elijah is coming. They have an empty chair at the table for Elijah. He comes back and says, "No, he's not there." This is what they're talking about. The Old Testament was very clear to them that Elijah would come. He would proclaim the appearance of the Messianic Kingdom. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He would have fulfilled that had they accepted him, but Jesus said that they refused to do that.

However, the point of all this is that there is a great deal of similarity between Elijah and John the Baptist.

The Elijah still to come is probably one of these two witnesses that will be ministry in the spirit and power of Elijah. One of the two witnesses here in Revelation 11:3 is probably going to be the fulfillment of this Malachi 4:5-6 passage about the return of Elijah.

One of the witnesses, then, could be Elijah himself. You remember that he never died. He went to heaven alive. 2 Kings 2:9-11 describe that. On the other hand, Moses did die, but they never found his body. He died on Mount Nebo, and God buried him in the Moab desert, and we read about this in Deuteronomy 34:5-6. We have an interesting verse in Jude 9 which says that Michael had to contend with Satan, who wanted the body of Moses. It just tells how Michael treated the devil very respectfully, because he knew the power of this former archangel. For some reason, Satan was eager to get the body of Moses. We must wonder if perhaps someplace God has preserved the body of Moses in order to resurrect him as one of the two witnesses, and that God has taken Elijah to heaven alive to bring him back as one of the two witnesses. This may be the reason for Satan's desire to get hold of the body of Moses – to try to frustrate the plan of God.

So, who are the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3? The Bible does not name them, but there is indeed good, strong evidence, as we have sought to demonstrate to you, that they could be Moses and Elijah.

The Old Testament Scripture has proclaimed a future earthly messianic kingdom. That comes to us from the Old Testament Scriptures. And who are the two main agents that convey Old Testament Scripture? Moses, in the law; and, Elijah, in the prophets. So the Old Testament is often called "The Law and the Prophets." Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. That event had to do with entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. They may also symbolize believers of the church age: Elijah, representing those, like many of you who will go to heaven alive in the rapture; and, Moses representing others who die, and go into heaven into the Lord's presence through death.

Since God has left the two witnesses in obscurity, we can't go any further than that. However, we can say that two men, like Moses and like Elijah, will have supernatural powers from God to validate their warnings of imminent worldwide judgment.

So, in verse 4, there is an analogy. Again, we read a verse here about which the reformers just threw their hands up. They never tried to write about the book of Revelation. In many churches, if you find Bibles in the pews, if the Bibles have been there a long time, one of the cleanest pages you'll find is the book of the Revelations. Nobody ever asks you to turn to that book. One of the reasons is that they haven't caught the principle that when you read something in the book of the Revelation that is a symbol, the first thing you do is look elsewhere in the Bible for that symbol, to see how it was used, to give you a clue for its meaning. Here you have a splendid example in Revelation 11:4. We have an analogy to describe these two men.

**Two Olive Trees and Two Lamp Stands**

John says, "These are the two olive trees, and the two lamp stands, that stand before the Lord of the earth." The place that this comes to have some meaning for us is in Zechariah 4:2-3. We have exactly this same symbol. It's amazing. Notice what Zechariah sees. He's speaking to an angel: "And he (the angel) said to me, 'what do you see?' And I said, 'I see and behold, a lamp stand all of gold, with its bowl on top of it, and its seven lamps on it, with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps, which are on top of it. Also two olive trees by it; one on the right side of the bowl, and the other on its left.'" ...

What is he talking about? First of all, he says that he sees a lamp stand. And he says that this thing has seven lamps. That means that it has seven lights glowing. He says that above this is a reservoir (a tank). In this tank is olive oil. To each lamp, there comes a tube from the reservoir, for lamps one through seven. Then he says that on each side is an olive tree. And from this olive tree, there is a golden tube that goes to the reservoir. So, from the olive tree comes a perpetual eternal supply of oil, and it moves down with seven tubes to these lamp in order to keep these lamp stands burning forever.

Zechariah gets interested in the two trees. He knows immediately that he is seeing a vision of something that is a symbol that has some kind of meaning. So, he turns to the angel and he asks, and he asks him, "Who is represented by the two olive oil trees?" Zechariah 4:4-5: "Then I answered and said to the angel, who is speaking with me, saying, 'What are these, my lord?' So, the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, 'Do you not know what these are?' And I said to him, 'No, my Lord.'"

The angel doesn't proceed to answer this question. Instead, he proceeds to say something that is pertinent to the time of Zechariah. The time of Zechariah was the time when the Babylonian captivity of 70 years was at an end. The Jews were now coming back to the Promised Land, and they were under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who had come to rebuild the temple. So, the angel proceeds to answer the question first by giving him some other information. What he does is he reveals to him that Zerubbabel has returned with a group from Babylon to rebuild the temple, which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (Zechariah 4:6-9). Notice Zechariah 4:6: "Then he (the angel) answered and said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts (the Lord of armies). "What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain. And he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of 'Grace! Grace to it!'". That is, he will complete the structure; put on the capstone; and, shout about the grace of God that made that possible.

Verse 8: "Also the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house (that is, the second temple), and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of Hosts has sent me to you.'" Zechariah is saying, "I'm going to confirm my words as a prophet. I'm telling you now that's Zerubbabel, who begin the rebuilding of the temple, will also complete that structure."

Verse 10: "For who has despised the day of small things. But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel." He's talking about these seven lamps as a picture; perhaps as the eyes of God: "These are the eyes of the Lord, which range to and fro throughout all the earth." And when he talks about "despise the day of small things:" on the day that they dedicated this second temple, the old folks remembered that magnificent structure of Solomon's temple, and it was a magnificent grand structure. They remembered it, and then they looked at this stripped down model that Zerubbabel was able to build, because that's all they had to work with. The Bible says, "The older folks cried." They wept. They weren't joyful over the restoration and the re-dedication of this temple. They were weeping about the old days, and what they had lost.

What he is referring to here is that here's as the thing was going up, some of the old-timers were making cracks, expressing how they despised what was the rubble was doing, because it was on such a smaller scale, and they were even standing in his way, throwing roadblocks into what he was doing. Now, the Lord comes along, and in the process of showing Zechariah this symbol, He says, "I want you to understand that this temple is going to be rebuilt. Zechariah started it, and Zechariah is going to complete it. He's going to remove all demonic and human obstacles. These workers are going to be operating under a perpetual source of power. Here they are."

These olive trees are pouring oil into this reservoir. This reservoir is taking every lamp, representing the knowledge (the eyes) of God, and it is keeping it perpetually filled. Olive oil, as you may know in the Bible, is a symbol for God the Holy Spirit. So, what he is saying is that this job is going to be done because I'm going to fill certain workmen. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit filled certain individuals sovereignly, at His choice. He said, "I'm going to fill certain men, and their hands will produce a marvelous structure." They will have great abilities, and my man Zerubbabel will be filled by the Spirit of God, and they will get the job done.

So, then he proceeds to finally the answer the question to identify these two servants of God. We find that they are the two servants of God who are the witnesses to the whole world. In Zechariah 4:11, Zechariah says, "Then I answered and said to him (the angel): 'What are these two olive trees, on the right of the lamp stand and on its left?' I answered the second time and said to him, 'What are the two olive branches which are beside the golden pipes?'" He says, "'What are these two extensions (these two pipes that are coming from the trees into the reservoir) which empty the golden oil from them?' So, he answered me, saying, 'Do you not know what these are?' And I said, 'No, my Lord.'"

I can't help thinking of an old Ralph Kramden routine here. Here's this poor guy saying, "What are these trees? What is the significance? Ralph Kramden used to say, "Do you want to know? Is that what you're asking? Do want to know? Do you? OK, I'm going to tell you. Is that what you want to know?"

And here's this angel keeping Zechariah on pins and needles: "'Yes, that's what I want to know. What is this all about?' Then he said, 'These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth. These are the two specially selected witnesses of God to all the earth." And the two witnesses refer specifically to the two men of this context. If you would read just before this, in chapter 3, you would see that God, in a vision, shows Zechariah one of his great witnesses, who was the high priest Joshua at the time. The other man here is Zerubbabel, who is dealt with here in chapter 4, so that these two visions go together. What he is saying by context is that these two trees are the source of Holy Spirit power and thus of Holy Spirit enlightenment of truth. And these two men are filled with God the Holy Spirit, so that they are keeping the reservoir of God's truth filled, and they are pouring it out as enlightenment to the world. These two men are, in Zechariah's time: Joshua, the high priest; and, Zerubbabel, the political leader. The two visions go together.

Joshua and Zerubbabel were associated in the rebuilding and the restoration of the second temple after the Babylonian captivity. So, they are described as standing by the Lord, or before the Lord of the whole earth. Joshua and Zerubbabel, in fact represent the Messiah Jesus Christ in His role as priest and king.

The lamp stand itself represents Israel. Isaiah 42:6 and Isaiah 49:6 refer to Israel as a source of enlightenment to the world. The Jews were indeed God's source of spiritual light, especially to the gentile nations. The Bible was written by Jews. Israel was that kind of a spiritual light in Zerubbabel's day, but it will be a much more powerful light in the form of the two Jewish witnesses that we read about in Revelation 4.

So, when we read in Revelation 4 about the vision of two olive trees (and over in this vision, each of them becomes a lamp stand of enlightenment on his own): "They stand before the Lord of the earth." That's a significant description. Remember that at this point in time, the antichrist has taken charge, and the whole world has gone to New Age doctrine. And what is the core feature of New Age doctrine – the thing that it got from Eastern mysticism? What is the key thing that identifies New Age doctrine? Everybody is a god. Everybody is a potential God, and your business in life is to realize that you are a God, and open yourself up to all the powers that are potential in you, and to open yourself up to the powers of your mind. You can imagine reality into existence because you are God. You are to realize that you have that power. That is New Age doctrine. All the world at this time is going to be looking at the antichrist as the great example of what a man who realizes that he is God can do. And they're all going to try to become as powerful and effective as he is.

I think it is significant that, here in Revelation 11:4, the Creator God is described as the Lord of the earth, and He is the true God (the Creator God) before whom these two witnesses stand, and who they represent. They are empowered by God to operate on the power of the Holy Spirit. They are empowered by God to deliver His truth to the apostate tribulation world – God's world through spiritual light to mankind. Proverbs 6:23 calls God's Word light.

So, Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets, and representing thus the Old Testament Scripture, may well indeed be the two witnesses here who bring Holy Spirit Enlightenment to mankind in the tribulation.

The two witnesses in Revelation 11 also stand before the God of all the earth. They are there as His agents, and they will be demonstrating their credentials by supernatural capacities that God has given them. They are invincible. Furthermore, while fulfilling their divine mission of telling mankind how to escape the lake of fire. The number of the revelation witnesses may indeed reflect the requirement of the Mosaic Law. Why are there two witnesses?

Well, in Deuteronomy 19:15 and Matthew 18:16, the Mosaic Law says, "You cannot prove something against a person definitely (like murder or any other moral crime) unless you have had at least two eyewitnesses that he actually did this crime. You must yourself bear witness to this. So, perhaps that's why there are two witnesses at this point in time.

Their message is going to fall on dead ears, but they are going to preach in such a way that people are not going to be able to ignore them. They are going to start doing things and saying things that will cause all the world to want to silence them. The Jews will want to silence them because of their proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah Savior. The gentiles under the antichrist will want to silence them because they are exposing the New Age false doctrine (the lie) that they are all gods. These two men, these two Moses and Elijah-like men, are going to team up together and make a powerful evangelistic team.

One of the things that we should learn from this incident is that God always has a true remnant of believers through whom He warns people of what He's going to do. You will never find the Lord bringing the ax down on anybody before he warns them. He won't do that to any of us. First, He gives us warning, and He gives us instruction. And if you ignore it, and you turn your back upon it, then the hand of God comes down. That's why you want to remember that Ezekiel 18:23 says that God takes no pleasure in the destruction of the unbeliever, but that those who reject His truth are indeed going to suffer the consequences. It must indeed greatly sadden God our Father to realize how many people reject His Son, whom the Father put through so much suffering in behalf of those people.

God is going to invite repentance through these two witnesses to the tribulation world, and then, when rejected, He is going to, by force, take that world away from the antichrist and his followers, and He's going to give it to His Son for the millennial kingdom. The gospel that is going to be proclaimed at this time by these witnesses will again be the gospel that John the Baptist preached; that Jesus preached; and, that the apostles preached – the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the imminent return of the Son of God.

So, that's the picture: these two olive trees; two lamp stands; spiritual illumination; and, witnesses to the antichrist world. Next time, we shall follow with the powers (the credentials) that they have. I suspect that you have done, as I have done. Imagine yourself in the position of the authority and the power that these two witnesses have. Have you ever sat and thought how you would like to deal with the Mafia? These two gentlemen have got the means to do it. The Mafia is going to be right there at the head of the line dealing with these two representatives of God against the antichrist world. And how they deal with that is absolutely astounding. How can people ignore the evidence (the proof) before their very eyes? Next time you shall see again that the hardened, indifferent, cold, godless mind of the unbeliever or the cardinal Christian will not stop at rejecting anything that God has said.

That's why, as we said in the previous session, that the apostle Paul pled with the believers that God would give him minds that would listen, and ears that would respond to the truth of God. I would suggest to you that if things aren't all that well in your life: in your marriage; with your kids; in your situation in your business; or, with your associates, you might want to ask yourself whether indeed God has already given you instruction, and like the antichrist world, you scoffed at it; you turned your back upon it; and, you've been indifferent. If you've been here in these services this day, you've got a running start, and a leg up on all the rest of the humanity that you'll be rubbing shoulders with this week, because you have been introduced to the Word of God. And those who listen to it will be prospered; will be blessed; and, will have all eternity to rejoice in the fact that they paid attention.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1989

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