

## **The Two Witnesses of Revelation Eleven**

### **The identity of the two witnesses (11:3-4)**

Bible commentators differ on the identity of the two witnesses. Some take it to represent two actual men who will come to prophesy in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (futurists). Others among the historicists, take the two witnesses to refer to true Christians during the time of Roman Catholic power; perhaps John Huss (1369-1415) or John Wycliffe (died

1384), or Jerome of Prague (1379-1416), or groups of Christians like the Waldensians or Albigenses.

All agree that they are witnessing to the Word of God and the cause of Jesus Christ, who is the true and faithful witness (Revelation 1:5; 3:14). Those who follow him are prophets, or witnesses who carry the same message of the gospel.

If we accept that the 1,260 day (11:3; 12:6), "forty-two months" (11:2), and "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14) all refer to the same period of time, i.e. entire duration of the Church period (the idealist or spiritualist view), then we can identify these two witnesses as the Church militant, during this present age, bearing testimony of the gospel to the world.

The number of the witnesses-two-is important and symbolises the certainty and trustworthiness of the message, as "the testimony of two people is true" (Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17; 1 Timothy 5:19. See also Acts 1:8).

The passage in Revelation eleven gives us a remarkable picture of the ministry of the gospel in days of apostasy and suffering, showing that the Lord does not leave himself without a witness, even in the darkest days. They may be wearing sackcloth (clothing of humiliation and mourning) but John identifies these two witnesses as two lamp stands connected directly to two olive trees, the source of the oil (vs. 4), showing that in the midst of a hostile world and a suffering Church, God has provided for his church both light and the oil of the grace of the Spirit.

John's vision then is connected to the image of the two olive trees in Zachariah 4:3. It is through these Two Witnesses, (the faithful preachers of the gospel), that the church can continue to be the light of the world, in the midst of darkness.

### **The work of the two witnesses (vss. 5-14)**

The two witnesses are said to perform miracles that match Moses and Elijah almost detail for detail. One turns water into blood and strikes the earth with plagues (vs. 6, similar to Moses in Pharaoh's court). The other shuts up the sky so it doesn't rain (vs. 6, see Elijah's confrontation with Ahab).

We should understand these indirect references to Moses and Elijah to be symbolic, like the two lambs and the two olive trees of Zachariah (4:3). In the power of the Spirit of God the witness of

the church cannot be bested or conquered. The Jews waited for someone to come in the power of Moses and Elijah, and the witness of the gospel answers this expectation. In the pattern of the prophets, the Church moves forward today, invincible, with the proofs of the power of the gospel (vs .6).

Although outwardly the ministry of the Church at times seems powerless and ineffective, and individual members of the Church are defeated and even put to death (vs. 7), yet God is doing his work through his faithful servants in the weekly ministry of the Word! The Spirit of the Lord is at work.