

"And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them." —Revelation 11:11

**They will know their God.
They shall be strong and do exploits.**

The Two Witnesses: Who Are They?

BY IRVIN BAXTER JR.

As pressure for an "international" solution to the Middle East problem mounts with each passing bullet, let us consider what the prophecies forecast for the times just ahead:

A global leader will pave the way for

Israel to build her Third Temple. Daily sacrifices in the temple will begin. There will be a war in heaven. Satan will be forbidden access to heaven and will no longer be able to function as the "accuser of the brethren." When this happens, the Bible says that the global leader will walk into Israel's temple, stop the sacrifices and claim to be Messiah and God. This event, called in the Bible the "abomination of desolation," will trigger Satan's 3 1/2-

year war against the saints. This time of great tribulation is described in Revelation 13:5-7.

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to

make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”

It appears that this time of tribulation will come first upon the Jewish settlers of Judea, and then will spread from there to Christians the world over (Revelation 12:13,17). But that’s only half of the picture.

The other half, much overlooked, is recorded in Daniel 11:32: “And they that know their God shall be strong and do exploits.” Who is this referring to? Let’s look closer.

Daniel 11:31 records the abomination of desolation. That is when Satan begins his 3 1/2-year power trip. But it’s also the same time that two prophets from God receive power from on high for the same 3 1/2 years. This is recorded in Revelation 11:3: “And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” The great tribulation will feature the classic battle—good vs. evil.

The time for the ministry of the Two Witnesses is close. They are certainly alive on earth right now, but we don’t yet know who they are.

The account of the Two Witnesses comes to us sandwiched in the midst of the account of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation. Specifically, we read of them between the 6th and 7th Trumpets. Their ministry, therefore, begins after the 6th Trumpet war and continues until the sounding of the 7th Trumpet.

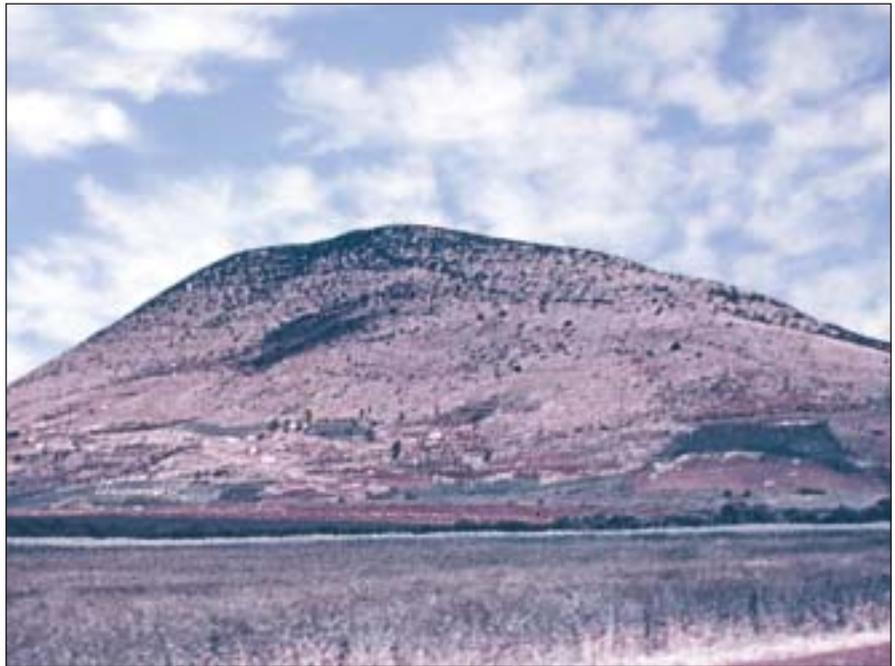
Much debate has raged over these two special prophets of God. Who are they?

Is one of the two Elijah?

Some have argued very persuasively that one of the Two Witnesses must be Elijah. In Malachi 4:5 we have this prophecy: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

It is because of this prophecy that the Jewish people have long looked for Elijah to come, announcing the arrival of the Messiah. Many believe this will happen during the time of the annual Passover feast. This is why every Passover meal has an extra place setting for Elijah, just in case he would appear.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jewish people claimed to their



Mount Tabor, located in the Jezreel Valley near Megiddo, is regarded by Bible scholars as the site of the Mount of Transfiguration where Peter, James and John saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah.

Turkish occupiers that Elijah would soon come, entering through the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount. The prospect of this scared the Turks of the Ottoman Empire so much that they had masons seal up the Eastern Gate. It is still sealed to this day. Oddly, the Turks had no idea that they were fulfilling an incredible prophecy in Ezekiel 44:1-3. The prophecy states that the Eastern Gate would be sealed, because the Lord had entered in by it. (Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when He entered through the Eastern Gate during His triumphal entry, one week before His crucifixion.) The prophecy also states that it would not be opened again until He came back, entering through it again. The Eastern Gate stands sealed until this very moment, awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus. The Turks, in an attempt to prevent one prophecy from being fulfilled, unknowingly fulfilled another!

Back to Malachi’s “I will send you Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

Many of the Jewish people of the 1st Century puzzled over whether or not this man named Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah. He fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. He raised the dead, walked on water, opened blind eyes...What more would Messiah do when He came?

One day the disciples came to Jesus asking, if you are Messiah, then where is Elijah? They knew the prophecy said that Elijah must come before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Jesus answered in Matthew 17:12-13: “But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.” So according to Jesus, the Elijah prophecy was fulfilled by the coming of John the Baptist.

Every person must die

Many have insisted that Elijah must be one of the Two Witnesses because he was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind and did not experience death. Hebrews 9:27 teaches that it is appointed unto men once to die. They contend that Elijah’s required death will be accomplished when he dies as one of the Two Witnesses.

There is a glaring flaw in this logic. Scripture teaches that the saved on earth at the time of the rapture will never see death. I Corinthians 15:51-54 tells us that we shall not all sleep (die), but that we shall all be changed from mortal to immortality at the last trump. Once we are immortal, we will certainly not be

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able to come back later and die. If we don't have to come back to die after the rapture, then Elijah certainly doesn't have to come back and die either.

Are they Moses and Elijah?

Another reason many have thought Elijah would be one of the Two Witnesses is found in Matthew 17:1-3. It says, "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him." Here, on the Mount of Transfiguration, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus.

Revelation 11:4 describes the Two Witnesses as "the two olive trees" and "the two candlesticks," which stand before the God of the earth. Since Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, many have concluded that they are these "two olive trees."

Another factor that adds credence to the possibility is found by studying Revelation 11:5-6. In these verses we find the Two Witnesses performing the same miracles that Moses and Elijah were noted for during their ministries. If any man tries to hurt them, fire will proceed out of their mouths and devour their enemies. Remember that Elijah pulled down fire from heaven and devoured his enemies at one point. The Two Witnesses will have power to cause a drought for the 3 1/2 years of their ministry. Elijah had the power to do the same. They will have power to turn waters into blood. Moses did that in Egypt—Plague #1. The Two Witnesses will have the power to smite the earth with all plagues. This again reminds of the ministry of Moses.

Now for the problems with this view: The Bible states that Moses died and God buried him. If Moses were to be one of the Two Witnesses, he would have to be reincarnated and then die the second time. Elijah would also have to be reincarnated since by now he would be nearly 3,000 years old.

We don't have one example of reincarnation in the Bible. We also don't have any record where a person from a previous generation came back to earth to preach. These factors preclude, in my mind, the



When the Turks conquered Jerusalem in 1517, their leader Suleiman the Magnificent ordered the Eastern Gate to the Temple Mount sealed, and so it has been ever since.

possibility of Moses and Elijah returning to earth as the Two Witnesses.

Do Two Witnesses symbolize Israel and the church?

Another very prominent opinion states that the Two Witnesses represent the Jewish and the Gentile church. This is not illogical since symbols are used prominently throughout the book of Revelation. Here is the reason some people believe this theory:

In Romans 11:24-25, the Apostle Paul refers to Israel as the tame olive tree and to the Gentiles as a wild olive tree. Revelation 11:4 says the Two Witnesses are "the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." From these two passages it has been deduced that there would be, in the endtime, a Gentile church and a Jewish church witnessing in the earth.

To some, this is quite a persuasive argument. However, the prophecy concerning the Two Witnesses calls them two prophets. It also says they will be killed and lie in the street for three and one-half days. I see no logical way that a nation or a church could be killed and lay in the streets. These two prophets will be two literal men.

Conclusion

The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 will not be the Jewish and the Gentile church. They will not be Moses and Elijah reincarnated.

John the Baptist was not literally Elijah; yet Jesus said that he fulfilled the Elijah prophecy because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Likewise, the Two Witnesses will be two ordinary people that apparently come in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah. These two prophets are almost certainly alive on this earth right now, and are being prepared by God for the ministry for which they have been ordained.

The time for the revelation of the Antichrist and False Prophet is near. These two men will be Satan's two witnesses.

God has an answer for Satan's master plan. He will present His Two Witnesses to the world. They will preach the full truth of God's Word for three and one-half years. They will then die in Jerusalem. After 3 1/2 days, they will be resurrected and caught up into the sky.

Yes, Satan's messengers will deceive the world and corrupt the people of the world by his flatteries. But, the people who know their God shall be strong and do exploits! □