

The Two Witnesses

**“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands
that stand before the Lord of the earth.”**

(Revelation 11:4)

Note: The previous sections, discussing the 144,000 and the seven trumpets, should be read before proceeding because both topics are essential to this study on the Two Witnesses.

Please consider five introductory statements:

1. If a person properly understands the purpose, mission, and empowerment of the 144,000 as well as God’s actions and objectives for the seven trumpets, the story of the Two Witnesses reveals the lengths to which God will go to win the hearts of even the worst of sinners. The Bible teaches that God is love, and the book of Revelation confirms that God’s love is a perfect balance of justice and mercy. For example, the seven trumpets (seven redemptive judgments) and the seven bowls (seven destructive judgments) are balanced by the work of the Two Witnesses (mercy and salvation offered through the Two Witnesses for 1,260 days). The story of the Two Witnesses begins in Revelation 10:1 and ends with the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:19, but there is much more to the story than what is written in these verses.

Among Christians today, there is speculation and confusion on the topic of the Two Witnesses. Some people believe the Two Witnesses are two Old Testament prophets, perhaps Moses and Elijah, who will descend from Heaven during the Great Tribulation. Others believe the Two Witnesses could be two religious institutions such as Israel and the Christian church. Still others believe the Two Witnesses could be Enoch and Elijah, the only two men taken to Heaven without seeing death. (Advocates of this view believe these two men will be brought back to

Earth so they can die during the Great Tribulation.) Of course, there are other views on the Two Witnesses such as people who have claimed to be one of the Two Witnesses, but the critical question we have to ask is this: “What does the Bible teach?”

When valid rules of interpretation* are followed, the Bible tells us who the Two Witnesses are because the Bible interprets itself. The Two Witnesses are not two people even though some translations of the Bible have taken the liberty of calling them “men.” (See Revelation 11:6 in the NIV.) The Two Witnesses are much more capable than any two men. The Two Witnesses are *personified* in the book of Revelation because they will work through men and women for 1,260 days.

(***Note:** For a discussion on the importance of valid rules of interpretation, please see Chapter 1 in my book, *Daniel Unlocked for the Final Generation*.)

When their 1,260 days of empowerment arrive, the Two Witnesses will enable 144,000 people to do greater miracles than Jesus did! (John 14:12-14) If Jesus Christ Himself came down from Heaven as one of the Two Witnesses, His influence during the Great Tribulation would be less than the influence the Two Witnesses will actually wield! To put this in perspective, ask yourself this question: “What effect did Jesus have on the nation of Israel during His ministry on Earth? Actually, the gospel of Jesus dramatically accelerated throughout the world *after* He returned to Heaven! The book of Acts confirms that after the Holy Spirit’s power descended upon the disciples, the gospel advanced in different ways through different people – simultaneously!” (See John 16:7.)

2. When a substantial conflict develops between two parties and they appear before a judge, two or more witnesses are required to establish a legal fact; otherwise, the claims of the plaintiff are

cancelled by the responses of the defendant. God told Moses, **“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”** (Deuteronomy 19:15) The Two Witnesses have a prominent role in Revelation’s story because they are intimately involved in a legal process – the judgment bar of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:31) The judgment bar of Christ has two phases of operation: The judgment of the dead* and the judgment of the living. The judgment of the dead is a rather simple process to understand. First, Jesus carefully reviews a faithful recording of each life. Jesus analyzes what the dead person understood to be right and wrong, how he treated those around him, and how he responded to the Holy Spirit. After taking everything into consideration, Jesus announces His decision to millions of angels who are watching with intense interest. (Daniel 7:9,10; Ecclesiastes 12:14; John 5:22) Every dead person will be judged *before* Jesus returns to Earth. Those found to be righteous during the judgment of the dead will be resurrected at the Second Coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) Those found to be evil during the judgment process will not be resurrected until the one thousand years have ended. (Revelation 20:5) Thus, all dead people will be judged *before* Christ returns. (***Note:** For a discussion on what happens at death, see Chapter 13 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*. For a discussion on the timing of Christ’s judgment bar, see Chapter 4 in my book, *Daniel Unlocked for the Final Generation*. For a discussion on the relationship between the year 1844 and the breaking of the third seal, which concerns the judgment bar of Christ, see the chapter, “Revelation 4-6” in my book, *A Study on the Seven Seals and the 144,000*).

A Completed Record

When a person dies, it is impossible for that person to make further decisions or actions. In other words, a person's life record is "sealed by death." When Jesus examines the record of a dead person, He evaluates a record that cannot be changed. (Ecclesiastes 9:5,6; Psalm 115:17,18) Jesus' use of sealed records makes the cleansing of Heaven's temple (the assignment of guilt) rather straightforward. After Jesus evaluates the record of a dead person and announces His decision, the guilt of that dead person is removed* from the temple (where it was *temporarily* stored). If the dead person is determined to be wicked, the sinner's guilt is assigned to the sinner (who will perish in the Lake of Fire – Revelation 20:14,15), or if the dead person is determined to be righteous, the sinner's guilt is assigned to the scapegoat. (**Note:** Lucifer, the originator of sin, is the scapegoat. (1 John 3:8-10; Leviticus 16:8-10) God will destroy Lucifer at the end of the thousand years for his own sins, as well as the sins he led others to commit. Revelation 20:10). When Christ completes the judgment process, the temple in Heaven will be clean because every sinner's guilt will be assigned. I believe Jesus began cleansing Heaven's temple in 1844 and He will conclude this process during the Great Tribulation, just before the seventh trumpet sounds.** (Revelation 10:7)

(***Note:** If you are not acquainted with the doctrine that God *temporarily* stores our guilt in Heaven's temple, please see Chapters 11 and 12 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*. These two chapters discuss the concept of parallel temples [earthly and Heavenly temples] and parallel temple services. It reviews how the guilt of sin was transferred from sinners to the temple altars of the earthly temple through the blood of sacrifices and how the temple was cleansed of guilt on the Day of Atonement.) (****Note:** For a discussion on the commencement of the judgment bar of Christ, please see Chapter 4 in my book, *Daniel Unlocked for the Final*

Generation.)

People Can Change Their Minds and Their Actions

The judgment of the living is unlike the judgment of the dead. The judgment of the living occurs during the 1,260 days granted to the Two Witnesses. The judgment of the living **does not involve** a review of each person's history because a living person can exercise his power of choice and change his mind at any time. So, the judgment of the living involves *a four step process** which God will impose on everyone living during the Great Tribulation.

Step One: Jesus will see to it that everyone on Earth hears the truth about the will of God. This truth is called the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ (Revelation 14:6) and God's servants (the 144,000) will deliver a series of testing truths during the first 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation. The first six trumpets will open the minds and hearts of mankind so that each person, regardless of heritage, culture, or religion, can thoughtfully and intelligently consider a gospel that may be contrary to everything he or she has ever heard about the will of God.

Step Two: Painful choices will need to be made. Upon hearing the gospel, every person must make a choice concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 24:14) The choice is clear. Will the person choose his love for truth or will he succumb to a fear of persecution? The gospel of Jesus will demand a decision: Repent and submit to the authority of Christ or rebel and reject His salvation. Eventually, all people who love truth will step out in faith and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. When they take their stand, they will be given the grace and strength to face persecution. People who love wickedness and are rebellious toward God will be given every opportunity to intelligently consider their situation. The Holy Spirit will pound on their hearts. He will do everything within His power to get rebellious people to embrace the gospel of Jesus.

However, many will reject the Word of God and the Spirit of God – the price for obedience will be too great. (John 3:19-21; Luke 18:18-25; Revelation 13:8)

Step Three: During the judgment of the living, God has designed a “testing time” to make sure that everyone has made their final decision. Persecution will force those people who love truth to take a clear stand for the truth. Those unwilling to make it clear where they stand will capitulate and join forces with Babylon and the devil to avoid persecution.

Step Four: This final step is what the Bible calls the sealing. Everyone embracing the gospel – everyone putting faith in Christ and passing the test of faith – will have their carnal natures removed* and will be sealed with the seal of “the living God.” Everyone not receiving the seal of God will accept the mark of the beast in order to avoid certain death. When everyone has been sealed or marked, the judgment of the living ends. Each person will choose his or her own fate. Jesus will seal the righteous and the devil will mark the wicked.

Now that the four steps involved in the judgment bar of the living have been presented, two observations need to be made: First, consider the love of God. When a sinner passes this test of faith and his carnal nature is removed, God will seal that faith-full person in a state like that of Adam and Eve before they sinned. This means that after a person’s sinful nature is removed, that person will no longer struggle with addictive habits, inner rebellion toward God’s authority, or any of Lucifer’s previous temptations. The curse of sin and human carnal weakness will be gone. Those receiving the seal of God will be free of sin’s power because Jesus will set them free. Because they were willing to take a stand for truth, they are set free! Jesus said, “**Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**” (John 8:32) I cannot emphasize this aspect of God’s amazing grace enough! Think about this: Even the worst addicts or the vilest sinners

will be set free of their sinful baggage if only they will step out in faith and obey the gospel of Jesus. The threshold for obedience will be very low: “Just keep my commandments,” says Jesus.

(John 14:15) **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

(Matthew 11:29,30)

The second observation we need to consider is that at the Second Coming, Jesus will deal separately with four groups of people:

1. The righteous dead in Christ – those who Jesus declared righteous during the judgment of the dead will be resurrected
2. The righteous living in Christ – the living who will be sealed with the seal of God and will be caught up with the resurrected (righteous dead) to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:15,16)
3. The wicked dead – those who Jesus declared wicked during the judgment of the dead will not be disturbed; they will remain asleep in their graves until the thousand years are over (Revelation 20:5)
4. The living wicked – Jesus will kill those who receive the mark of the beast with the “sword” (literally, a command) that comes out of His mouth (Revelation 19:15-21)

At the Second Coming, Jesus will have already decided who will receive eternal life and who will not. The fact that every person who has ever lived on Earth is in one of these four groups when Christ returns underscores this point.

(***Note:** People who do not live long enough during the Great Tribulation to go through all four steps will be judged on the basis of their completed records. In other words, those who die

during the Great Tribulation before receiving the seal of God or the mark of the beast will be judged in the same way as those who died centuries ago. For a discussion on the removal of the carnal nature and the receipt of the seal of God, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega.*)

I have presented these matters pertaining to the judgment bar of Christ because the Two Witnesses will play a crucial role in the judgment of the living. The judgment bar of Christ requires two witnesses to establish a legal fact. Thus, the Two Witnesses will testify about the choices each person makes during the judgment of the living. Remember that in Bible times, two or more witnesses were required to put a person to death. God told Moses, **“Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.”** (Number 35:30; Hebrews 10:28; 2 Corinthians 13:1) By using God’s parameters for fairness and justice, the role of the Two Witnesses becomes clear. What matters most to God is our response to truth. If a person chooses to reject the plainest evidences of truth and ignore the “shouting” of the Holy Spirit within, God can do nothing further to bring that person to repentance. Such a person will be condemned to death by two infallible witnesses: The Bible (the Word of God) and the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God). These Two Witnesses will establish a legal fact. They will speak about the choices of each person. They will tell Jesus whether we chose submission or rebellion. The Two Witnesses will be united in purpose and action. There is no conflict between the Word of God and the Spirit of God because the Word of God was conveyed to mankind through the Holy Spirit! (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16) It is the Holy Spirit’s desire to transform our hearts so that we will choose to obey the Word of God. (1 Peter 4:17; Acts 5:32; 1

John 3:24)

3. Revelation 11:4 says the Two Witnesses “**are *the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord [Ruler] of the Earth.***” The Bible also says the Two Witnesses will be killed at the end of their 1,260 days of empowerment. (Revelation 11:7) I am often amused when people say, “The Two Witnesses can’t be the Bible and the Holy Spirit because they can’t be killed.” My response is, “Then, how do you explain the death of two lampstands and two olive trees that are not on Earth?” This question is usually met with silence because many people simply ignore Revelation 11:4. It is important to understand that witnesses in the Bible are not necessarily human beings. Notice the use of witnesses in each of the following four passages:

Seven Lambs are a Witness

“Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, and Abimelech asked Abraham, ‘What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?’ He replied, ‘Accept these seven lambs from my hand as *a witness* that I dug this well.’ So that place was called Beersheba, because the two men swore an oath there.” (Genesis 21:28-31, italics mine)

A Heap of Stones are a Witness

“ ‘Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us.’ So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. He said to his relatives, ‘Gather some stones.’ So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed. Laban said, ‘This heap is *a witness* between you and me today.’ That is why it was called Galeed. It was also called Mizpah, because he

said, ‘May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me.’ Laban also said to Jacob, ‘Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. This heap is *a witness*, and this pillar is *a witness*, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.’ So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.” (Genesis 31:44-53, italics mine)

The Lord Himself is a Witness

“Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign Lord may *witness* against you, the Lord from his holy temple. Look! The Lord is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads the high places of the earth. The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.” (Micah 1:2-4, italics mine)

The Gospel is a Witness

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for *a witness* unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matthew 24:14, KJV, italics mine)

I wrote earlier that I believe the Two Witnesses are not two human beings. Actually, the Two Witnesses are *personified* in Revelation 11 because the Two Witnesses will work through 144,000 *people*. Revelation 10:1-11:19 is not about 144,000 servants plus two witnesses.

Instead, it is a story of 144,000 empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God! The

144,000 will have supernatural powers. These powers will enable them to say and do things that ordinary people cannot do! If you want to read about a small sample of these supernatural powers, just review the book of Acts! The lame were healed. (Acts 3:6) Dead people were raised to life. (Acts 9:37-40; 20:9,10) The eyes of a blind man were opened. (Acts 9:9-18) At Pentecost, the disciples spoke in foreign languages without any training or preparation. (Acts 2) Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira lied about the money they received from the sale of their property, even though their lie was known only to them. (Acts 5) The apostle Paul was bitten by a deadly viper, but was not hurt. (Acts 28:3) An entire island of people were cured of illnesses. (Acts 28:8, 9) How were these signs and wonders possible? Jesus told His disciples: **“But you will receive *power* when the *Holy Spirit* comes on you; and you will be my *witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** (Acts 1:8, italics mine) To make their witness for Jesus effective, the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to do signs and wonders. **“The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. . . .”** (Acts 5:12)

What was the purpose for the miraculous signs and wonders recorded in the book of Acts? **“So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who *confirmed the message of his grace* by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.”** (Acts 14:3, italics mine) What was the source of their message? **“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received *the [gospel] message* with great eagerness and examined *the Scriptures* every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching *the word of***

God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up [with prejudice so they would not listen to the Word of God].” (Acts 17:11-13, italics and insertions mine)

The use of personification is the best way to explain the Two Witnesses because we cannot separate the empowerment of the 144,000 from the power of the Holy Spirit who will fill the 144,000 and the Word of God which they will boldly preach. Think about the coming impact of this phenomena: 144,000 ordinary people will suddenly be able to perform miracles at will and preach the Word of God with tremendous clarity, which many of them knew very little, if anything, about! How will this be possible? *God’s Two Witnesses will rest on the 144,000 and everyone will see and hear the amazing results.*

The Two Witnesses will use the 144,000 as their mouthpieces to bring about the revelation of Jesus Christ to the whole world. Consider this: During the Great Tribulation, the gospel will be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people as *a witness* – that is, as a measuring rod. Those who receive the gospel will be given the righteousness of Christ (the wedding garment – Matthew 22:12) and through the gift of His righteousness and in His power, they will measure up to the demands of the gospel. Those rejecting the gospel will not measure up. They will be like the man who went to the wedding but refused the wedding garment.

The Unpardonable Sin

The Bible leaves no wiggle room about the unpardonable sin. There is *only one sin* that cannot be forgiven and this sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 12:31,32) A person can speak against Jesus, use God’s name in vain, and even curse the Father and be forgiven!

However, if a person continues to rebel against the demands of the Holy Spirit, that person will eventually blaspheme (insult) the grace of God and the Holy Spirit will depart. This sin is

unpardonable because once it happens, that human being cannot repent of his sins. Many people may regret making some “bad choices” when they are brought face to face with the consequences of their actions, but this is not repentance. Cain was distraught when God confronted him about killing his brother, Abel, but Cain was not repentant. (Genesis 4:13,14) There was no change in Cain’s evil heart. When the Holy Spirit departs from a human being, there is no further desire to know God or to submit to God’s authority. In effect, when a sinner “kills” God’s influence in his soul, spiritually speaking, that sinner is a “dead man” walking. (Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:14)

Now that we know it is possible to kill the influence of the Holy Spirit through the unpardonable sin, we have to ask, “Is it possible to kill the authority of God’s Word?” When a person is confronted with a demand from God (a testing truth) and that person refuses to submit to the truth (as did Pharaoh), the sinner “nullifies” God’s Word through rebellion. Paul wrote, **“For the word of God is *living and active*. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”** (Hebrews 4:12, italics mine) Jesus scolded the Pharisees for robbing the Word of God of its power saying, **“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”** (Mark 7:13) It is possible to kill the influence of the Spirit and the Word of God because both are alive! Similarly, it is possible to “kill” a bill in the Senate, a business deal, a friendship, or a good idea. Without even thinking, we regularly use personification to express our thoughts about various processes and God has done the same thing in the story of the Two Witnesses.

4. God’s Two Witnesses have always existed. The Word of God (entrusted to various groups)

has been with mankind since Creation, and the Holy Spirit has been present ever since the first day of Creation. (Genesis 1:2) The antediluvians *killed* the influence of the Two Witnesses. The antediluvians rebelled against the Word of God that He gave to Noah, who was a “preacher of righteousness.” (2 Peter 2:5) They rejected the Holy Spirit’s call to submit their lives to God’s will. God saw their hardened rebellion, **“Then the Lord said [to Noah], ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his [remaining] days [on Earth] will be a hundred and twenty years.’”** (Genesis 6:3, insertions mine)

5. The testimony of the Two Witnesses will be “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Our response to the Two Witnesses during the Great Tribulation will tell Jesus everything He needs to know so that He can accurately pronounce judgment on each living person. The Bible will be exalted during the Great Tribulation like never before. In my previous study on the second seal, I presented how the Holy Spirit moved men and women to establish Bible societies in Europe and America in the early 1800s. Through the centuries, God’s Spirit moved people to translate and publish Bibles in hundreds of languages. (Even today, no other book on Earth comes close to the Bible in terms of translation and distribution.) The Bible is about to become the most important book on Earth. In fact, a day is coming when the Bible will be the most studied book on the planet. Many people will argue about it and the wicked will kill the saints because of its testimony! (Revelation 6:4) This is why the second seal is highly important. The Bible is about to come “alive” for 1,260 days.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit will exercise enormous power for 1,260 days – power unlike anything we have previously seen. The outpouring of Holy Spirit power, described in the book of Acts, is just a small sample of what is coming. God’s Spirit is going to deeply trouble the hearts of every

living soul, and at the same time, the Holy Spirit will empower 144,000 people to perform signs and wonders (like Moses and Elijah) to affirm the validity of the Scriptures (in a world where more than two-thirds of the population denies the Bible is the Word of God). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the 144,000 will speak the “testimony of Jesus,” and after people compare the proclamations of the 144,000 with the Bible, there will be a numberless multitude who embrace the gospel of Jesus. In short, the 144,000 will be the “arms and legs” of the Two Witnesses. Through them, the Holy Spirit and the Bible will produce a great harvest! Everyone who receives the gospel will receive the seal of God. Everyone who rebels against the gospel will be condemned and ultimately destroyed by fire.

I know this introduction has been lengthy, but I hope this information will accelerate the reader’s understanding about this important prophecy!

Jesus Takes Control of Earth

The book of Revelation is carefully designed. Every detail is perfectly choreographed. Every scene is deliberately set up, and each of the seventeen prophecies in Daniel and Revelation properly fits within a matrix that conforms to valid rules of interpretation. A proper understanding of apocalyptic prophecy produces an incredible story about Jesus. In fact, the entire Bible dovetails into the “Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The role and character of the Godhead, their love for each other and mankind, the sovereign authority of Jesus, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Father’s plan for our salvation, which Jesus will accomplish, is *all* found in apocalyptic prophecy. I have said many times that apocalyptic prophecy is not so much about oncoming events as it is about the love, the plans, and ways of God. *If you really want to appreciate salvation’s process, you will have to study the books of Daniel and Revelation.*

Revelation 10 reveals certain things about Jesus that will shock the world when the events described in Revelation 10 begin. Remember that Revelation 10:1 starts just before the censer in Revelation 8 is cast down. As this prophecy begins, Jesus descends to Earth to make Himself known to the 144,000. Like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, most of the 144,000 do not personally know Jesus currently, but when the appointed time arrives, they will see Him and behold His sovereign authority over Heaven and Earth. The appearing of Jesus to the 144,000 parallels His unannounced appearing before Abraham. Do you remember how the Lord and two angels (the two angels were serving as two witnesses) came down from Heaven to see for themselves how great the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah had become? (Genesis 18) The Lord Himself will come down from Heaven and appear before 144,000 people to announce the imminent destruction of Earth.

“Then I saw another mighty angel [this angel is Jesus] *coming down* from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He *planted* his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land [His stance declares sovereign rule over land and sea], and he gave a loud shout [a thunderous announcement] like the roar of a lion.

When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.” (Revelation 10:1-3, italics and insertions mine)

Timing

Rule One says that each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time. I understand that Revelation 10:1 occurs a few days *before* the censer is cast down in Revelation 8 and the seven trumpets begin. Please examine the chart below:

The Mighty Angel

The mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 is Jesus. In the previous study about the seven trumpets, I explained why I believe the censer will be cast down during a war that involves a nuclear exchange. During this war, Jesus will come down from Heaven and introduce Himself to individuals He has selected as the 144,000. Only the 144,000 will know about this appearing of Jesus. (Jesus is robed in a cloud, which I believe indicates that He is essentially hidden from view.) Even though they are scattered all over Earth, Jesus will appear to the 144,000 on or about the same time, just as He appeared to Saul of Tarsus. Remember, most of the 144,000 currently do not know Jesus. Even if they do know Him, it would be fair to say that this introduction will be an overwhelming revelation.

Jesus is depicted as an angel in Revelation 10 for several reasons. A caricature is a depiction of a person which contains distinguishing characteristics that have been exaggerated to achieve a desired effect. For example, the devil is represented as a “great red dragon” in Revelation 12. Jesus is represented as a “lamb with seven horns and seven eyes” in Revelation 5, and Lucifer’s demons were represented to John as “locusts” in Revelation 9. God designed these caricatures to help us better understand the identity, character, and work of each prophetic element. (Political cartoonists use caricatures in the newspapers every day to speak volumes without saying a word!) By highlighting or exaggerating different characteristics, God enhances our understanding of complex topics with very few words.

I have been asked many times, “Why do you say Jesus is the angel in Revelation 10?” The

answer can be determined with a little sleuthing. Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy requires that we examine parallel references in Scripture to determine the intended meaning of an apocalyptic passage. The first clue is found in the parallels that exist between Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 10. John's description of Christ and Ezekiel's description of Christ are in perfect harmony even though these men lived approximately 700 years apart. Ezekiel wrote, **“Above the expanse over their heads [the four living creatures] was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like *the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day*, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of *the Lord*. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking. He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.’ ”** (Ezekiel 1:26-2:1, insertion and italics mine) The fiery appearance of Jesus and the rainbow surrounding Jesus in Ezekiel and Revelation indicates deity. Jesus is the Creator of light. (Genesis 1:1; 1 John 1:5; John 8:12) The rainbow around Him testifies that He is the Creator of everything that exists. (Colossians 1:16) *No being, other than God, has a rainbow radiance in the Bible.* No throne, other than God's throne, has a rainbow encircling it. (Revelation 4:3)

The second clue indicating this angel is Jesus is found in His deliberate stance. John says, **“He *planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.*”** This deliberate stance indicates this angel has sovereign authority over Earth (land and sea). Jesus uses the form of a mighty angel to describe Himself in Revelation 10 instead of a man for several reasons. Angels are a

higher order of creation than mankind. Angels have strength and powers that humans do not have. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords among the angels just as He is King of kings and Lord of lords among mankind. Prior to living among us as a man, Jesus lived in Heaven as one of the angels. Jesus is Michael, the archangel.* When Jesus returned to Heaven on Resurrection Sunday (John 20:17), He resumed His identity and authority as Michael and He led *His* angels in a successful battle to evict** Lucifer and his angels from Heaven. Jesus is represented as a mighty angel in Revelation 10 because He is the commander of the seven angels who have the seven trumpets. Let me be perfectly clear, Michael/Jesus is *not* a created being like angels or human beings. Michael/Jesus is God, a co-eternal member of the Godhead. Michael/Jesus is equal in every way to the Father. Many people stumble over the idea of Michael/Jesus living among His creation as one of us, but the truth on this topic is quite simple. God lives and walks in the shoes of His creation. Jesus is called by His angelic name, Michael, in Daniel 10:13,21, 12:1, Jude 1:9 and Revelation 12:7 because the Father wants us to know that even after assuming our humanity, Jesus remains the archangel, the commander of Heaven's angels. (The prefix "arch" comes from the Greek word that means ruler – the English word monarch is derived from that source.)

(***Note:** For more information on the topic of Michael the Archangel, please see Chapters 1 and 2 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*. **Lucifer and his wicked angels were cast out of Heaven for rebellion before the world was created. However, Lucifer was permitted to enter Heaven occasionally as the representative of Earth. Revelation 12:7-9, Job 1:6)

A third clue revealing the identity of this mighty angel comes from the apostle Paul. Paul tells us that Jesus Himself will come down from Heaven, and speaking with the authority of the

archangel, Michael, the dead in Christ shall come up out of their graves. **“For the Lord *himself* will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with *the voice of the archangel* and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:16, italics mine) Paul says that the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven and command the righteous dead to arise from their sleep. No one other than Jesus has the authority and the power to create life. (John 1:4) Jesus claims that He holds the keys to life and death. **“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades [the grave].”** (Revelation 1:18, insertion mine) On the basis of His perfect life (He did not sin) and His humiliating death (to pay the penalty for our sins), our Redeemer was appointed by the Father to be the judge of mankind. What amazing grace! *We are judged by a God who has lived as we live, a God who has been tempted as we are tempted.* When Jesus was found worthy to conclude the sin problem in 1798,* He was given sovereign power over everything in the universe. He holds the keys of death (He determines who will live forever and who will not) and Hades – the grave (Jesus determines who will be resurrected to receive eternal life and who will be destroyed with fire). Jesus affirms the words of Paul saying, **“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear *the voice of the Son of God* [who is also Michael the archangel] and those who hear will live.”** (John 5:25, italics and insertion mine)

(***Note:** To learn more about the empowerment of Jesus in 1798, please see my study on Revelation Chapters 4-6.)

The fourth clue indicating this mighty angel is Jesus is found in the actions of this angel. No other being can say and do what is done in Revelation 10 but Jesus. Specifically, Jesus swears by

Himself in verse 6, to flawlessly follow “the Great Tribulation plan” which the Father gave Him.

“And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth [land] and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said,

‘There will be no more delay [of the Great Tribulation]!’ ” (Revelation 10:6, insertions mine)

We know from John 1:10, Hebrews 1:2, Colossians 1:16 and other places in the Bible, that Jesus is the Creative Agent of the Godhead. He alone is the Creator, He has made everything that exists. So, if the mighty angel is our Creator, why does the language in verse 6 suggest that Jesus is swearing by someone other than Himself? We find this literary technique used in other places in the Bible and the purpose for this technique is emphatic disclosure. Consider these two

references: **“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord [God] rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?’”** (Zechariah 3:1,2) In this passage,

Zechariah saw the Lord speak to Satan and the Lord silenced Joshua’s accuser by asserting sovereign authority. The Lord said, “The Lord [God] rebuke you.” The Lord silenced Lucifer with the same unimpeachable authority that He rebuked the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

(Matthew 8:26)

On another occasion, the Lord asserted His authority over Satan with the same words. **“But even the archangel Michael [Jesus], when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses [the devil was arguing that Moses should not be resurrected and taken to Heaven], did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him [the Lord did not engage in the argument], but said, ‘The Lord [God] rebuke you!’ ”** (Jude 1:9, insertions mine) Again, Jesus

asserted His authority by referring to Himself in the third person. In Revelation 10:6, Jesus refers to Himself in the third person for the purpose of emphatic disclosure. Jesus takes an oath in verse 6. He swears by Himself, the Creator of everything that exists, because there is no higher authority.

An oath is necessary in Revelation 10:6 because this verse occurs when it is time to select the 144,000. After selecting the 144,000, Jesus promises with an oath to conclude the sin problem according to the Father's blueprint for man's salvation. At the beginning of sin, Jesus submitted Himself to the authority of the Father. This event is recorded in Psalm 2: **"I will proclaim the decree of the Lord [the Father]: He said to me [Jesus], 'You are my Son [subject]; today I have become your Father [ruler]. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. [I will give them to you if you redeem them.] You will rule them with an iron scepter [unbroken rule]; you will dash them [your enemies] to pieces like pottery.' Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord [Jesus] with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."** (Psalm 2:7-12)

We know that Jesus came to Earth the first time to do the Father's will, not His own will. (John 6:38) To redeem mankind from the curse of sin, Jesus has to carry out the plan of salvation which the Father decreed before sin began. (Revelation 17:8) In Revelation 10:6, Jesus promises the Father that He will do everything the Father requires, and the group of twenty-four elders, the millions of angels, and the 144,000 people will be eye witnesses. Compare this event with the *swearing in* of a new president of the United States. The president must swear before

God and many American citizens at his inauguration, to uphold the constitution of the United States.

This is not the first time that Michael the archangel has sworn an oath using Himself as the highest authority. Carefully notice the words of this *angel* speaking to Abraham. This angel is Michael because the only angel that is God is Michael (the name Michael means one who is like God): **“The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, ‘I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.’ ”** (Genesis 22:15-18, italics mine)

Finally, the little book that rests in the angel’s hands proves this angel is Michael/Jesus. The selection and empowerment of the 144,000 was presented to John as though he would be one of them. This literary feature helps us understand the experience that each of the 144,000 will have. Once again, Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy says we have to examine parallel passages of Scripture to reach the intended meaning, and we find an obvious parallel in Ezekiel 2 and 3. God told Ezekiel: **“ ‘You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.’ Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.’ So I**

opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. He then said to me: ‘Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak *my words* to them.’ ” (Ezekiel 2:7-3:4, italics mine) Notice how Ezekiel’s experience parallels John’s experience. Both men were given words to speak and the words are represented as a book that is already written.

Consider these five elements: (1) the rainbow around His head, (2) His authoritative posture, one foot on land and the other on the sea, (3) Michael the archangel/Jesus, resurrects the dead at the last day, (4) the Creator swears by Himself that He will follow the Great Tribulation plan which the Father has given Him, and (5) the parallel between John and Ezekiel receiving words from God which they are to speak. Given these five facts, it becomes obvious that the mighty angel described in Revelation 10 is Michael/Jesus who received the seven attributes of sovereign power in 1798 from the Father. (Revelation 5:12) Of course, currently a large percentage of the world does not know about Jesus and another large percentage of the world’s population reject the divinity of Jesus, but this will change when Jesus takes the control of Earth away from mankind.

The Loud Shout

“And he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.” When Jesus descends to meet with the 144,000, He will give a loud shout – like the roar of lion. I believe this shout will be a startling event, heard around the world in the form of heavy thunder that rolls throughout Earth. This shout will be like a gigantic explosion in the heavens, a signal moment, an ominous warning, but the puzzling mystery is that nothing in

the Heavens or on Earth will be found to produce this violent sound! (See Job 36:26-37:5.)

Nevertheless, this shout will be a sign, an announcement “for those who have ears to hear” that Jesus Christ has come to take control of Earth. John does not reveal what is said in the shout, but I like to think Jesus shouts, “Earth! Prepare to meet your Creator!” (Amos 4:12)

You may recall that the Father spoke to Jesus from time to time when Jesus was on Earth.

Consider this situation which occurred a few days before Jesus was crucified: **“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ The crowd that was there and heard it [but did not understand the words] said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, ‘*This voice was for your benefit, not mine.* Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ ”** (John 12:27-32, italics and insertions mine)

The Seven Thunders

After Jesus shouts, seven thunderous voices will speak. **“And when the seven thunders spoke, I [John] was about to write [down the things I heard the thunderous voices say]; but I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down [because I want those “having ears to hear” to be the ones to hear what I have to say].’ ”**

(Revelation 10:4, insertions mine)

The seven thunders are seven thunderous announcements which Jesus will speak during the Great Tribulation. We do know the 144,000 will speak “the testimony of Jesus,” but the seven thunders are not messages conveyed through human beings. *Jesus Himself will speak seven*

times during the Great Tribulation in a way that is reminiscent of the seven times He spoke while hanging on the cross. John was not permitted to write down each pronouncement – even though he heard the pronouncements and understood them. Jesus wants each person who receives the seal of God to hear His voice with his own ears. Can you imagine actually hearing the voice of Jesus? Can you imagine the joyful assurance the seven thunders will be for those who are standing firmly in their faith and have received the seal of God?

Consider this: If you hear a thunderous voice from Heaven and you understand the words that were spoken, *your own ears will confirm that you have been sealed!* The seven thunders are seven messages of assurance, hope, and encouragement. These seven thunders are for the benefit of the people who have been thoroughly tested and proven faith-full. As the Great Tribulation progresses, more and more people will be sealed. Thus, most everyone who receives the seal of God will hear and understand at least one thunder! (I say “most everyone” because the sealing process occurs over a period of 1,260 days and it is possible that some who are sealed near the end could die before the next thunder occurs.)

This is a guess, but it seems to me that the seven thunders will occur at seven moments of great anxiety and discouragement during the Great Tribulation. If so, the following potential scenario is offered for your consideration:

Thunder 1 When Jesus says, “No more delay.” Censer cast down (during a nuclear exchange?)

The 144,000 will hear and understand this thunder because they have been sealed.

Thunder 2 During the first angel's message (when persecution begins?)

Thunder 3 During second angel's message (just before the fifth trumpet?)

Thunder 4 During third angel's message (while the devil masquerades as God?)

Thunder 5 During the martyrdom of the saints (when a third of mankind is killed?)

Thunder 6 At the close of salvation (during the 3.5 days when the Two Witnesses are considered dead?)

Thunder 7 Just before the Second Coming (during the seventh bowl?)

Regardless of when the seven thunders occur, those who have received the seal of God will hear and understand the seven thunders simultaneously all over the world and their courage will be renewed.

The Solemn Promise

“Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore [made a solemn promise] by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, ‘There will be no more delay.’ But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God [the sealing] will be accomplished, just as he announced to his [144,000] servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:5-7)

Remember Michael swears by Himself because He is God – just like the Father is God. He is the Creator and there is no higher power. (See also Isaiah 45:23 and Jeremiah 22:5.) Do not confuse the divinity of Jesus with His submission to the Father for the purpose of man’s salvation. Even though Jesus surrendered certain prerogatives to the Father to save mankind, Jesus is just as much God as is the Father.

The question rises, why does the command, **“There will be no more delay,”** require a solemn oath? Actually, there is more to the setting than this command. When the perfect time arrives for the administration of God’s wrath, Jesus will make a solemn promise to faithfully and

completely carry out all of the objectives the Father embedded into the plan of salvation. For example, Jesus is going to administer God's wrath upon Earth (seven redemptive judgments and seven destructive judgments). Jesus is going to ensure that the gospel is presented to every person and Jesus is going to see that every soul is tested. Those passing the test of faith will be sealed with the seal of the living God. Jesus is going to release the devil from the abyss and Jesus is going to execute vengeance on the wicked – all this without any deviation from the plan of salvation which the Father gave Jesus. (Revelation 1:1) In other words, when Jesus declares there will be no more delay, *He will be required to do all that the Father has mandated without deviation.* Therefore, Jesus will swear to carry out the will of God. Because Jesus loves each person (saints and sinners alike) to the point that He would gladly give up His eternal life to save each person, this assignment will be more difficult for Jesus in some ways than going to the cross! It will crush Jesus' heart to do what He has to do. In spite of this, He promises to do all that is required.

Consider this parallel: When a newly elected U.S. president raises his (or her) right hand and takes the "oath of office" on Inauguration Day, the president promises at any and all costs to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States – our highest law. This oath is given at a public gathering. The citizens of the United States, including those who elected him and those who voted against him, are assured by the president's oath that he will uphold the law of the land and he will govern honorably. The president solemnly swears before God and the citizens of this country that he will not deviate from the Constitution, no matter what! When a president swears to uphold the Constitution, he declares that (1) the U.S. Constitution is honorable and defensible, (2) the laws governing the U.S. have greater authority than he does, and (3) he agrees

to uphold the intent and demands of the law at any and all costs. In a similar way, Jesus raises His right hand and makes an oath before the Father, the angelic host, and the twenty-four elders. He makes a promise to fulfill the Great Tribulation plan which the Father gave Him – regardless of the horrors that will follow.

Daniel saw Jesus take this oath. His view adds a few more details that are helpful: **“The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, ‘It [the presentation of the gospel through my servants] will be for a time, times and half a time [1,260 days]. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken [that is, when the 144,000 are rendered powerless], all these things [pertaining to their mission] will be completed.’ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, ‘My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?’ He replied, ‘Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.’ ”** (Daniel 12:7-9*)

(***Note:** For further information on this passage, please see Chapter 8 in my book, *Daniel Unlocked for the Final Generation.*)

The Scroll

Revelation 10 declares the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ, the Creator. He rules over land and sea, He swears by Himself, He gives a scroll containing His words to John, and with sovereign authority, He declares, “There will be no more delay.” The apostle John is treated in this prophecy as though he is one of the 144,000. God uses this literary device so that much can be said about the experience of the 144,000 with very few words. **“Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: ‘Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand**

of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, ‘You must prophesy *again* about [before] many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’ ” (Revelation 10:8-11, italics and insertion mine)

After His resurrection, Jesus was given authority as the Head of His Church. (Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18) On the basis of this authority, Jesus gave the gospel commission to His disciples just before He left Earth (Matthew 28:19,20) and the gospel of Jesus has been proclaimed for about two thousand years. Over the past twenty centuries, the gospel has become contaminated with the traditions and opinions of men. Today, there are hundreds of variations on what actually constitutes the gospel of Jesus! During the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will be solely responsible for the gospel commission. A pure gospel will be delivered to the world without traditions or opinions because Jesus will speak through the 144,000. The world will hear His words! (The words of Jesus are called the “testimony of Jesus.” Revelation 1:9, 19:10) John, representing the 144,000, was told, “You must prophesy (preach the gospel) *again*.” The eternal gospel of Jesus has not changed (Revelation 14:6), but after two thousand years of “man-handling,” today’s versions of the gospel are a distortion of truth. Therefore, the gospel must be cleansed of corruption and given *again*. The little scroll which John receives is the *pure* gospel of Jesus.

When God called upon Ezekiel to speak to Israel, the young man did not have anything to say to

the elders of Israel. Ezekiel was naturally timid, even though he was a priest. He did not find speaking easy or desirable and after all, how could a young adult tell Israel's elders about God's will? Nevertheless, the Lord gave words to Ezekiel to speak. (Please consider the entire passage that follows so that you can compare the distinct parallels that exist between Ezekiel's situation and that of the 144,000.)

“ ‘You [Ezekiel] must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.’ Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll [ingest these words]; then go and speak [these words] to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. [The Word of God is wonderful to understand!] He then said to me: ‘Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them. You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel [my chosen people] – not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you. But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate. But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though

they are a rebellious house.’ The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away [from the Kebar River where I was living], and I went in bitterness [having contempt] and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the Lord upon me.” (Ezekiel 2:7-3:14)

Two parallels are immediately obvious. Ezekiel and John (1) were told to “eat the scroll” and speak the words that had been given to them, and (2) they found the scroll “sweet in the mouth and bitter in the stomach.” These parallels are easy to understand. We often use the expression of “eating” up books. If we say, “Bill eats up everything he can find on fishing. . . .” We know what this means. The important point here is that the 144,000 (like Ezekiel) will be given words to speak. They will not speak on their own. They will speak for Jesus and receive the same condemnation that Jesus would have received if He were here speaking the same words. This is the bitter part. Jesus told His disciples, **“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, *do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*”** (Matthew 10:17-20, italics mine)

Soon after Jesus returned to Heaven, the disciples were given bold and powerful words to speak. Read Acts 3 and you will marvel at the clarity and depth of Peter’s testimony. In fact, **“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.”**

(Acts 4:1-3) God gave Stephen the ability to speak with penetrating words as well. He too was arrested for speaking boldly about Jesus, **“When they [the Jews] heard this [Stephen’s testimony concerning the ministry of Jesus], they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ At this they covered their ears [so they could not hear Stephen’s blasphemy] and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”** (Acts 7:54-58, insertions mine)

If the promise of being given “words to speak” in Matthew 10:17-20 has been applicable during the past two thousand years, how much more applicable will this promise be when the 144,000 are given *the scroll* to eat! Theologians, scholars, pastors, priests, teachers, etc. **will not be speaking for Jesus** during the Great Tribulation **unless** they are among the 144,000, because no one else receives the scroll.

The Measuring Rod Indicates Judgment

After eating the scroll (which is the gospel of Jesus), John was told to “prophesy again” and it is this final proclamation of the *true* gospel of Christ that measures the inner court of the temple.

(Revelation 11:1, 2) The idea of measuring the temple and counting the worshipers in the inner court is one of judgment. In fact, measuring the temple describes the judgment bar of Christ for the living. **“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”** (1 Peter 4:17)

The concept of judgment comes from the process of measuring. The Greek word for judgment is

krino. This word means to decide or to distinguish. From ancient times, merchants, builders, and judges have used interchangeable terms such as, “weighed in the balance,” “out of plumb,” “full measure,” or “deficient” to indicate compliance or noncompliance with defined standards. In this sense, a yardstick (a measuring rod) and a law are defined standards. A yardstick measures thirty-six inches and a law defines what is illegal. Judgment is the process of measuring whether something is perfect or imperfect according to the standards. The 144,000 will proclaim the words given to them and their words will make rebellious people furious and they will make honest-hearted people think. Thus, a separation of the sheep from the goats will result. As persecution grows, one’s commitment to the gospel of Jesus will become clear. Those who love truth will embrace the gospel of Jesus, and they will stand firmly for God’s requirements and standards. Everyone else will “fall short” (not measure up). **“I was given a reed like a measuring rod [a yardstick] and was told, ‘Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it [do not include those who refuse to worship me], because it [the outer court] has been given to the Gentiles [those who do not know me]. They will [become angry and] trample on the holy city [my people] for 42 months.’ ”** (Revelation 11:1,2, insertions mine)

The difference between the inner court and the outer court of the temple warrants a little explanation. Prior to its destruction in A.D. 70, the temple in Jerusalem had two courts. “Pure Jews” could enter the inner court (the area closest to God) and Gentile converts, that is, “impure Jews,” had to stay in the outer court (an area farther away from God). This practice stemmed from the law of Moses: **“No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation. No Ammonite or**

Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation. . . . Do not abhor an Edomite [the descendants of Esau], for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.” (Deuteronomy 23:2, 3, 7, 8, insertion mine)

During the Great Tribulation, the people who love truth will eventually denounce their past religious views and embrace the gospel of Jesus. Speaking figuratively, these honest-hearted people will enter “the inner court” of God’s temple (the area closest to God) and God will regard them as “pure Jews.” (Revelation 2:9) Because of their faithfulness to the demands of the gospel, the righteousness of Christ will be imparted to these sinners (their carnal natures removed) and they will receive the seal of God. There is no need to “measure” the outer court because no sinner, on his own, “measures up” to the righteousness required for salvation. In fact, those who reject the terms and conditions of the gospel will be offended by its denunciation of sin. The goats will angrily persecute God’s sheep for forty-two months. History says there is no war more tenacious or bitter than a holy war.

Two Holy Cities

Currently, God has two holy cities! One is in Heaven and it has physical dimensions (Revelation 21:15-17) and is physically made of precious metals and gem stones. (Revelation 21:18-21) This city is called “*New Jerusalem*” because it has displaced old Jerusalem. God’s second holy city is on Earth. It is not a physical city. This city consists of honest-hearted people all over the world. Many people think the “holy city” trampled on in Revelation 11:2 applies to the current city of Jerusalem. They believe a large horde of Gentiles (Palestinians, Arabs, Russians, etc.) will attack

Jerusalem at some point during the Great Tribulation. It is always possible that Jerusalem will *again* be attacked by non-Jews. In fact, Jerusalem has been attacked many times throughout the centuries, but the “holy city” in Revelation 11:2 has nothing to do with Jerusalem. After Israel rejected the Messiah, God redefined Israel. For the past two thousand years, a “Jew” is anyone who submits to the teachings of Christ. (Galatians 3:28,29) Conversely, a Gentile is anyone who does not submit to the teachings of Christ. This means that the city of Jerusalem today is a Gentile city – not *the* holy city. Ironically, most of those living in Jerusalem and claiming to be Jews today are actually Gentiles in God’s sight! (Revelation 2:9)

God redefined Israel and destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 for good reasons. (Matthew 23:38 - 24:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16) God moved on to a “new Israel” operating under a “new covenant” because He wanted the gospel of Jesus to go throughout Earth. Since the Jews made it clear they would have nothing to do with giving the gospel of Jesus, God raised up the Christian Church, and once it was on its feet, He destroyed Jerusalem. The modern city of Jerusalem is not a “holy city” set apart from the rest of the world for a special purpose. It is not a city of refuge. It is not a city where God dwells. God’s temple is not located there. Jerusalem is just another evil city with the same evil as Moscow, Baghdad, and New York City. Under God’s original plan, “Plan A,” the ancient city of Jerusalem would have endured forever, but Plan A could not be carried out because Israel refused to cooperate with God during the seventy weeks. Therefore, God terminated Plan A by destroying Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Under Plan B, God has created a bigger and better city and it is called “*New Jerusalem*” because the builder and maker of this city is Jesus Himself! (John 14:1-3) *New Jerusalem* was the city that Abraham looked for. (Hebrews 11:10) At the Second Coming, Jesus will gather up all the saints and take them to *New*

Jerusalem. After the one thousand years have ended, the Holy City will descend to Earth:

“I saw the Holy City, the *new* Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. . . .Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs [the Gentiles in the outer court], those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.’ ” (Revelation 21:2,3; 22:14,15, italics mine)

Two Churches and Two Cities

The book of Revelation separates the people of Earth into two churches and two cities. One church group is represented by a “great whore” because the people participating in Lucifer’s theocracy will prostitute their integrity to save themselves from death, and the other church group is represented as the “bride of Christ.” One city is called “Babylon” because it will mirror ancient Babylon in arrogance and ignorance, and the other city is called the “holy city” because it contains the holy people. Consider this text which points to events that take place during the sixth trumpet:

“He [the stern-faced king, Lucifer] will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation [because Jesus has empowered him to destroy Earth] and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men [his military adversaries] and *the holy people* [the people of God]. . . . The man clothed in linen, who was above the

waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, ‘It [salvation’s offer] will be [available] for a time, times and half a time [a total of 1,260 days, while the Two Witnesses are preaching]. When the power of *the holy people* has been finally broken [crushed, conquered], all these things will be completed.’ ” (Daniel 8:24, 12:7, italics and insertions mine)

Revelation 13:7 “He [the beast, Babylon] was given power to make war against the saints [for 42 months] and to *conquer* them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”

“The woman [the great whore] you saw is *the great city* [Lucifer’s theocratic government] that rules over the [ten] kings of the earth. . . . Terrified at her torment [during the seven bowls], they [the kings of Earth] will stand far off and cry: ‘Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, *city of power!* In one hour your doom has come!’ ” (Revelation 17:18, 18:10, italics and insertions mine)

Revelation 11:2 “But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the *Gentiles*. They will trample on *the holy city* [the people of God who live all over the world] for 42 months.”

It is easy to understand God’s use of two churches, but why does God describe people as members of two cities in the book of Revelation? A city is a corporate body, *a system* that has infrastructure, a form of government, and a set of laws that everyone must obey. A city is a living entity. Look at the word “citizen.” The first four letters “citi” indicate membership in a *system*.

During the Grecian empire, city/states were the equivalent of small nations. Each city had its

own laws, officials, and government. Everyone knew in those days that a city could only survive if everyone supported the king and remained united. It was true then and it is true today: A city or nation divided will fall. During the Great Tribulation, the people of Earth will eventually join one of two cities. One city (having Jesus as its King) will consist of sheep, the other city (having Lucifer as its king) will consist of goats. The Gentiles will make up the outer court and the people of God will make up the inner court. The Gentiles will persecute the holy city (the holy people) for 42 months. John was told, **“But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.”** (Revelation 11:2) The Gentiles will conquer the saints. **“The beast [the leopard-like beast from the sea] was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. . . . He [the beast] was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over *every* tribe, people, language and nation.”** (Revelation 13:5, italics and insertions mine)

The Two Lampstands and the Two Olive Trees

“**And** [Jesus said to John] **I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy** [on my behalf] **for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth** [a coarse fabric, not pleasant to wear, indicating a time of great upheaval and distress]. **These** [witnesses] **are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand** [that is, they are positioned] **before the** [throne of the] **Lord of the earth.**” (Revelation 11:3,4) How can two lampstands and two olive trees (four objects) be Two Witnesses? Before we address this question, a short study in the book of Zechariah is necessary because the identity of the Two Witnesses is explained there. Remember, Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy says that if a prophetic element is thought to be symbolic, the Bible must define that symbol with relevant Scripture. In this case, we not only find relevant Scripture in the book of Zechariah, but we also find a really neat parallel story!

The Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. About two years later, Darius I (the king of the Medes who ruled over the province of Babylon) died. The death of Darius I enabled Cyrus (who had been king of the Persians for several years) to become sovereign over the province of Babylon. When Cyrus learned (perhaps from Daniel) that the Most High God of the Jews had called him by name one hundred fifty years before he was born to rebuild the temple, and to be king over the entire region, Cyrus was deeply impressed with the God of the Jews. (See Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-6.) The timing of Darius’ death could not have been more perfect because his death enabled one man to exercise sovereign authority over the province of Judea *as well as* the province of Babylon. Thus, Cyrus could set the Jews free from Babylon, and send them home to Judea whereas Darius could not have done this.

Thus, at the end of seventy years, Cyrus permitted the Jews to return home in 536 B.C. **“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia [as king over the province of Babylon], in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah*, the Lord *moved* the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: ‘This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.’ ”** (Ezra 1:1-3, italics mine)

(***Note:** Prior to the Babylonian captivity, the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah: **“ ‘This whole country [of Judea] will become a desolate wasteland, and these [tribal] nations [of Israel] will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,’ declares the Lord, ‘and will make it desolate forever.’ ”** (Jeremiah 25:11,12)

Get Out of Jail!

After the decree was issued, an excited group of 42,360 Jews departed Babylon for the ruins of Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:64) However, their excitement soon faded after arriving in Judea because during their absence, powerful warlords had overtaken the territory. Of course the squatters did not want the Jews to return to Judea, so they made the lives of the Jews difficult and miserable. Nevertheless, the Jewish king, Zerubbabel, and the high priest, Joshua, appointed Levites to begin rebuilding and restoring the temple. There was great rejoicing and celebrating that following spring when the foundation was laid, but their joy was short lived.

“Then the peoples [the warlords] around them [the Jews] set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. [For many years] They hired counselors [lobbyists] to work against them [the Jews] and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius [II] king of Persia. (Ezra 4:4,5 insertions mine)

The resentment and actions of the warlords explains why four decrees were issued over a period of ninety-three years to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. Cyrus gave the first decree in 536 B.C. Darius II, king of Persia (not to be confused with Darius I, the king of the Medes, who put Daniel in the lion’s den) issued a second decree in 519 B.C. Years later, the Persian king, Artaxerxes, issued two decrees – his first decree was issued in 457 B.C. and his second was issued in 444 B.C. Each time the Jews received permission to go forward, the devil found a way to thwart God’s work and bring the process of rebuilding to a halt. Finally, in 515 B.C., the temple was completed. It was dedicated the following year (the Sabbath year of 514 B.C.) even though enhancements to the temple and the city of Jerusalem would not be completed for another seventy-five years. (**Note:** The Jews were deeply hated throughout the land of Canaan before Nebuchadnezzar took them captive. This explains why three Persian kings had to issue four decrees over a period of ninety-three years to restore Jerusalem and the temple! The warlords resented the return of the Jews so much that it took four different decrees to overcome their hatred.)

“ . . . They finished building the temple [the basic structure] according to the command of the God of Israel and the [four] decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign

[515 B.C.] of **King Darius** [that is, Darius II, king of Persia].” (Ezra 6:14,15, insertions mine)

Fourteen Years of Despair (534-521 B.C.)

Now that a brief overview has been given on the circumstances of rebuilding the temple and the city of Jerusalem, consider the deep despair which beset King Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest. (Their story is also important because the saints will face a parallel experience during the Great Tribulation.) The reconstruction of the temple was halted the year it began and the project “lay dead” for fourteen years. The warlords mocked Zerubbabel and Joshua and as time went by, despised by many of their own people. The warlords sent letters of accusation (about the past behavior of the Jews) and this shut down the rebuilding project. There was nothing that Zerubbabel and Joshua could do but wait. Fourteen years is a long time to wait and these good men knew that a long delay would further diminish their opportunity to complete the task. During this hopeless period of “gridlock,” the Lord gave the prophet Zechariah several visions to encourage His people.

Of course, Jesus saw all that was going on. He saw the lies and accusations of the warlords which the devil used to thwart the rebuilding of the temple. Jesus also saw the fragile condition (spiritually speaking) of those Jews who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem. In some ways, the generation that came out of Babylon was worse than the generation that came out of Egypt. The people of Israel who came out of Babylon possessed a corrupt religion. They held a faulty understanding of the laws of Moses and some of the pagan beliefs of the Babylonians had been mixed in for good measure. Understanding human nature and the condition of His people, *God designed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and His temple to be an object lesson for generations to come.* Israel’s deliverance from Babylon was to be as much of a miracle as Israel’s deliverance

from Egypt. The rebuilding of the temple would be just as much of a miracle as the crossing of the Red Sea! In short, Jesus wanted His people to understand the importance of living by faith (doing what is right without regard for the consequences) because without faith, it is impossible to please Him! (Hebrews 11:6)

At the end of the rebuilding project, Jerusalem was to be a city built by faith and inhabited by the “faith-full.” Jesus did not want Jerusalem established on human prowess and illusions of self-importance and self-righteousness. Therefore, God permitted the exiles to enter the “tunnel of hopelessness.” (This is a situation where you cannot go forward or backward, up or down. In short, the tunnel of hopelessness is a dark place of perfect gridlock.) Human efforts to rebuild the temple fizzled out during the first year of reconstruction and there was absolutely nothing that the king and the high priest could do to overcome it. After a few years of languishing in despair, God spoke to His people through Zechariah:

“[For many good reasons,] **The Lord was very angry with your forefathers** [and as promised, He drove us from *His* land – Leviticus 25:23]. **Therefore** [the Lord said to me] **tell the people: ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: Return to me,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘and I will return to you,’ says the Lord Almighty. . . .** [did you notice the order – return to me and I will return to you] **Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.’ But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the Lord. . . .** **‘However, if** [consider the conditional nature of this offer] **you return to me, I will bless you. . . . I have many wonderful things in store for you. . . .’ ‘Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming** [to Earth], **and I will live among you,’ declares the Lord.** ‘[A time is

coming when] **Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and [many Gentile nations] will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem [as His dwelling place].’ ”** (Zechariah 1:2-4; 2:10-12, insertions mine)

God’s punishment of Israel and His words of reconciliation perfectly align with the terms and conditions originally stated at Mount Sinai. (See Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28)

Nebuchadnezzar drove Israel from their “homeland” because of rebellion against the Lord.

Because Israel did not observe God’s Sabbath years for 430 years (Ezekiel 4:5,6), God put Israel in exile for seventy years so that the land could get its Sabbath rest! (There are seventy Sabbath years in 430 years. 2 Chronicles 36:21,22) When the restitution for the land had been made and the old generation had died off in captivity, the Lord wanted to start over with a new generation of Jews. He wanted the new generation to know that He had forgiven Israel and that He was ready to renew His original covenant with *them*.

From the beginning, God’s purpose for calling Israel to serve Him was comprehensive. He wanted a holy nation of priests. (Exodus 19:4-6) In other words, Jesus wanted a large body of people who understood His love, character, and ways. Jesus wanted a nation that could present the light of truth and salvation to the Gentiles. Jesus wanted a nation of loving people who could proclaim and demonstrate His power and salvation in their lives. Israel was to be a nation of people who lived by the beatitudes! (Matthew 5-7) Israel’s failure can be assessed by the hatred which the Gentiles had for the returning Jews. The warlords did not want the Jews living in their midst. Jesus, however, loved the descendants of Abraham because Abraham was His friend.

(James 2:23) Jesus wanted to change Israel from within and without. If the new Israel would honor Him and trust Him, Jesus promised that He had many wonderful things in store for them. In fact, Jesus said, “I Myself will come and live among you!” “If you will love me, obey me, trust me, and put your faith in me – everything will start moving forward – toward the purpose for which you were called!”

Of course, Jesus foreknew the difficulty the rebuilders would face upon returning to Judea. He permitted them to enter into a difficult and trying experience so that this generation of Jews could see His deliverance and salvation firsthand! The new generation had to see and learn the importance and joy of living by faith. Jesus wanted Israel’s experience to become, “In God we trust.” **“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth. He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.”** (Psalm 33:12-15)

The Separation of Church and State

Under a theocracy, there is one king (who determines political matters) who is also the lord (who determines spiritual matters). When Israel rejected the theocracy which Christ had established at the Exodus (1 Samuel 8:7), Jesus did the next best thing. He required the nation of Israel to have two leaders, a high priest and a king. Both leaders were forbidden to take the other’s place.

Consider God’s wisdom in keeping church and state separate for a moment. God intended to rebuild the nation of Israel with a generation of exiles who barely knew Him. To do this, God presented two important object lessons in a vision to Zechariah. God used the current high priest (whose name was Joshua) and the current king (whose name was Zerubbabel) to represent

Israel's spiritual and political condition at the time. Jesus wanted His people to understand two profound truths:

1. Israel had been forgiven and the covenant renewed on the basis of divine grace alone.
2. Israel could not accomplish the rebuilding on the basis of human strength.

When the rebuilding project came to a stop, some of the exiles developed a bad attitude toward God. They understood the reasons for their exile in Babylon, but they complained to God, "Why should we suffer for something we didn't do?" Instead of complaining to God, they should have been praising the Lord by saying, "Thank you, Lord, for putting us in this tunnel of hopelessness. We see that we are powerless. We know that somehow, You will overcome the obstacles that confront us. Teach us patience and submission to Your glorious will. Help us to count this tribulation 'all joy.' Show us again Your wonderful salvation! Amen." (See James 1:2,3.)

There are two important parallels in this story for the generation that will experience the Great Tribulation. First, all who embrace the gospel of Jesus during the Great Tribulation will be granted total forgiveness of their sins on the basis of grace alone. Second, those who embrace the gospel will not be able to survive the Great Tribulation on the basis of human strength.

Given these facts, may the Lord Jesus give each of us the patience and faith to "count it all joy" when we are called upon to suffer for the sake of Christ!

Now that you have some background on the dire circumstances surrounding those who had returned to Jerusalem, consider this vision given to Zechariah:

Joshua

"[Zechariah writes,] **Then he** [an angel] **showed me Joshua the high priest** [remember, Joshua represents the spiritual condition of Israel] **standing before the angel of the Lord**

[Michael/Jesus], **and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.** [Wherever Satan goes, a spirit of criticism and accusation is always present.] **The Lord [Michael/Jesus] said to Satan, ‘The Lord [God] rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen [to restore this nation and return it to] Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man [the nation of Israel] a burning stick snatched from the fire?’** [The language of snatching a burning stick from a fire indicates a divine rescue. The Lord had deliberately rescued Israel from total extinction by moving King Cyrus to set the Jews free. If the Lord had not done this, Israel would have disappeared from history. Satan argued with the Lord arguing that there was no basis for rescuing Israel, but the Lord simply said to Lucifer, “Your argument has no merit. Be silent.”]

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. [This was a very strange sight to Zechariah because a high priest was not permitted to wear dirty clothes. (Leviticus 21:10-12) Israel’s spiritual condition before God was filthy and the nation had become degenerate in God’s sight through dishonesty, violence, and sexual immorality.] **The angel [Michael/Jesus] said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ Then he said to Joshua, ‘See, I [Myself] have taken away your sin, and I will put rich [clean and priceless] garments on you.’ Then I [Michael/Jesus] said, ‘Put a clean turban on his head.’ So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord [Michael/Jesus] stood by [approving this marvelous transaction].**

The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: ‘This is what the Lord Almighty [Michael/Jesus] says: ‘If you [Joshua, representative of the high priests who will serve Israel] will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then [your temple will remain and] you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these

[celestial beings] **standing here. ‘Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come** [the associates of Joshua symbolized the high priests who would follow Joshua down to the time of Christ]: **I am going to bring my servant, the Branch,*** [to the city of Jerusalem].’

(***Note:** Jesus calls Himself ‘the Branch’ because the nation of Israel had been ‘cut down’ like a tree. Out of “this withered stump of a nation” a branch would *appear* and it would become mighty and restore the tree to its divine purpose. This imagery was God's way of assuring Israel that the original covenant given to the “family tree of Abraham” was still intact. **“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . .”** Isaiah 11:1,2)

‘See, [Jesus said “Behold”] the stone I have set in front of Joshua [this unchanging stone will serve as a witness that I have made this promise]! **There are seven eyes on that one stone,** [a rock endures from age to age, and in this case, this rock represents the Holy Spirit who sees everything. (Revelation 5:8) The changeless Spirit of God will *see* if Israel keeps the covenant of the Lord] **and I will engrave an inscription on it** [this inscription is my promise],’ **says the Lord Almighty, ‘and [at the appointed time] I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. ‘In that day each of you will invite his neighbor [from neighboring nations] to sit under his vine and fig tree [and there, fellowship as brothers],’ declares the Lord Almighty.”** (Zechariah 3:1-10, insertions mine)

Three Key Points

1. Because the Lord is forgiving and compassionate beyond measure, the Lord chose to give

Israel a second chance, and Satan complained to the Lord because he and his angels had not been granted a “second chance” after their expulsion from Heaven. Lucifer’s argument had no merit for two reasons. First, God had given Lucifer and his angels much time and many opportunities to repent of their rebellion, but Lucifer and his angels interpreted God’s patience and forbearance as weakness and their rebellion reached the point of open defiance. Second, Lucifer and the angels could not be forgiven because they had committed the unpardonable sin. They were created with sinless natures, whereas human beings are born with carnal, rebellious natures. So, rather than enter into a meaningless argument with the devil, the Lord silenced the devil with a sovereign rebuke. While the devil watched, Jesus commanded that Joshua’s guilt (his filthy clothes) be removed and Jesus clothed the high priest with *a spotless garment that was not his own*. What a beautiful example of God’s grace and righteousness. Grace is seen in the command to remove his filthy clothes and righteousness is seen in the spotless clothing God gave to Joshua. The gift of Christ’s righteousness* is our only hope of salvation! (Matthew 22:1-14) Jesus had forgiven Israel. He was no longer hostile toward His people. (See Isaiah 26 and 27.) Even though God’s wrath may burn for a season, God’s wrath does not endure forever. Justice prevails and righteousness is restored. (Isaiah 54:8)

(***Note:** For further study on the gift of Christ’s righteousness, please see Chapter 4 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.)

2. The Lord told Joshua, “If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these [celestial beings] standing here.” Notice how Jesus renewed His original covenant with Israel through Israel’s high priest. Remember, the original covenant (as stated in Leviticus 26 and

Deuteronomy 28) was conditional in nature. *IF* you will be my people, *IF* you will walk in my ways, I will be your God. *IF* you rebel against me, I will destroy you, not because you offended me [although that is true], but because you have profaned my holy name among the nations (Ezekiel 20) and rejected the purpose for which you were called out of Egypt. (Exodus 19:4-6)

3. The Lord placed “a stone” with seven eyes on it as **a witness** of His promise to Joshua. We have already noticed that stones can be a witness. “[Laban said,] **‘Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a *witness* between us.’** So Jacob took *a stone* and set it up as a pillar. He said to his relatives, **‘Gather some stones.’** So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Laban said, **‘*This heap is a witness* [that we have entered into a promise] **between you and me today.**’** That is why it was called **Galeed.**” (Genesis 31:44-48, italics and insertions mine)

Joshua: Two Object Lessons

Now that we have considered what God told Joshua the high priest during a period of great distress and despair, you may wonder what Joshua has to do with the Two Witnesses. There are two object lessons. First, the Great Tribulation will be a time of distress and discouragement with a situation something like the rebuilders found when they returned to Judea. The exile in Babylon lasted seventy years and the Great Tribulation will last 1,335 days. Pagan warlords persecuted the Jews who came up from Babylon and the rebuilding project totally unraveled. Similarly, the devil’s warlords will persecute the people who come out of Babylon during the Great Tribulation. It will appear after a couple years of persecution that the gospel is dead, making no advance, but make no mistake about it, God’s Two Witnesses will not fail to accomplish their mission.

The second object lesson is that during the Great Tribulation, many people will receive Christ and “come out of Babylon.” For no other reason than surrendering their will to Jesus, He will give them a spotless wedding garment. (Their sins will be removed in a single day – on the day they are sealed.) Regardless of their past, these sinners will step out in faith and face persecution for their choice, but they will obey the gospel of Jesus. Relatives and friends will insult them and falsely accuse them of hypocrisy, but these arguments will be meaningless because Jesus saves. Jesus will gladly forgive every repentant sinner, no matter how sinful he has been and after clothing the sinner with a clean wedding garment (representing the righteous life of Christ), Jesus will seal him in it.

Zerubbabel: The Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees

After giving Zechariah the vision about the high priest, the Lord gave him a vision about Israel’s king: **“Then the angel who talked with me [earlier] returned and wakened me, as a man is wakened from his sleep. He asked me, ‘What do you see?’ I answered, ‘I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.’ Then I asked the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ He answered, ‘Do you [Zechariah, a prophet of God] not know what these are?’ ‘No, my lord,’ I replied. So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by [human] might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit [the temple will be rebuilt],” says the Lord Almighty.’ ‘What are you, O mighty mountain [of warlords and insurmountable difficulties]? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. [My Spirit will remove all of the roadblocks set by your adversaries and the temple will surely be rebuilt.] Then he [Zerubbabel, yes King**

Zerubbabel himself] **will bring out the capstone** [the finishing stone of the temple] **to shouts of “God bless it! God bless it!”** ’ **Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it.** [Tell those who have no faith, those who doubt this vision that when they behold the completed temple] **Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you.’**

‘Who despises the day of small things? [Who complains when troubles are few? God works best when everything else fails.] **Men will rejoice when they see** [once again] **the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.’** (These seven [the seven eyes on the stone set before Joshua] **are the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the earth** [they are always on those who fear the Lord. Psalms 33:18].)’ **Then I asked the angel** [a second time], **‘What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?’** [After a few moments of unanswered silence] **Again I asked him** [a third time], **‘What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?’** **He replied, ‘Do you** [Zechariah, a prophet of Israel] **not know what these are?’** **‘No, my lord,’ I said. So he said, ‘These** [the two olive trees and the golden lampstand that stand before the Lord, they] **are the two** [witnesses] **who are anointed** [chosen] **to serve the Lord of all the earth.’** ” (Zechariah 4:1-14, insertions mine)

Please notice two key points in this vision:

1. Even though the rebuilding project was dead when God gave the vision, the Lord promised that Zerubbabel himself would present the capstone to shouts of “God bless it! God bless it!” A promise was given. Zerubbabel would rebuild the temple and the obstacles he faced would be overcome, but not through human strength. “ **‘Not by [human] might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit** [the temple will be rebuilt],’ **says the Lord Almighty.’**”

2. Twice, the angel avoided Zechariah's question about the lampstand and the two olive trees. In fact, the angel's response, "Do you not know what these are?" was a gentle rebuke because Zechariah should have understood the meaning of what he saw.

Now we come to the heart of our study in the book of Zechariah as it relates to the Two Witnesses. The Lord showed Zechariah a golden lampstand that had seven lamps on it. Two olive trees stood beside the lampstand, one on the left and the other on the right. Each olive tree had a golden pipe that was attached to the lampstand. In fact, the two pipes from the two trees fanned out into seven channels so that each lamp on the lampstand received oil. The imagery is both elegant and simple. Olive oil perpetually flowed from the two living trees and this enabled the lampstand to burn perpetually! What a marvelous design! Perpetual light without human participation!

As a prophet and priest, Zechariah should have understood what he saw because each evening and morning, he knew that the priests attended to the lampstand in the temple. Fresh olive oil was required for the seven lamps that made up the golden lampstand. (Exodus 25:31-40, Leviticus 23:3,4) Zechariah also knew that, "**The lamps on the pure gold lampstand** [that stood] *before the Lord must be tended* [by humans] **continually.**" (Leviticus 24:4, italics and insertion mine) Given his knowledge of temple services, Zechariah should have connected the dots. He was looking at a symbol of the Holy Spirit (the two olive trees) and the agency that God had chosen (Israel, the lampstand) through which the light of truth (the Word of God) was commissioned to shine.

Standing before the Lord of the Earth

Notice the location of the Two Witnesses: "**These are the two olive trees and the two**

lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.” (Revelation 11:4) The lampstand in Zechariah’s day was located on the south side of the Holy Place, directly across the room from the Table of Shewbread which was located on the north side of the Holy Place. The Table of Shewbread represents the throne of God.* Consequently, the lampstand *stood before* the Table of Showbread or in temple language, the lampstand stood before the throne of God. In Zechariah’s vision, two olive trees were seen standing on each side of the lampstand, therefore, the trees also *stood before the Lord*. When Zechariah pressed the angel a third time, the angel confirmed their importance saying, **“These [the two olive trees and the golden lampstand] are the two [witnesses] who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth [Sovereign God].”** (***Note:** For a study on the Table of Shewbread and God’s use of parallel temples, please see Chapters 11 and 12 in my book, *Jesus: the Alpha and The Omega*.)

Israel: The Lampstand with Seven Lamps

God gave the visions concerning Joshua and Zerubbabel before the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt. Nevertheless, the temple in Heaven was intact at that time. (You may recall that the earthly temple was a shadow of the Heavenly temple. Hebrews 8:1-5) The vision concerning the lampstand and the two olive trees should be understood from the perspective of the Heavenly temple, where the Lord sits on His throne. The lampstand in Heaven’s temple represented God’s *agent* on Earth – the agent entrusted with His Word. We find this responsibility addressed in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus told the Jews, **“You are the light of the world. . . .”** (Matthew 5:14) In other words, Israel had been selected and anointed to serve the Lord of all Earth as trustees of His Word, His eternal gospel. (Isaiah 42:6,7; see also Revelation 14:6.) This is why a single lampstand was placed *before the Lord’s throne in the Heavenly temple*. That lampstand

was a constant reminder before the Lord that Israel needed Holy Spirit power every day to take the light of truth (the Word of God) into all the world.

“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and *a light for the Gentiles*, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness [of ignorance].” (Isaiah 42:6,7, italics and insertion mine)

Israel’s Light Goes Out

Israel’s history is one of apostasy, time and time again. After the Babylonian captivity, Israel’s apostasy went from bad to worse. Instead of becoming a people who loved God and man, Israel’s religion was hijacked by a sect of religious zealots (the Pharisees) who created a corrupted version of Judaism that was worse than before. (Is it not better to have freedom of spirit and no religion at all than to be subjected to the demands and confines of a “heavy handed” false religion?)

Jesus deliberately came to Earth at the peak of Israel’s apostasy. Jesus began His ministry at the beginning of the seventieth week and in spite of all the miracles He performed, Israel promptly rejected Him because He spoke the Word of God. **“He [the Word] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** (John 1:10-14, insertion mine)

Because Israel wanted nothing to do with the Word of God or the gospel commission, Jesus abolished His covenant with Israel. He divorced Himself from the biological offspring of Abraham with this decree: **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house [of worship] is left to you desolate [empty]. [As a nation you have no further part or place in my plans.] For I tell you, you will not see me [striving to win your hearts] again [I will not be found by this people] until you [see me sitting beside the Father and are forced by my consuming glory to] say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its [magnificent] buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down [in A.D. 70 by the Romans].’ ”**

(Matthew 23:37-24:2, see also Matthew 26:64. Insertions mine)

The bottom line is sad, but simple. Israel’s lampstand went dark because Israel disconnected from the power of the Holy Spirit through rebellion and sin. For this reason, Israel’s lampstand was removed from the presence of the Lord and seven lampstands were put in its place!

Christianity: The Seven Lampstands

When Jesus terminated His covenant with Israel, He created a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6) and all who enter into the new covenant constitute the *new* Israel. Jesus established a new covenant because He still wants His gospel of salvation and truth delivered to the Gentiles.

(Note: God loves the Gentiles just as much as He loves those who are called to labor for the Gentiles! Romans 3:29) The transition from the old covenant to the new covenant confuses a lot

of people. Here are two important things that every Christian should understand about this transition:

First, the promises and prophecies given to ancient Israel under the old covenant were abandoned when the old covenant was terminated. This means that the nation of Israel became an ordinary nation when Jesus established His new covenant. Ancient Israel lost the privilege of being God's agent of light. Because God's covenant with Israel was a conditional covenant, God was free to abandon the promises and prophecies given to ancient Israel. Many Christians do not understand the conditional nature of God's covenant with Abraham's offspring. To make matters worse, they do not understand the termination of the old covenant with its promises and prophecies and they continue to lift passages from the Old Testament and apply them to the end time. This errant practice has produced a series of popular concepts that are totally misleading. Millions of people are anticipating things that will not occur. The Old Testament (excluding the book of Daniel which was sealed up until the time of the end) does not speak of a Second Coming. If Israel had received Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus would have remained on Earth and the kingdom of God would have been established and all of the promises and prophecies given to Israel in the Old Testament would have been fulfilled. Unfortunately, Israel rejected Messiah and God's covenant with ancient Israel was dissolved and a new covenant put in place.

(Note: For further study on "What was nailed to the Cross" and "God's Covenants," please see Chapters 7 and 8 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.)

The second issue that confuses a lot of people today is the identity of Israel. When Jesus abandoned the old covenant given to the biological offspring of Abraham at Mount Sinai, He established a new covenant which *redefined* the seed (the sperm) of Abraham. (Galatians

3:28,29) It was necessary to redefine the seed of Abraham because God's covenant with Abraham was not conditional. The covenant God gave to Abraham was a unilateral – a one sided – covenant. Jesus made three promises to Abraham which He will not fail to keep. First, God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations. Second, God told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring, and last, God promised to give the land where Abraham lived to Abraham's descendants. Notice how these three promises will be fulfilled: At the Second Coming, a numberless multitude from every kindred, tribe and nation will be redeemed because they put their faith in Christ *just like Abraham*. Thus, Abraham will be the father of the “faith-full” from many nations. When the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven at the end of the one thousand years, it will encompass *all of the land* promised to Abraham. Thus, Abraham's seed will inherit the promised land. Because there will be people from every nation in the new Earth, this fulfills the promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring. Thus, all three promises made to Abraham will be factually fulfilled.

Paul leaves no wiggle room on the redefinition of Israel: **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed** [the Greek word for seed is *sperma*], **and** [as a descendant of Abraham you are] **heirs according to the promise** [which God gave to Abraham].” (Galatians 3:29, insertions mine) So, many Christians are grossly misled on this topic. *Modern Israel has no prophetic role or spiritual importance during the end time.* On the other hand, *the new Israel* – the Israel redefined by the new covenant – will take center stage. The *new Israel* is both the target of Lucifer and the bride of Christ which Jesus is coming back to receive. Jesus will “airlift” Abraham and all of his faith-full descendants (both from the dead and the living) to live in the

New Jerusalem at the Second Coming!

Paul understood God's abandonment of biological Israel. He also understood the selection and calling of a new Israel, the Christian church. **"Then Paul and Barnabas answered them [a group of abusive Jews] boldly: 'We had to speak the word of God to you first [because you are close to the truth, but so far away from Christ. However,] Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us [Christians]: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.'**" (Acts 13:47-49, italics and insertions mine)

Out with the Old and In with the New

The abandonment of Israel and the establishment of Christianity has been briefly addressed in this study so you can understand how seven lampstands came to replace the previous lampstand that stood before the Lord in Heaven's temple. The seven lampstands represent *a new agent* – a new body of people called to serve as trustees of the Word of God (the light of truth). This new group became known as Christians. (Acts 11:26)

John saw seven golden lampstands: **"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.'** I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. **And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone**

‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.” (Revelation 1:10-15)

Even though there were more than seven churches in Asia Minor in A.D. 95 when God gave John the Revelation vision, Jesus chose these specific seven churches to represent *the whole of Christianity*. Together, the seven churches had all of the strengths and problems that every Christian church faces. In other words, Jesus foreknew that some Christians would fall into the Ephesus experience, that is, they would lose their first love. Jesus also foreknew that some Christians would have the Laodicean experience, that is, they would become lukewarm – distracted from the rigor of living by faith through pleasure and wealth. Other Christians would be corrupted by sexual immorality like Thyatira and Pergamum. In A.D. 95, Jesus selected seven churches (seven is a whole number) – six churches having serious problems and one church hanging on under difficult circumstances – so that He could praise the good and identify the bad in each case. Unfortunately, the testimony of Jesus did not keep the seven churches or Israel from falling into apostasy.

Before we go any farther, please notice that Jesus threatened the church at Ephesus with abandonment. **“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name,**

and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. *If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*"

(Revelation 2:1-5, italics mine)

Given that Israel's lampstand was removed at the end of the seventy weeks, the words Jesus spoke to the church at Ephesus must be taken seriously. The threat, even though directed at Ephesus, also holds true for the other six churches because Ephesus was a part of the whole – one of the seven. This threat is highlighted because the seven churches did not last long.

Church history does not address or lament the disappearance of the seven churches. However, we know they ceased to exist for several reasons: First, Roman Caesars, Decius (249-251 A.D.) and Diocletian (284-305 A.D.), issued decrees that all Christians in the Roman empire were to be exterminated. Second, if any of the seven churches escaped these purges, they either acquiesced to the demands of Constantine (306-337 A.D.) and the heresies taught by the church at Rome or they disappeared and went underground. Finally, Islamic conquests in Asia Minor during the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. terminated the existence of all Christian churches in a region that is modern day Turkey. Even though the seven churches disappeared, the light of truth was not totally extinguished. **"The woman [faithful Christians] fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days."** (Revelation 12:6)

By the sixth century A.D., the Christian church in Rome was powerful, full of heresy, and willing to punish anyone who rejected its blasphemous authority. The Christian church's slide into apostasy parallels Israel's history. (This proves the point that human beings, whether Jew or

Christian, are the same.) We have already discussed how two versions of Israel came to be (the old covenant Israel and the new covenant Israel) and by the sixth century A.D. we find two versions of the Christian church (one church lavishly headquartered at Rome and the other church destitute, hiding in the desert). Just as the angel showed Daniel, after the seven churches disappeared, darkness (the Dark Ages) overtook the world for the next 1,260 years (538-1798). I hate to point this out, but the Bible indicates that Christianity today (Catholicism and Protestantism) is as corrupt as Judaism was in Christ's time! Remember the leopard-like beast in Revelation 13:1? (We discussed this beast at some length in the previous chapter.) This beast will rise to power during the first four trumpets. This soon-to-appear crisis government will have seven heads and each head represents a religious system of the world. The seven religious *systems* of the world are: Atheism, Heathenism, Eastern Mysticism, Judaism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. (The sixth head on the beast having a deadly wound is the Roman Catholic Church (Revelation 13:3) and the seventh head that lasts for "a short time" is Protestantism. Revelation 17:10) The Bible gives several identifying characteristics of the seven heads, but one element is very important. Each of the seven heads has a blasphemous name written on it indicating that each religious system insults the gospel and authority of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 13:1)

The Two Lampstands

Revelation 11:4 tells us that the Two Witnesses are two lampstands and two olive trees that stand before the Lord. After studying Zechariah 4, we know the two olive trees represent the Holy Spirit. We also know that the lampstand representing Israel and the seven lampstands representing Christianity have been removed, so what do the two lampstands represent at the end

of the age?” The two lampstands in Revelation 11:4 represent the *living* Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), specifically, the Old and New Testaments. Together, these *two prophets* (the Bible and the Holy Spirit) will speak through 144,000 servants of God. These two prophets will measure (determine) every person’s response to the gospel during the judgment of the living. Because they will measure our response to the gospel, the Two Witnesses will be in a position to establish a legal fact. They will testify whether a person has submitted to the gospel of Jesus or rebelled against it. Everyone found in submission will be sealed and all others will be condemned to death.

It is important to understand how the Two Witnesses will measure the people of Earth. Here is a good parallel (notice that God spoke through Moses, like He will speak through the 144,000):

“Now when the Lord spoke to Moses in Egypt, he said to him, ‘I am the Lord. *Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you.*’ But Moses said to the Lord, ‘Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?’ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘See, *I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country.*’ ” (Exodus 6:28-7:2, italics mine)

I assume you already know the story about Moses and the ten plagues that eventually destroyed Egypt, but you may not realize an important point: **“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘When Pharaoh says to you, “Perform a miracle,” then say to Aaron, “Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,” and it will become a snake.’ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and**

sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.” (Exodus 7:8-12) Moses did not know that Pharaoh would ask for a miracle, but God did.

Moses had no power to turn Aaron’s rod into a snake, but God did. Moses and Aaron did not want to appear before Pharaoh, but God sent them. Jesus confronted Pharaoh through two ordinary men and Pharaoh (at first) regarded Moses and Aaron as two magicians.

Moses and Aaron were marionettes, just like the 144,000 will be marionettes, with God pulling the strings. The 144,000 will go where God sends. They will speak as God requires. They will do as God commands. The 144,000 will not be gods and they will not have the authority to condemn or save anyone. Instead, God will select ordinary people to speak and act for Him. The 144,000 will not be objects of worship or adoration. Actually, they will be hated more than anyone else on Earth because they (like Moses and Aaron) will present a gospel that is contrary to what people believe about God. Their inflammatory gospel will make people angry and everyone who tries to harm the 144,000 will be punished, not by the 144,000, but by God! **“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”** (Revelation 11:5)

A good parallel from the Old Testament showing how God will protect His servants is this story about Elijah: **“Now [King] Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, ‘Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury.’ But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, ‘Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult**

Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” Therefore this is what the Lord says: “You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!” ’ So Elijah went. When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, ‘Why have you come back [so soon]?’ ‘A man came to meet us,’ they replied. And he said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, “This is what the Lord says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending men to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!” ’ The king asked them, ‘What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?’ They replied, ‘He was a man with a garment of hair [camel hair – see also Zechariah 13:4, Matthew 3:4] and with a leather belt around his waist.’ The king said, ‘That was Elijah the Tishbite.’ Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, ‘Man of God, the king says, “Come down!” ’ Elijah answered the captain, ‘If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!’ Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men. At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, ‘Man of God, this is what the king says, “Come down at once!” ’ ‘If I am a man of God,’ Elijah replied, ‘may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!’ Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men. So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. ‘Man of God,’ he begged, ‘please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!’ The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, ‘Go down

with him; do not be afraid of him.’ So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king. He told the king, ‘This is what the Lord says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!’ So he died, according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.” (2 Kings 1:2-17, insertions mine)

Obviously, God was directing and protecting Elijah. As an ordinary man, Elijah did not have the power to call fire down from Heaven, but the Holy Spirit spoke through Elijah and fire fell!

Two Lampstands during the Great Tribulation

Many people ask, “If the single lampstand in Zechariah’s vision represented the nation of Israel, and the seven lampstands in John’s vision represented Christianity, shouldn’t the two lampstands in Revelation 11 also represent a group of people?” At first, this logic makes sense, but remember, Jews and Christians are ordinary people called to be agents of the Word of God.

These groups are not the Word of God which is the light of the world. One could argue that the 144,000 will be agents of the Word of God and this is true in a sense. However, the 144,000 will not know each other and they will have nothing in common with each other – other than their calling and empowerment. In other words, the 144,000 will only be a group of people in God’s sight.

Here is the issue: The Jews were a family of people who descended from Abraham. Christians are a self-selecting group of people who choose to believe in Christ. The difference is that 144,000 will have nothing in common, that we as humans can discern. They will come from

different languages, religions, cultures, and nations. They will not work together or know each other. The reason Jesus selects them is that He knows their hearts. Jesus also knows the confusion and errors that fills their heads, but He will take care of their confusion by revealing Himself and His gospel to them. Jesus will take care of their ignorance by giving them words to speak (the little book). Jesus will take care of their helpless situation (no human support) by giving them the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus does this for 144,000 ordinary people in every religion, nation, culture, and language so that His servants can speak to their own kind. Remember, Jesus is anxious to save as many people as possible and there is no better way to do this than by empowering ordinary people to speak to their neighboring brothers and sisters. In ages past, God spoke to the people of Earth through established groups of people: the patriarchs, the Jews, and then, the Christians. However, history has proven that human agents cannot do the job. Therefore, during the Great Tribulation, God will empower His Word and His Spirit to speak. These will not fail because the Two Witnesses are from God. The Holy Spirit will make the Bible easy to understand and truth will resonate deep in the hearts of every honest person. Thus, Bible truth and Holy Spirit power will be able to measure the response of every person – those who submit to the demands of the gospel will be saved. Those rebelling against the demands of the gospel will be condemned to death. This is how the judgment of the living occurs. When the clearest evidences of truth have been presented from the Bible, when the Holy Spirit has driven truth deep into the conscience of the listener, there is nothing further that Almighty God can do to get a human being to surrender His will. God will put the living through this process of judgment because God will not violate our power of choice.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105) Jesus said the Word of God **“cannot be broken [proven false].”** (John 10:35) During the Great Tribulation, millions will become martyrs because of Bible truth. No book on Earth compares to the Bible and many will die because of it. **“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony [of Jesus] they had maintained.”** (Revelation 6:9, italics mine)

If you can accept the idea that the 144,000 will be God’s spokesmen, that is, “the arms and legs” of His Two Witnesses, the rest of the story told in Revelation 11 will make sense. *The Spirit will empower the 144,000 to proclaim Bible truth for 1,260 days.* During this time, the sheep will be separated from the goats. The 144,000 will tell the truth about the will of God in the clearest of terms. The honest in heart will submit to God’s authority. The wicked will rebel against it. When the world experiences the overwhelming destruction caused by the first four trumpets, the topic of God’s wrath and the will of God will be prominent in the thoughts of man. In this setting, the honest in heart will seek out the Word of God. Let me review why I believe the first three seals were broken at the beginning of the 19th century. The breaking of the first seal centers on giving the message that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone. (This truth will be preached with great power during the Great Tribulation because a religious organization cannot save anyone.) The breaking of the second seal brought about the translation and distribution of the Bible. Jesus has been preparing the world for the Great Tribulation for more than two hundred years! The breaking of the third seal brought about an understanding of the judgment bar of Christ and the breaking of the fourth seal is the release of the wrath of God and the commencement of the Great Tribulation. Millions will die as martyrs during the fifth seal

because they will obey to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The breaking of each seal is a new revelation about Jesus. This is an awesome process!

Holy Spirit Work: Early Rain / Latter Rain

In ancient Israel there were two annual crops. The first harvest of the year was the winter crop and it was gathered in the Spring. The second harvest of the year was the summer crop and it was gathered in the Fall. Of the two, the Fall harvest was the largest. Generally speaking, there were two cycles of rain per crop – the early rain and the latter rain. For the winter crop, the early rain fell just before winter began and the latter rain fell just before harvest in the Spring. (Joel 2:23) For the summer crop, the early rain fell in late Spring and the latter rain fell just before harvest. It is important to note that the names of the two rains are relative to the harvest, not the time of the year.

The Holy Spirit is represented as Two Trees in Revelation 11 because the work of the Holy Spirit comes as two rains. (James 5:7) The first “rain” of the Holy Spirit is to engage us spiritually.

The Holy Spirit “rains down” on everyone at birth and this gift from God demonstrates His great compassion for fallen man. God wants every sinner to become a spiritual being. He wants us to overcome sin and live victorious lives. He is not willing that any person should be lost. (2 Peter 3:9) The problem is that fallen man does not naturally feel his need for a Savior and our need of a Savior is far greater than that of a warm fuzzy. We need a Savior who gives us power to do what is right. We need a Savior who teaches us how to live. We need a Savior who has died in our place and paid the penalty for our sins! Therefore, the Spirit is anxious that we hear the gospel of Jesus because the truth about our condition before God comes from hearing the Word of God. (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21) After hearing the gospel, the Holy Spirit is

sometimes able to bring a person to repentance – deeply impressing us with our guilt and our desperate need of surrendering our lives to a loving Savior.

When a person totally surrenders his will to Jesus and His teachings, the Holy Spirit causes the “born again experience” to occur. The born again experience is like *the early rain* in ancient Israel. Just before the rain came, seeds were planted, and of course, the rain and the sunshine that followed caused the seeds to germinate and grow. In a few days, the barren ground showed new life! So it is. Once the seed of truth is planted in good soil, the Holy Spirit can make it grow into a beautiful experience. This is the “early rain” experience.

The rain that precedes the harvest is the latter rain. The latter rain of the Holy Spirit will occur during the Great Tribulation. During the tribulation when the judgment process for the living occurs, those who submit to the laws of Babylon will be found in rebellion against God. Those who submit to the laws of God will be found in rebellion against Babylon. As you can see, the contest will be difficult and painful either way. Each person’s decision will be thoroughly tested.

When a person passes his test of faith, the righteousness of Christ will be *imparted* to that person.

The Holy Spirit will remove his carnal nature and seal that “faith-full” person with the sinless nature that was given to Adam and Eve before they fell. (Genesis 3:7, Colossians 1:27;

Revelation 7:1-4; 10:7) The sealing is the latter rain experience. It is also called “receiving the seal of the living God.” (Revelation 7:2) When God concludes the sealing of His people, the

saints will no longer need an intercessor or mediator in Heaven. God’s children will have a sinless nature “sealed” within them. Jesus marks the end of the judgment of the living with this

declaration: **“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to**

be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be

holy.” (Revelation 22:11)

Getting Back to the Story

At this point in our study we have examined the following:

1. John sees Jesus come down from Heaven to select the 144,000.
2. John, representing one of the 144,000, is given a little book to eat. This book, like the book given to Ezekiel, contains the testimony of Jesus which the 144,000 will speak during the Great Tribulation.
3. Jesus takes an oath, promising to carry out the plans the Father gives Him.
Jesus then declares there will be no more delay. The censer comes down. The first four trumpets begin.
4. John, as one of the 144,000, is told to prophesy again (specifically, present the gospel with the notice that the judgment of the living is underway).
5. John is given a measuring rod, told to measure the inner court and to ignore the outer court. The gospel presented by the 144,000 will measure the response of people – separating the sheep from the goats.
6. Jesus gives power to His Two Witnesses for 1,260 days.
7. The Two Witnesses are the two lampstands and the two olive trees that stand before Him in Heaven’s temple. The two olive trees represent the Holy Spirit. The two lampstands represent the Word of God (Old and New Testaments).
8. The power given to the Two Witnesses will rest upon the 144,000. In other words, the Two Witnesses will speak and work through the 144,000 to save as many souls as possible.

Now that we have some understanding of John's experience as one of the 144,000, as well as the identity and role of the Two Witnesses, the rest of the story in Revelation 11 is not difficult to understand.

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy [through the 144,000] for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [during distressing circumstances]. These are the two olive trees [the two phases of the Holy Spirit's work] and the two lampstands [the living Word of God, the Old and New Testaments] that stand before [that is, these items are positioned before] the Lord of the earth [who rules from His temple in Heaven]. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies [God will protect the 144,000 from harm until they have completed their work]. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die [Those rejecting the clearest evidences of truth will be thrown in the lake of fire at the end of the 1,000 years. See Revelation 20:15.].” (Revelation 11:3-5)

(Note: The Bible and the Holy Spirit will be *supernaturally* empowered for 1,260 days. The world has never seen “the latter rain power” of the Holy Spirit and the world has never had a global situation like the first four trumpets which will make the Bible the most important book on Earth. For 1,260 days, 144,000 servants of God will be “gifted” with the empowerment of these Two Witnesses and a great contest for souls will unfold. There will be intense hatred for those who choose to obey God, but there will be a great display of love among those who receive the gospel of Jesus. Were it not for the special protection the Holy Spirit will give the 144,000, they would be easy prey. In fact, I believe that wicked men would kill them long before they could accomplish their task. The language, “If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies” means the 144,000 will remain *invincible* until they have

completed their God-given work. (See Jeremiah 5:14.) God does not allow anything to stop them from their mission until their job is done and the caricature of a fire breathing monster indicates their invincibility. In ancient times, when it was believed that Earth was flat, sailors believed that fire-breathing dragons lived under Earth. If a ship sailed too far out in the ocean, the sailors believed it would be consumed by fire breathing beasts which men could not destroy. (See Job 40.) The phrase, **“This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”** is a divine promise. Even though the 144,000 cannot be harmed until their work is done, those attempting to harm God’s servants will be treated by God as though they did harm them because that was their intent. The destiny of these wicked people will be death by fire at the Second Coming. (Revelation 19:20)

“These [the Two Witnesses] men [the word “men” is supplied by translators, it is not in the Greek text] have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying [See 1 Kings 17:1. The Holy Spirit told King Ahab through the prophet Elijah there would be no more rain. God has used famine a number of times to punish nations for their rebellion. See also 2 Samuel 21, Jeremiah 11 and Ezekiel 5:12-17.]; and [like Moses and Aaron, the 144,000] they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast [the lamb-like beast in Revelation 13:11-18] that comes up from the Abyss [Lucifer, the Antichrist, who comes up out of the abyss at the fifth trumpet Revelation 9:1-11] will attack them, and overpower and kill them.” (Revelation 11:6,7)

(Note: In the previous chapter, we studied the first global earthquake at length – the earthquake that marks the commencement of the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 8:5) We examined the idea

that the first global earthquake will break up the world into 144,000 cells with one of the 144,000 located in each cell. We also investigated the destruction of one third of mankind during the sixth trumpet. (Revelation 9:15) You may recall that Lucifer sets up his theocracy during the sixth trumpet and all who refuse to abandon their religion and worship him as Lord of lords, and King of kings, will be targeted for slaughter. (Revelation 13:15) This means that when everyone in a given cell has firmly made their decision – for or against the gospel – the prophet working that cell will have completed his assignment. Lucifer’s forces will then be permitted to kill most, if not all, of the 144,000, and the death of God’s servants will bring the work of the Two Witnesses to an end. If any of the 144,000 remain alive, they will not be able to work miracles or speak with power after the 1,260th day. I do not expect all of the 144,000 to die on the same day. However, I do believe that most, if not all, of God’s servants will be dead on or before the 1,260th day of the Great Tribulation.)

“[It was the custom in ancient times for kings to leave the bodies of their enemy lying in the streets to show contempt for their rebellion. In this sense,] **Their bodies** [of the 144,000, the arms and legs of the Two Witnesses] **will lie in the street of the great city** [the great whore, the universal city of “Babylon The Great”], **which is figuratively called Sodom** [because she is like Sodom, full of people controlled by passions of greed and sexual immorality] **and Egypt** [who, like Pharaoh, hardened their hearts in rebellion], **where also their Lord was crucified.** [Jesus was not crucified in Sodom or Egypt, however, Jesus did say that spiritually speaking, Jerusalem was worse than Sodom and Egypt! Luke 10:12; 11:31,32] **For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation** [the whole world] **will gaze on their bodies** [God’s servants, the 144,000 who could not be killed until now] **and refuse them burial.** (Revelation

11:8)

Two important facts need to be addressed. First, the Bible says, “Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city.” What is the “great city?” The great city is the great whore, Lucifer’s theocracy. (Revelation 17:18) The great city is not a geographical location on Earth. Instead, the great city is a governing system that encompasses the whole world. In other words, the bodies of Two Witnesses (actually, the bodies of the 144,000 through whom the Two Witnesses spoke) are not going to be viewed at a particular address in a given city. Geographically speaking, the dead bodies of the 144,000 will be found *all over the world*.

Second, the idea of allowing the bodies of the 144,000 to lie in the street is meant to show gross contempt. Consider these two texts which speak of God’s anger toward Israel: **“Therefore the Lord's anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and *the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets*. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”** (Isaiah 5:25) **“Therefore, this is what the Lord says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. And *the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them or their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.*”** (Jeremiah 14:15,16, italics mine) The language describing bodies lying in the streets is that of contempt. When the 144,000 are killed, no one will care enough to even bury them. The wicked will despise the 144,000 and the remaining saints will be hiding from the wicked. Notice that Jesus treats the wicked according to their actions. When Jesus arrives at the Second

Coming, He will throw the beast (the leopard-like beast, Babylon) and the false prophet (Lucifer) into a lake of fire and He will kill the remaining wicked with a command that comes out of His mouth. (Revelation 19:19-21) You can be sure the wicked will be repaid. Ironically, their bodies will also lie in the street of the great city “. . . **and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.**” (Revelation 19:21) The righteous meet the Lord in the air and the wicked are slain. No one will be left on Earth to bury the dead.

“The inhabitants of the earth will gloat [rejoice] over them [the bodies of the 144,000] and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. [For 1,260 days, the Holy Spirit and the truth from God’s Word will torment each person until (1) he submits to the gospel of Jesus, or (2) he grieves away the Holy Spirit and commits the unpardonable sin. (Revelation 14:11) By the time the 1,260th day is reached, every decision will be final, and a large majority, who have committed the unpardonable sin, will rejoice to be set free from the torment caused by the 144,000.] **But** [their celebration over the deaths of the Two Witnesses will prove to be premature because] **after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them [the 144,000], and they [came to life and] stood on their feet, and terror struck [the wicked, particularly those who participated in killing them] those who saw them.** (Revelation 11:10,11)

What is the point of gazing on the bodies of the 144,000 for three and one-half days? Why is there a fractional part of a day in this prophecy when all other prophetic time periods in Daniel and Revelation are given as whole days? There may be several reasons behind God’s plan for doing this, but I can only think of one. We know that God measures a day from sundown to sundown. (Genesis 1; Leviticus 23:32) For the sake of discussion, suppose the 1,260 days ends

on a Tuesday, February 3 at sundown (local time). At sunrise (Wednesday morning), February 4, Lucifer announces the annihilation of the 144,000 and the wicked begin celebrating and their drunken celebration continues through Wednesday (half day), Thursday, Friday and Sabbath. After the three and one-half days end, the 144,000 are resurrected during the darkness (like Jesus) of Sunday, February 8. Even though it is dark, a glorious light illumines each dead prophet as he or she comes to life. They walk about. Everyone is awakened to see them. The wicked are totally undone – overcome with trembling and anxiety. Then, a loud voice from Heaven says to the 144,000, “Come up here.”

If this scenario is possible, the timing becomes interesting because first fruits were always presented to the Lord on a Sunday in ancient times. Jesus Himself, the first fruits of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20), presented Himself to the Father on Sunday morning! (John 20:1,17) Since the 144,000 will be the first fruits of a numberless multitude who come out of the Great Tribulation, it is more than coincidental that they should be presented to God on Sunday. **“These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.”** (Revelation 14:4)

“Then they [the resurrected 144,000] heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they [the 144,000] went up to heaven in a cloud [of glory], while their enemies looked on. At that very hour [all over the world] there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city [the great whore] collapsed. Seven thousand people [Lucifer’s staff, his cabinet, his congress] were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors [the saints awaiting death, held in dungeons and prisons] were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe

[the second curse of the sixth trumpet – Lucifer’s theocracy] **has passed; the third woe** [the seven bowls] **is coming soon.**” (Revelation 11:12-14)

Seventh Trumpet

We examined the details of the seventh trumpet (which follows the resurrection and ascension of the 144,000) in the previous chapter. The beauty of the resurrection and ascension of the 144,000 to Heaven is understanding that God’s *true* prophets are taken to Heaven to see the destruction of the *false* prophet, Lucifer. Their grueling work is over and all that remains to be done on Earth is the execution of the seven bowls – God’s vengeance on the great whore. At the Second Coming, the 144,000 will return with Jesus in the clouds. At that time, a numberless multitude of people, who heard and received salvation through the sacrifice and suffering of 144,000 ordinary people, will rise in the air to meet the 144,000, who were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God.

Summary

1. The story of the Two Witnesses begins with Jesus coming to Earth to select 144,000 people to be His servants. In this story, John represents the experience of the 144,000 because he is given the little book to eat (the testimony of Jesus) and then he is told to prophesy again. The little book was sweet as honey in John’s mouth, but bitter in the stomach. This means that the message of truth is sweet, but the delivery of the testimony of Jesus will be painful and distressing to the 144,000. After Jesus gives the 144,000 the words they are going to speak, He declares there will be no more delay. He promises, on oath, to uphold and carry out the will of the Father during the Great Tribulation. John is given a measuring rod (the gospel of Jesus) and is told to measure the inner court and count the worshipers there. The inner court represents

those who are pure in heart. They will receive the gospel of Jesus and after being tested and freed from the carnal nature, sealed.

2. God's Two Witnesses have always been His Word and His Spirit. However, the Two Witnesses have not functioned at any time in the past like they will during the 1,260 days of their empowerment. Because the judgment of the living involves people who can change their minds and their actions, Jesus will empower the 144,000 to preach His Word with clarity and simplicity and the Holy Spirit will deeply trouble every soul, prompting them to receive the gospel of Jesus which the 144,000 will present. By using Two Witnesses that are divine and infallible, there will be no excuse. (The 144,000 will be sealed before they begin to testify and for the first time in the history of sin, this eliminates any possibility of human error in the giving of the gospel.) No one will be able to argue that the terms and conditions of salvation were not properly presented or correctly stated during the Great Tribulation. Thus, God's Two Witnesses will be able to establish a legal fact about the choice of each person. Those who surrender to the authority of Jesus will be saved. Those who remain in rebellion will be condemned. No one will be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

3. The Great Tribulation will prove to be a great war between right and wrong. The revelation of Jesus will challenge every form of evil. The 144,000 will be actively leading the charge with truth from the Word of God in their respective areas and Lucifer's forces will be defending darkness and error. At first, the devil will work through a frightened and diverse system called "Babylon." This crisis government will come to life as a result of the first four trumpets and at first, most of the world will accept as reasonable Babylon's stated mission of appeasing God so that His wrath will cease. The 144,000 will be a very tiny number of people standing against the

world in terms of population. Yet, against all odds this last-day Gideon-type army will accomplish a mission that has been impossible for the past 2,000 years. The 144,000, empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God, will take the gospel to every living person during a period of 1,260 or fewer days. Because there will be persecution and a time limit, everyone will be forced into making a decision by the time the sixth trumpet occurs and the devil kills a third of mankind to eliminate any opposition to his theocracy. As ever, the honest in heart will step out in faith and by doing this, God will give them the necessary strength to face whatever the consequences may be. After passing their test of faith, each faith-full saint will have their carnal natures removed and sealed with God's seal of approval. All others will acquiesce to Babylon's demands, receive the mark of the beast, and take sides with the devil. Thus, the Two Witnesses will factually testify about the choices that each person made.

4. Currently, there is endless confusion about the will of God. Corporately speaking, our world is divided into seven religious systems and each system is corrupt, even worse, each system believes the other six are in gross darkness concerning the truth about God. Within each system one scholar says one thing, another scholar says something different. The result is that there is confusion – between systems and inside systems – the religions of the world are in darkness. Nevertheless, a time is coming when the truth about the will of God will be plainly told. For 1,260 days, the Two Witnesses will make the will of God clearer than at any time in Earth's history. They will abolish the darkness which Lucifer has imposed upon God's Word. The Word of God will come alive and the Spirit of God will enable the 144,000 to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with simplicity, clarity, and power. The Holy Spirit will deeply trouble people's hearts, prompting them to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and be saved. The honest

in heart will respond to the torment of the Holy Spirit. Remember the experience of Pilate's wife. **“While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.’ ”** (Matthew 27:19)

The same choices will happen again. **“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my [144,000] servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”** (Joel 2:28-31, insertion mine)

5. Jesus loves all the inhabitants of the world. To Him, every human being is part of His creation. To ensure that everyone *living* on Earth has an equal opportunity to hear His gospel and be saved during His judgment of the living, Jesus will empower two infallible witnesses for 1,260 days. God's Word and the Holy Spirit will have enormous powers because God is love! No one will have any excuse. Like a plasma torch, the Two Witnesses will cut through every barrier. The Two Witnesses will overcome every objection. The Two Witnesses will be invincible until they have completed their mission. When the world sees ordinary people speaking profound things from the Bible and performing signs and wonders at will, this spectacle will reach the honest in heart: Families will be shattered by truth – marriages will be disintegrated by truth – brothers and sisters will part company – parents and children will go separate ways – because God's truth is marching on. **“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,**

joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:12,13)

“ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus replied, ‘no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.’ ” (Mark 10:29,30) The words of Jesus sums up this study: For those who do not waver and remain loyal to Jesus, any loss will be replaced a hundred fold in a much better place.

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