

## A Discussion of the Two Witnesses

It is almost impossible to write a study for the internet in which you dot all the "I"s and cross all the "T"s.

If you make the study too detailed, everyone goes to a more exciting room. If you leave out too much, the readers think you are teaching doctrines that are unbiblical. Catch 22 <smile>

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Now for tonight's study on the Two Witnesses.

That most of Revelation is figurative is easily proven. In Rev 1:20, candlesticks=churches. stars=messengers and there are many more such figures in the book.

Words that show a passage should be taken figuratively appear over 80 times in Revelation: Those words are

"like"

"as"

"like unto"

"I was in the spirit"

Biblical visions have never been literal. All of them are figurative.

The Two Witnesses are figurative as well. They are witnesses alright, but they are not two Old Testament come back to life, as is often supposed . . .

Rev 11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

In the Old Testament, people clothed themselves in sackcloth when they were in mourning because of the death of loved ones or when they were faced with a great trial. So these witnesses will be suffering tribulation.

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Now we have already mentioned what candlesticks are, but here is the verse . . .

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Stars = Angels (messengers)

Candlesticks = Churches

The above isn't creative theology. That's exactly what Rev 1:20 states. Biblically, candlesticks is a symbol for Churches and Stars is a symbol for messengers.

Now if seven candlesticks are seven churches in Rev 1, then two candlesticks in Rev 11 are also churches unless God changes the definition of candlesticks somewhere in between those two verses

Guess what, He didn't. So the Two Witnesses are two Churches.

But which Churches are they? Well there is another figure in that verse that tells us: Olive Trees!

Now olive trees do appear in Zechariah, but we don't go to the Old Testament to find the definition of a New Testament figure when there's a New Testament definition that fits perfectly:

Rom 11:24 For if thou (the Gentile Church) wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree (Israel),

how much more shall these (Jews), which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Plain as day, the two olive trees are the Jewish People of the Christian Era and the Gentile Church. So those are the Two Witnesses.

Now some say the Jews can't be one of the witnesses because they rejected the Lord. but that is not what the Bible says . . .

Rom 11:28 As concerning the gospel, they (the Jews) are enemies for your (Gentiles) sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

Notice they are enemies of the Gospel, but still elect.

The Greek words ekloge and eklektos appear 19 times in the New Testament. Both mean divine selection. In every instance, those words refer to God's people and refer to their unshakable redemption in Him.

So the Jews of the Christian Era are elect by the sovereign will of God, just like we are.

Rom 11:29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Were the Jews ever God's chosen people? Of course. Then according to Romans 11, they still are. Now I didn't write the above verses, God did, but I didn't try to interpret them away. I just believed them. <smile>

Now how about those 1260 days they were going to witness? Well the Jews were driven away from their temple site in 688AD. They returned, established the new nation of Israel, and began praying at the wailing wall in 1948.

688AD + 1260 = 1948AD

So the time of the Two Witnesses to the Gentile world is over. Oh, we are here and some still witness, but that prophetic time, as established by God, is indeed over.

As we will see in some future lesson, we are now in Daniel's "the time of the end."

Rev 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Some say that isn't happening? This may be a spiritual death as well as a physical one. Islam is the fastest growing religion on Earth. In England, more Moslems go into mosques than Christians go into churches.

Again estimates vary, but in Europe, the cradle of the Reformation, less than 5% of the population still hold fast to the faith. Their great cathedrals either empty or used as tourist attractions.

Estimates vary, but worldwide, it appears that about 30,000 Christians a week are dying for Jesus' name, mostly murdered by Moslems. If a Saudi native is found to be a Christian in Arabia, he is beheaded.

Millions of Christians have been slaughtered in the Sudan, Indonesia, Nigeria and the Middle East, mostly by Moslems.

With those facts in mind, "shall overcome them, and kill them," makes a little more sense, doesn't it?

I sure am glad Jesus is returning soon. There will be a time of trial at the end and we Christians will be here during it, but the Lord has not forgotten how to protect His Children . . .

Isa 26:20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

Isa 26:21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

Isa 27:1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

At the end of this chapter we see another reference to the last trumpet. So we will be here when these events take place.

With the exception of the "hour of trial," I know of very little prophecy that still needs to be fulfilled. Jesus' return is at hand, He is right at the door.

Revelation is a vision, and biblical visions are always figurative in nature. Revelation also contains 82 verbal figurative signposts as follows: "Like - Like unto - As" and "I was in the spirit." These signposts support that the book is primarily figurative.

As established in a prior study, the Two Witnesses are the Gentile Church and the Jewish people of the Christian Era (study on the Two Witnesses can be repeated for those who missed it). The 1260 day-years of the Witnesses span from the establishment of the new nation of Israel (1948AD) back to the construction of the "Abomination that maketh Desolate," the Islamic structure on God's temple mount, the Dome of the Rock (688AD).

1948AD - 1260 = 688AD !!!

No rocket science there. A first grader can do that math.

But following the verses identifying the Two Witnesses are several verses impossible to understand unless viewed figuratively.

I am quoting relevant excerpts, but the full text can be found in your Bible:  
REV 11:8-15

“And their dead bodies” [the empty churches. The Greek word translated bodies here is "ptoma," a ruin, i.e. lifeless body. Church buildings without any believers in then believers are exactly that, dead bodies.]  
“will lie in the street of the great city” [Jerusalem] “which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations” [the Moslems in the surrounding lands] “will look at their dead bodies” [the empty churches] “for three and a half days” [Years of day-years span from 688AD to 1967AD. The Greek word translated “day” in this verse is “hemera,” variously translated: time - hour - moment - day - and year. Context suggests year. Applying a day for a year (Eze 4:5-6), 3.5 years are 1278.34 days.]

Jerusalem was freed of Gentile control in 1967AD - 1278.34 = 688.66, and the construction of the Islamic Dome of the Rock!

This gives us the time-frame for when these verses were fulfilled. Between 688AD and 1967AD.  
“and will not permit their dead bodies” [the empty churches] “to be laid in a tomb” [to be torn down].  
“And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another,” [The Two Witnesses = Christians and the Jews. Islam thought it had won, that the God of Israel had lost the “footstool of His feet,” forever, and they reveled in their victory] “because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth” [it is torment for the lost when the gospel is preached and they do not repent].

“And after the three and a half days” [after Jerusalem was freed.] “the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet;” [After 1967, God's people returned to Jerusalem's churches and synagogues in staggering numbers, a phenomenon that continues to this day] “and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.” [the Palestinians and surrounding Moslems] “And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them,

“Come up here.’ ” [Saints, both Jew and Gentile are taken up. This is the so-called “rapture” folks. At this verse the Church is taken to be with the Lord. It is a repeat declaration of Rev 4:1 and another indication that Revelation is repetitive in nature.] “And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them...and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

“And the seventh angel sounded;” [This is the Last Trumpet in the Bible and we are taken to be with the Lord at the Last Trumpet, 1 Cor 15:52]

“and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.’ ”  
Note “forever and ever”

At this Last Trumpet, there is NO tribulation following and NO Millennium following. We are taken immediately into the Eternal Kingdom of God. Rev 10:6 defines the event:

Rev 10:6-7 . . . “there should be time no longer:”

[i.e., time as a natural phenomenon will cease to exist.]

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound,”

[“begins,” at the very first note that comes out of this trumpet this verse will be fulfilled. Sound is “salpezo,” i.e., the sound of a trumpet]

“the mystery of God should be finished,”

[The Greek word “musterion” appears 27 times in the New Testament. Most refer to the Gospel itself or the mystery of Jesus' relationship with the believers.]

[Finished is “teleo,” defined as a total and complete end.]

“as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

Note that NO prophets are left out, so that includes John and the book of Revelation. According to these verses, all of Revelation (with the exception of those verses foretelling the eternal Kingdom

of God) will be fulfilled at the Seventh Trumpet!

Since it's all over at the Seventh and Last trumpet and that trumpet blows in Rev 11:15, what do we do with the rest of Revelation, i.e., chapters 12 through 20? The Bible clearly tells us: Rev 10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must PROPHESY AGAIN before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

"Thou must prophesy again!" We are at the end of the trumpets. The Last Trumpet is about to blow. Jesus hands Revelation (the little book) to John and commands him to "prophesy again." Ergo: Revelation 12-20 is a repeat of chapters 2-11. Those chapters are in different words with a different emphasis, but they cover events that take place on earth during the same TIME, i.e., the Christian Era.

End of study

The room is now open for discussion.

We come from such different doctrinal planets, that I'm not sure we can even understand each other, but I'm going to try. Please take time to read the following with an open heart because it will take this servant of the Lord several hours to write it. Because of its Hebrew poetic form (chiasmic), some eschatologists see the book of Revelation as a series of repetitive prophecies. The Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, the Two Witnesses, the Leopard-Bear-Lion beast, the Scarlet beast and Babylon, each presenting a different spiritual picture of the Christian era. Somewhat like the old fable of the four blind men looking at the elephant.

If I understand you correctly, you see Revelation 11 being fulfilled over several years, I see the chapter as a picture of all the redeemed of the whole Christian era. I'll exegete the chapter as I understand it, my notes inserted into the text in italics.

Revelation 11:1 "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod (**angelic measure**): and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." (**A picture of the Temple of Solomon and all Old Testament believers. They can now be numbered because the Temple has been destroyed, the veil of the Temple has been rent and we are now in the Christian era**).

Revelation 11:2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles (**the Dome of the Rock is in what was once the Court of the Gentiles, 300 feet south of the Temple of Solomon, see Biblical Archaeology Review, March-April 1983**): and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (**42 months is 1278.34 days, Jerusalem was freed of Gentile domination in 1967. 1967-1278.34 = 688.66, the exact year the Muslims began construction of the Dome of the Rock on God's Temple mount.**)

Revelation 11:3-4 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, (**the new nation of Israel was established in 1948, 1948-1260 = 688 A.D. and the Islamic Dome of the Rock**) clad in

sackcloth (of repentance) These are the two olive trees (Romans 11:24-25), and the two candlesticks (Revelation 1:19) standing before the God of the earth.

Revelation 11:7 “And when they (The Two Witnesses) shall have finished their testimony (among the Gentile nations, 1948-1967, one witnesses now back in their homeland), the beast (Satan) that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make (spiritual) war against them, and shall overcome them (spiritually with materialism, false doctrine and the cares of this world), and kill them” (spiritually).

Isn't that verse an accurate picture of the spiritual condition of the Western Church today?

Revelation 11:8-11, (Excerpts) “And their dead bodies (Greek: pto'-ma, by definition: a fall, a ruin, the carcass, the bones, i.e., the empty churches.) will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified (Jerusalem). And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations (the the surrounding Islamic countries) will look at their dead bodies (the empty churches) for three and a half days (Greek: hay-mera may also be translated years, so years of day-years, i.e., from 688AD to 1967AD) and will not permit their dead bodies (the empty churches) to be laid in a tomb (to be torn down). And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets (the Christians and Jews) tormented those who dwell on the earth” (it is torment for the lost when the gospel is preached and they refuse to repent).

Revelation 11:11-19 “After the three and a half days the breath of life (after Jerusalem was freed of Gentile control in 1967) from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; (In new Israel, God's people are again welcome in all of Jerusalem's synagogues and churches) and great fear fell upon those (Moslems) who were beholding them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’” (Saints, both Jew and Gentile, taken to be with the Lord. . . still future! Compare with the “Come up here” of Rev 4:1) and they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. And the seventh angel sounded; (the Last Trumpet) and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” (It seems there is no “Seven Year Great Tribulation” or “1000 year Millennium” following the Last Trumpet! Instead, we are instantly translated into the eternal Kingdom of God, just as Revelation 11:15 and the following verses plainly declare.)

The Eternal Kingdom of God

“And the four and twenty elders, (the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles) which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying . . . “We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because

thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets (**physical seed of Israel**), and to the saints (**the Gentile Church**), and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”