

# The Two Witnesses

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

- Revelation 11:4

**Note:** This study utilizes certain concepts developed in the presentations on the 144,000 and the seven trumpets. For best results, please read those studies first.

## Introduction

There has been a great deal of speculation and confusion on the topic of the Two Witnesses. Some Christians believe the Two Witnesses could be Moses and Elijah. Others believe the Two Witnesses could be two religious institutions such as Israel and the Church. Still, others believe the Two Witnesses could be Enoch and Elijah, the only two men taken to Heaven without seeing death.<sup>1</sup> Of course, there are other views, but we want a solid, definitive answer. What does the Bible teach?

When valid rules of interpretation are followed, the Bible will tell us who the Two Witnesses are because the Bible interprets itself. The solution may not be obvious at first, but the correct interpretation will be an exclusive solution because *there is only one interpretation* that can meet all of the specifications given to the Two Witnesses.

We will discover in this study that the Two Witnesses cannot be two men even though some translators have taken the liberty of inserting the word “men” into the Greek text. For example, Revelation 11:6 in

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<sup>1</sup> Advocates of the Enoch and Elijah view presume that Enoch and Elijah must be brought back to Earth so that they can experience death. As far as we know, these two men were the only people taken to Heaven without seeing death. The problem with this preconception is that there is no mandate for people to experience death before going to Heaven. In fact, Paul clearly says people will go to Heaven without seeing death! He wrote, **“After that [the resurrection of the dead in Christ], we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17, italics and insertion mine)

the NIV says, “**These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying. . .**” I have italicized the word “men” because this word is not found in the Greek text. NIV translators have forced the pronoun “These” to refer to men, but the antecedent of the pronoun is “the Two Witnesses.” Because the Two Witnesses are personified as “two prophets” in Revelation 11:10, some people (like the NIV translators) have jumped to the conclusion that the Two Witnesses must be two men. Under closer investigation, however, Revelation 11:4 will not permit the Two Witnesses to be two human beings. Revelation 11:4 says, “**These [the Two Witnesses] are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.**” (insertion mine) As we will see, these representations of the Two Witnesses will make perfect sense once a few things are understood.

### Who Are the Two Lampstands and Two Olive Trees?

We will find in this study that God’s Two Witnesses have existed throughout eternity. They are omniscient and omnipresent and their testimony is infallible. The Two Witnesses are two observers! They testify about God to His subjects and they report back with their observations. During the Great Tribulation, God’s Two Witnesses will be given greater power than at any previous time in Earth’s history. They will boldly declare the truth about God. Their testimony will be confirmed with powerful signs and wonders and they will measure and *observe* man’s response. They will faithfully report their observations to God. In fact, Jesus will hear from the Two Witnesses before He passes judgment on any person. God’s Two Witnesses work in both directions. They come from God, they witness our response, and report back to God. Their testimony is unimpeachable.

Two lampstands and two olive trees are called “two witnesses” because they are an important part of a judicial process that will last for 1,260 days. This judicial process will be the judgment of the living. The Bible speaks clearly: “**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether *good or bad.***” (2 Corinthians 5:10, italics mine) The judgment bar of Christ will be based on fact. Therefore, two infallible witnesses will be needed to establish the facts about each person.

When a 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 claims of the defendant. To prevent the cancellation of claims and counterclaims, God said, **“On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.”** (Deuteronomy 17:6) This principle will be followed during the judgment of the living. No one will be sentenced to eternal life or death on the testimony of one witness. Before He passes judgment on a person, Jesus will first hear from His Two Witnesses.

The Two Witnesses are the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup> (represented by two lampstands) and the Holy Spirit (represented by two olive trees). One Witness is a member of the Godhead and the other Witness comes from the mouth of God. Because they are divine, these Two Witnesses have no conflict. They operate in perfect harmony. The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets of enduring and changeless stone. (Exodus 34:1) One tablet contains the first four commandments (defining man’s duty to God). The other tablet contains the remaining six commandments (defining man’s duty to man). The Ten Commandments are based on the principle of love – total devotion to God and selfless service for others. **“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets [the Scriptures] hang on these two**

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<sup>1</sup> Note: For thirty years I have taught the Two Witnesses were the Word of God (Old Testament and New Testament) and the Holy Spirit (early rain and latter rain). For reasons that will be presented in this study, I have had to update my thinking. At first, you might think that I am splitting hairs because the Ten Commandments and the Word of God come from God. Yes, they do, but I have changed my position because the Bible offers a better explanation. The Bible predicts that mankind has a divine appointment. We are about to be caught in a great valley between two kings. The laws of one king will stand in direct opposition to the law of God, the Ten Commandments. These two kingdoms will sharply compete for citizens and distinct lines will be drawn in the sand. Everyone will be forced into making a choice. The consequence for taking sides – either way – will be dramatic. God’s Two Witnesses will make this contest embarrassingly simple. They will speak to seven billion people. They will cut through our religious diversity, our languages, confusion, and cultures with a simple declaration. It will be a Mt. Carmel moment. **“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ . . .”** (1 Kings 18:21)

**commandments.’”** (Matthew 22:36-40; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18)

In a sense, the Ten Commandments are prophetic. They reveal what people will do when they love God and man as they should. Paul understood this. He wrote, **“Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”** (Romans 13:10)

King David understood the perfection of God’s law. He wrote, **“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.”** (Psalm 19:7-10)

The Two Witnesses are *personified* in Revelation 11 as two prophets because they will work through God’s prophets during the Great Tribulation. The Holy Spirit will empower each of the 144,000 to present God’s law to the world and the results will be spectacular. Honest hearted people will be “cut to the heart” with guilt when they hear about the demands of God’s law. Jesus predicted, **“When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of *guilt* in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”** (John 16:8, italics and insertion mine) Of course, human beings can reject the law of God and the demands of the Holy Spirit because nothing trumps free will in God’s universe.

The law of God operates like a plumb line. (Amos 7:8) It defines absolute right and wrong. Any deviation from the plumb line of God’s Word is sin. (1 John 3:4) This is why Paul wrote, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:23) The Bible uses the imagery of a plumb line because it defines true vertical, and God’s law defines the Truth about His will. The law of God measures our actions and the Spirit reads our thoughts and motives. Remember, God’s Two Witnesses work in both directions. They come from God and observe our response. Then they report their findings back to God. They are infallible witnesses! Their testimony is harmonious and their truthful testimony will enable Jesus to righteously and fairly pass judgment on each human being. **“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a**

**mirror and, after looking at himself [and seeing his sins], goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law *that gives freedom*, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it– he will be blessed in what he does.”** (James 1:23-25, italics and insertion mine)

The Bible says the Two Witnesses will be killed at the end of 1,260 days by the beast that comes up out of the Abyss. (Revelation 11:7) I am often amused when people say, “The Two Witnesses cannot be the law of God and the Holy Spirit because you cannot kill the law of God or the Holy Spirit.” My usual response goes like this: “Revelation 11:4 says the Two Witnesses ‘are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.’ How does one kill two inanimate lampstands and two olive trees that are not on Earth?” I have not received a biblically reasoned solution to this question during the thirty years that I have been asking it. It’s as though Revelation 11:4 does not exist. Many Christians ignore Revelation 11:4 and jump to Revelation 11:10 which says the Two Witnesses are “two prophets” and this leap usually prompts a second question.

Unable to answer the first question, people often quote verse 8: **“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”** (Revelation 11:8) Then, they ask, “How can the law of God and the Holy Spirit lie in the street of the great city?”

The phrase, **“in the street of the great city,”** does not refer to a geographical place because the Bible plainly tells us the “the great city” is not a geographical place. **“Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. . . . This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. . . . [The angel said to John] The woman you saw *is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.*”** (Revelation 17:3,5,18, italics and insertion mine) The woman who will rule over the kings of Earth is identified by the title on her forehead; she is Babylon the Great.

We found in our study on the seven trumpets that Lucifer will modify Babylon and establish a theocracy during the sixth trumpet. He will set himself up in the place of God as “King of kings and Lord of lords”

over all of Earth. Lucifer's church-state is the great city that will rule over the kings of Earth. His theocracy is the great prostitute. After 1,260 days, the world will be like Sodom and Egypt. Sodom represents lawlessness, bold deviant behavior, and sexually immoral passions. Egypt represents defiance and hardness of heart. Remember, Pharaoh hardened his heart ten times! Lucifer's theocracy can be compared to the ancient city of Jerusalem – where Jesus was crucified. Jerusalem had rejected God's law and inserted its own. This explains why God was put on trial and condemned as a criminal. Lucifer will repeat the same process with Babylon the Great. She will condemn the people of God and punish them with death. **“I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.”** (Revelation 17:6)

The phrase, **“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city,”** refers to the ancient practice of victors showing utter contempt for their enemies. In ancient times, the greatest contempt a king could show for his enemies was to leave his enemies unburied. This allowed the dogs, vultures, and vermin to eat their victims. The stench of death and the never-to-be-forgotten sight of human beings being eaten by animals was a powerful testimony to anyone wishing to rebel against the king. The Bible predicts that Lucifer and his forces will kill most (if not all) of God's 144,000 prophets and leave their bodies unburied (Revelation 6:11; 7:3; 16:6; 18:24). Ironically, Jesus will do the same thing to Lucifer's servants! At the Second Coming, Jesus will show utter contempt for His enemies by throwing Lucifer's administration into a lake of fire. Jesus will kill the rest of mankind by a command (the sword that comes out of His mouth) and the bodies of the dead will lie all over the face of Earth. Birds (vultures) will gorge themselves on their flesh. (Revelation 19:21) Understand that when the Two Witnesses finish their work, the wicked will feel no sorrow or remorse when the 144,000 are slain. In fact, they will gloat and rejoice! (Revelation 11:10) When the Two Witnesses finish their testimony, God's servants will die and **“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city [of Babylon the Great].”**

I must say again, “When valid rules of interpretation are followed, the Bible will tell us who the Two Witnesses are because the Bible interprets itself. The solution may not be obvious at first, but the correct interpretation will be an exclusive solution because *there is only one interpretation* that can meet all of the specifications given to the Two Witnesses.”

### Killing the Two Witnesses

The *work and influence* of God's law and the Holy Spirit can be killed. In fact, Lucifer and his angels killed their work and influence in Heaven. The plumb line of God's law testified that Lucifer's actions were sinful and the Holy Spirit testified that Lucifer and his followers had hardened their hearts to the point that further communion with God was impossible. The same thing will happen on Earth. Near the end of the 1,260 days, the devil will use his deceptive miracles, as well as torture, to kill the work and influence of God's Two Witnesses. Of course, the devil cannot kill the Holy Spirit or abolish God's law, but the devil can lead people into rebellion through sin. The devil can kill the influence of the Holy Spirit in any heart *if* we cooperate with him! The devil has made the law of God irrelevant in the world today. Look around. People do evil things without shame or guilt. The devil works through arrogance and ignorance to shut out the Word of God. The devil also works through human passions. He aggrandizes sex, money, fame, power, and greed to lead us away from God. (2 Peter 1:4) Once we grieve away the Holy Spirit with persistent defiance, our blasphemy becomes permanent and therefore, unpardonable. (Matthew 12:31,32)

One day, Jesus said to the Pharisees, **“Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; *their teachings are but rules taught by men.*’ ‘You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.’ And he said to them: ‘You have a fine way of *setting aside the commands of God* in order to observe your own traditions!’ ”** (Mark 7:7-9) The Pharisees killed the influence of God's law by setting aside the law of God with rules (laws) made by men!

When a new law is proposed in the U.S. Congress, it is called a “bill” and given a reference number. Legislators know very well that bills frequently “die in committee” because a bill can be *killed*. Relationships can die and affection can be killed. Ask any divorce lawyer. The Boston Tea Party in United States history demonstrates that even a king's decree can be killed. So, yes, *the work and influence* of God's law and the Holy Spirit can be killed (made to no effect). False religion terminates the influence of God's law when it usurps the commands of God with rules made by men. Blasphemy is a far more important topic than most people realize! The devil's ultimate deception occurs when people believe that right is wrong and wrong is right. Jesus said,

**“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”** (John 3:19,20)

Human beings have the power of choice. We can choose to listen to God’s Two Witnesses or we can blaspheme them. Paul wrote, **“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** (1 Corinthians 2:14) One last point – the antediluvians killed the Two Witnesses before the flood. **“Then the Lord said [to Noah], ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.’”** (Genesis 6:3) The world rejected God’s law (Genesis 6:5) and they terminated the influence of the Holy Spirit through defiant rebellion. This is why God destroyed them – they could not be saved! Paul wrote, **“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance . . . .”** (Hebrews 6:4-6, italics mine. See also Matthew 12:31,32.)

I hope these introductory remarks have been helpful. Of course, many questions still need to be answered and we will eventually get to them. At this point, though, I hope your curiosity has been engaged because the story of the Two Witnesses is extremely fascinating.

### **Witnesses Are Needed**

Remember that when a 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 claims of the defendant. This cancellation explains God’s command to 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)

From the previous studies on Daniel 7, Daniel 8, and the seven seals, we have determined that the judgment for the dead began in 1844. Because each dead person’s life is unique, because each person’s knowledge of God and His Word is unique, and because each person’s response to the Holy Spirit is unique, three witnesses are necessary in

the judgment of the dead. After the testimony of these three witnesses has been corroborated, Jesus passes judgment on each dead person.

The first witness to speak in the judgment of the dead is the *life record* of each dead person. The second witness to speak is the *law of God* (the plumb line) and the third witness is the *Holy Spirit*. God follows His own law in the judgment of the dead: **“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) Notice how these three witnesses operate. First, Jesus reviews a flawless recording of the dead person’s actions. This is the first witness. Then, the second witness speaks: Jesus considers the level of knowledge the dead person had regarding God’s law. Finally, Jesus listens to the Holy Spirit’s report about the dead person. The Spirit intimately knows the heart and mind of every person (Romans 8:27) and His testimony is infallible. It is important to understand that the judgment of every dead person is unique, but completely fair. Every dead person is judged in the same way even though there are differences in actions, knowledge base, and responses to the Holy Spirit.

For example, those living in one age will have a different understanding of God and His law than those living in another age. Paul wrote, **“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have [knowledge of] the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for [unto] themselves, even though they do not have [knowledge of] the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness [that they acted in good faith], and their thoughts now accusing [having known some guilt], now even defending them [by doing what was thought to be right].”** (Romans 2:14,15, insertions mine) Children and people with mental disabilities are held harmless, that is, God’s grace covers those who are not accountable for their sins. This makes the testimony of the Spirit very important because the Spirit intimately knows each of us. He knows our response to His promptings. He knows how willing or unwilling we have been when it comes to fellowship and communion with God. After Jesus assembles the facts presented by the three witnesses, He passes judgment. Those declared righteous will be resurrected at the Second Coming. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) Those found to be evil will not be resurrected until the 1,000 years have ended. (Revelation 20:5)

### The Judgment of the Living

The second phase of the judgment bar is of Christ (the judgment of the living) and it begins when the censer is cast down and the Great Tribulation begins. The 144,000 will announce the judgment bar of Christ. They will cry out, “. . . **Fear God and give him glory, because *the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.***” (Revelation 14:7, italics mine)

The judgment of the living is *unlike* the judgment of the dead in several ways. First, the judgment of the living **does not require** a complete review of a person’s life. The judgment of the living will be based on our response to the Two Witnesses. Here is how it works: Jesus is going to test the faith of the living. (1 Corinthians 3:13; Revelation 3:10) All that matters to Jesus is our response to His Two Witnesses. At the end of 1,260 days, the judgment of the living will end because every person will have received either the seal of God or the mark of the beast by that time. If a person should die during the Great Tribulation *before* he receives the seal of God or the mark of the beast, he will be judged just like those who have previously died. Because many people will die before they are sealed or receive the mark of the beast, the judgment of the dead continues uninterrupted after the judgment of the living begins.

The second difference between the judgment of the dead and the living is that the judgment of the living involves *a four step process*. When the censer is cast down, everyone on Earth will participate in “Step One” even though they may not live long enough to complete all four steps. Some people will go through these four steps faster than others. The first people to be judged and receive the seal of God will be the 144,000. They are sealed just before the Great Tribulation begins. (Revelation 7:1-4) They are the first fruits of the end time harvest. (Revelation 14:4) After the 144,000 are sealed and empowered, the censer will be cast down and the four steps will begin. They are rather easy to understand.

### The Four Step Process

**Step One – The Law of God Proclaimed:** When the censer is cast down, the 144,000 will go to work. The Holy Spirit will empower them to preach the law of God as a *witness* to all nations. (Matthew 24:14) A witness does not have to be a human being. Consider this example: **“After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law**

from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord: **‘Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it [the Words of God] will remain as *a witness* against you.’**” (Deuteronomy 31:24-26, italics and insertion mine)

God’s law operates like a plumb line. God’s law defines the truth and in so doing, it destroys lies and deception. Nothing is more wonderful than *the light* of truth to those who love truth. During the Great Tribulation, God’s Word will be given unusual power to cut people “to the heart.” Remember Peter and the disciples on the Day of Pentecost? “[Peter said] **‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’** **When the people heard this, *they were cut to the heart* and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do [to escape God’s wrath]?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ *for the forgiveness of your sins*. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’**” (Acts 2:36-38, italics and insertions mine)

The overwhelming devastation of the first four trumpets will subdue religious prejudice for a short time. God’s manifold wrath will open the minds and hearts of a religiously diverse world so every person, regardless of language, culture, or religious background can thoughtfully and intelligently consider His law which the 144,000 will proclaim. People will hear the testimony of Jesus (the words of Jesus) coming out of the mouths of the 144,000 and the honest in heart will be “cut to the heart.”

**Step Two – Holy Spirit Discomfort:** God’s law makes no sense without the enlightenment of His Spirit! **“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** (1 Corinthians 2:14)

God’s law will be proclaimed throughout the world with Holy Spirit power. The distinction between truth and error, good and evil, will be made so plain that young people will even be able to understand the difference. Conviction will fall upon the honest in heart and painful decisions will be required. The social consequences for following Jesus will be severe. (John 16:1-3) The Holy Spirit will sufficiently “pressure” each person to choose the right and refuse the wrong. (See Joshua 24:15 and Hebrews 3:7-19.) Socially and culturally speaking, the situation will be difficult.

The gospel of Jesus always puts a person in a tough situation because the gospel demands total submission and loyalty to the law of God, and it goes without saying that our fallen human nature finds this difficult. When there is a price to pay for submission to God's law, our faith in Christ is tested. Do you remember how Peter betrayed Christ outside Caiaphas' home? (See Mark 14:53-15:1.) That embarrassing moment was a turning point in Peter's life. Peter realized that Friday morning that there was a huge difference between knowing Jesus and surrendering to Jesus. A few weeks later, Peter was chosen as the primary speaker at Pentecost because he had openly betrayed Christ and repented. Jesus gave this converted disciple a chance to let his countrymen clearly know where he now stood. I mention this matter because Peter knew first hand the internal struggle between loyalty and cowardice. He wrote, **"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? And, *if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?*"** (1 Peter 4:17,18, italics mine)

Those who love God and His truth will eventually step out in faith and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Once** a person decides to take his stand to obey God's Word, he will be given as much grace and strength as is needed to face the trials and persecution that will follow. On the other hand, people who cannot make a decision to obey the gospel will capitulate. *There is no strength to bear the consequences of persecution without first making a wholehearted decision to follow Christ.* Cowards, faithless, and double-minded people will go along with the flow to avoid suffering, and their eternal loss will be mind boggling. (Revelation 21:8) **“. . . ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.’ The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”** (1 Corinthians 2:9,10)

For 1,260 days Jesus will watch and wait, patiently allowing each person to make up his own mind. The Holy Spirit will pound on every heart's door. The third member of the Godhead will do everything short of violating human choice to get rebellious people to surrender to the plumb line of Truth – the law of God; unfortunately, many people will choose to rebel. Like the rich young ruler, they will conclude that the price for obedience is just too great. (John 3:19-21; Luke 18:18-25; Revelation 13:8) Without the enabling power that comes from a determined decision to obey Christ at any price, the wicked will be right – the price for obedience is too great.

**Step Three – Your Final Decision:** During the judgment of the living, three forces will be working together. The Word of God will be **heard** by everyone. Then, the Holy Spirit will **apply great pressure** within every heart to obey God’s law, and last, **persecution will force** everyone into making a decision. At first, you might think that the Two Witnesses are pulling people toward the shores of salvation and persecution is driving them away, but it is not what you think! Those who love God and His law will receive the testimony of the Holy Spirit. They will be willing to accept persecution because they are committed to pleasing God at any cost. On the other hand, those who love their lives and their possessions more than God will not be able to take the heat and accept the suffering that comes with their decision. Jesus said, **“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”** (John 12:25) **“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”** (Matthew 19:29)

There are always some people who will waver back and forth for a time, but increasing pressures from persecution will eventually force everyone into their final decision. Everyone living on Earth will either receive the mark of the beast or the seal of God. There is a simple reason for the persecution of the saints: Salvation comes through faith in Christ. Therefore, the Great Tribulation will be a test of faith. Faith in God quickly separates people. Remember the twelve spies that Moses sent into the Promised Land? (Numbers 14) Faith is a scary thing to those who do not know God and the power of His Word. Faith in God separates sheep from goats. Our actions declare our faith. James agrees. He wrote, “. . . **I will show you [and God] my faith by what I do.**” (James 2:18, insertion mine) Jesus assured the church members at Philadelphia (an early Christian church that had suffered persecution for years), **“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from [or during] the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”** (Revelation 3:10, italics and insertion mine)

**Step Four – The Seal and the Tattoo:** Every person who surrenders to the law of God and the Holy Spirit will fall in line with the testimony of Jesus. After choosing to obey Jesus without regard for the consequences, each person will be given the strength and faith to pass any test which persecution might impose. The fires of persecution will refine and purify the faith of the saints. “. . . **I will refine them like**

**silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”** (Zechariah 13:9) After passing some fiery tests of faith, a dramatic miracle will happen. It is ironic that after losing everything he owns, each faithful person will then lose his carnal nature!

The sealing of the saints requires the testimony of the Two Witnesses. The law of God will serve as the plumb line. It will measure the actions of John Doe. Jesus will see that John did, in fact, submit to God’s law. John will demonstrate his love for Jesus and his neighbor. The Holy Spirit will testify that John’s faith was thoroughly tested and he loves God with all his heart, mind, and soul, and his neighbor as himself. John gave everything he owned for the sake of the gospel! John was persecuted for worshiping Jesus on His Sabbath day. John’s actions clearly showed his love for God and man. The testimony of God’s Two Witnesses will establish the fact that John loves God and man. Jesus will announce His judgment: “Seal John Doe! Set him free from sin’s curse. Give him the wedding robe!” At that moment, John’s carnal nature will be removed and John will no longer have a propensity for sinning! John Doe will be like Adam before the fall.<sup>1</sup> He will feel a joyful difference and if he is in prison, he just might start singing at midnight. (Acts 16:25)

Those who reject the law of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit will become more rebellious and hard hearted as time passes. Eventually, everyone in this crowd will commit the unpardonable sin. God’s plumb line will measure their rebellion and the Holy Spirit will confirm the blasphemy of each person. To save their possessions and themselves from death, the wicked will eventually submit to wearing the mark of the beast – a tattoo which Lucifer will impose on mankind during the sixth trumpet. After everyone has been sealed or tattooed, the judgment of the living will come to an end and the influence of the Two Witnesses will disappear. Their work and influence is finished. **“Now when they have *finished* their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss [Lucifer] will attack them, and overpower and kill them. . . . The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.”** (Revelation 11:7, 10, italics and insertion mine)

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on the sealing, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.

### Three Observations

Now that both phases of the judgment bar of Christ (the judgment of the dead and the living) have been discussed, three observations need to be made:

1. Consider the righteousness and fairness of God when judging mankind. God will deal with the dead and the living, the rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated, the Christian and non-Christian using the same witnesses. Everyone will be judged according to their actions. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14) **“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”** (Revelation 22:12) **“The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”** (Revelation 20:13)

Jesus judges the dead and the living according to their actions, not their religious beliefs, or even their faith because their actions reveal their faith and love, not the other way around. **“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”** (James 2:17)

2. Those who receive the seal of God will be set free of sin’s power. 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 addict or the vilest sinner can be set free of their addiction and sinful baggage if only they will step out in faith and obey the gospel of Jesus. The choice for salvation will be very clear during the Great Tribulation, but the cost will be great. Jesus says, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** (John 14:15) It is interesting to me that the fourth commandment (which will become an object of great hatred) is the only commandment in the Ten Commandments that commands people to cease from work at an appointed time. What a wonderful commandment! God requires rest on His seventh day so that His children can rejuvenate. The 144,000 will powerfully proclaim, **“Worship [the Creator on His holy day, worship] him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water,”** but astounding as it seems, millions will rebel. The fourth commandment has been scorned for centuries and the wicked will widely resist it when they are confronted with the demands of God’s

law! Why is this called blasphemy? Blasphemy is rebellion against the law of God. **“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”** (Romans 8:7) This hostility cannot be justified. It only exists because we have carnal natures. Nothing is more wonderful than a Sabbath rest from the burdens of life. I have found God’s Sabbath rest to be my favorite day of the week! Jesus said, **“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)

3. By the time Jesus closes His judgment bar, He will have passed judgment on every soul who has ever lived on Earth. When He appears at the Second Coming, He will deal separately with four groups of people:
  - A. The righteous dead
  - B. The righteous living
  - C. The wicked dead
  - D. The wicked living

**“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has *done*.”** (Revelation 22:12, italics mine) Notice the outcome for each group: The righteous dead will be resurrected, and the righteous living will be caught up together with the righteous dead to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) The wicked dead will not be disturbed. They will sleep through the Second Coming and be resurrected at the end of the 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:5) The wicked living will be destroyed at the Second Coming and they will sleep during the 1,000 years. (Revelation 19:19-21) Every person who lived during Earth’s 6,000 years of history will be in one of these four groups at the Second Coming.

### Jesus Selects 144,000 Prophets

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 produce a matrix of timing and events that harmoniously conforms with valid rules of interpretation. A proper understanding of apocalyptic prophecy produces an incredible story about Jesus and His offer of salvation. In fact, the entire Bible dovetails into the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” much like all the electrical wires in a house connect to the breaker box. 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, and its timing – all this is found in apocalyptic prophecy. I have said many times that apocalyptic prophecy is not so much about future telling as it is about the love, plans, and ways of God. *If you really want to appreciate the fullness of salvation's process, you have to study the books of Daniel and Revelation.*

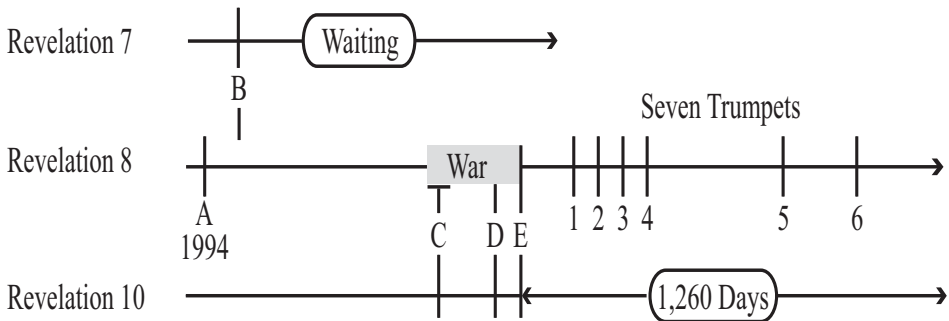
Revelation 10:1 occurs *prior* to the casting down of the censer in Revelation 8:5. When the time for Revelation 10:1 arrives, Jesus will quietly descend to Earth to make Himself known to those whom He has chosen to be His servants. Like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, most of the 144,000 do not personally know Jesus currently, but when they are called, they will see Him and understand His sovereign authority over Heaven and Earth. No one else will see Jesus descend. (Compare with Daniel 10:7 and Acts 9:7.) This appearing parallels the Lord's unannounced appearing to Abraham. Remember how the Lord and two angels came down from Heaven (in the form of three men) to see for themselves how great the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah had become. (Genesis 18) The two angels who came with the Lord came to serve as two witnesses. In a similar way, the Lord will quietly descend from Heaven to physically appear before His servants. He will tell them of His selection, He will empower them with His Two Witnesses and the destruction of Earth (the first four trumpets) will begin.

**“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 of apocalyptic prophecy 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 before the seven trumpets begin. Please examine the chart on the following page and notice the relationships between the prophecies in Revelation 7, 8, and 10:

### Relationships between Revelation 7, 8, and 10



A = In 1994, the limits of God’s patience were reached. The Jubilee Calendar expired. The seven angels were given the seven trumpets.

B = The first four angels of the seven trumpets were told not to harm the earth – until the sealing of the 144,000 is completed.<sup>1</sup>

C = At approximately the same time I believe a great war begins. Jesus will descend from Heaven, declare His sovereign authority over Earth, and announce that the appointed time for God’s wrath has come. Jesus selects and empowers the 144,000.

D = A possible nuclear exchange occurs. The saints pray for God’s intervention.

E = A few days later, the first of seven thunders occurs, Jesus declares there will be no more delay, the censer is cast down, and the 144,000 begin preaching for 1,260 days.

### Who Is The Mighty Angel?

John wrote, **“Then I saw another mighty angel 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.”** (Revelation 10:1) The mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 is Michael/Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Jesus is depicted as the angel Michael for several reasons. Consider the following:

1. John’s description of Jesus in Revelation 10 and Ezekiel’s description of Jesus in Ezekiel 1 are in perfect harmony even

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on the sealing, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*, for a discussion on why Michael and Jesus are two different manifestations of our Creator.

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)

Ezekiel saw the Lord sitting on His throne and He resembled the form of a man because mankind was created in God’s image! Angels look something like men, as well. (Genesis 1:26,27; 19:1; Daniel 9:21; Hebrews 13:2; Revelation 9:7) The fiery appearance of Jesus in Ezekiel 1 and the rainbow surrounding Him indicates that He is God. (Daniel 10:5,6) Jesus is the Creator of light. (Genesis 1:1; 1 John 1:5; John 8:12) The rainbow testifies that this angel is the Source of light and everything that exists. (Colossians 1:16) *No being, other than God, is surrounded by a rainbow in the Bible.* When God made the promise that He would not destroy the world with another flood, He said, “**I have set my rainbow in the clouds . . .**” (note the possessive pronoun) in the sky for everyone on Earth to see. (Genesis 9:13, italics mine) No throne, other than God’s throne, has a rainbow encircling it. The angel in Revelation 10:1 is a member of deity and there is only one angel who is deity – Michael. The rainbow is telling. (Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3)

2. The angel in Revelation 10 takes a deliberate stance. John says, “**He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.**” The angel’s posture and location indicates sovereign authority over Earth (both land and sea). John saw Jesus as a mighty angel in this prophecy for several reasons. Angels are a higher order of creation than mankind. Angels have strength and powers that go far beyond human ability. Michael, the Archangel, is King of kings and Lord of lords over all creation, Heaven and Earth combined. (Phillipians 2:9,10) Prior to living among us as a man, Jesus lived in Heaven in the form of an angel. This is why Jesus is also called, 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. (Revelation 12:7-9)

3. Jesus is represented as a mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 because He is the *commander* of the seven angels who have the seven trumpets. In the chapter on the seven trumpets, we found that seven exalted angels stand before God's throne. These angels were given the seven trumpets in 1994 and they have been waiting for several years for a command from Jesus to begin destroying Earth. Jesus will release the first four angels with their trumpet destruction when He announces ". . . **There will be no more delay.**" (Revelation 10:6) This mighty angel, actually Michael, is the commander-in-chief of the seven angels. Michael/Jesus is *not* a created being like angels or human beings. Michael is God, a co-eternal member of the Godhead. Michael is equal in every way to the Father. Many people stumble over the idea that Michael is Jesus, but whether He lives among the angels as one of them or among men as one of us – neither position diminishes the divinity or the fullness of Jesus. In fact, both incarnations expand the divinity of Jesus by revealing the love that God has for His creation! Think about this: The Creator of angels and human beings lives and walks in the shoes of His own creation. Michael/Jesus lives among us as one of us! 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 humanity, Jesus remains the arch-angel, the commander of Heaven's angels. (The prefix "arch" comes from a Greek word that means "above others" – the English words "mon-arch" means "one ruler" and arch-bishop means a "bishop above others.")
4. Another clue proving that the angel in Revelation 10:1 is Jesus comes indirectly from John and 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 is the archangel. No one but Jesus has the authority to give this command and the power to create life. (John 1:4) Jesus says 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, italics and insertion mine) But even more important, Jesus said, **“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* and those who hear will live.”** (John 5:25, italics mine)

5. Finally, the best clue comes from the actions of this angel. *No other being can say and do what is done in Revelation 10, but Michael/Jesus.* Specifically, Jesus swears by Himself in verse 6, to flawlessly carry out 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 and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, ‘There will be no more delay [of God’s wrath]!’ ”** (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. Jesus has made everything that exists. So, if the mighty angel in Revelation 10:1 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, that is, Jesus refers to His office as The Creator of the universe because there is no higher authority.* Consider three other references where Jesus refers to Himself in the third person:

- A. First, **“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 [Sovereign 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, the Lord silenced the devil by asserting sovereign authority. The Lord simply said, “The Lord rebuke you.” This divine denunciation silenced Lucifer. He could not say another word. The Word of God has incredible power. Remember, Jesus calmed the Sea of Galilee with a single command (Matthew 8:26) and the Heavens and starry hosts were formed by the breath of His mouth. (Psalm 33:6; Colossians 1:16)
- B. The following reference shows Jesus referring to Himself in the third person: **“But even the archangel Michael, when he**

was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, **‘The Lord [Sovereign God] rebuke you!’**” (Jude 1:9, insertions mine) The devil argued that Moses should not be resurrected and taken to Heaven because Moses had sinned against God. Once again, Jesus silenced the devil with a divine command.

- C. Finally, the following reference shows Michael/Jesus speaking to Abraham. The angel swears by Himself because there is no higher authority. **“But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.’ 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 22:11-18)

Jesus takes the oath in Revelation 10:6 swearing by Himself because one God (Michael/Jesus) promises another God (the Father) that He will conclude the sin problem according to the blueprint which the Father gave Him for man’s salvation! (Psalm 2:7-12; Revelation 1:1) From the beginning of sin, the plan of salvation has involved three Gods (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). When Adam and Eve fell, Jesus gave up certain prerogatives as “Creator God.” He submitted to the authority of the Father and His plan of salvation in order to save mankind. On that day, Jesus became the “son” of God. This clarifies why Jesus is called, “The Son of God.” The Hebrew word for son is *ben* and it means “subject or one who is subjected to the authority of another.” This amazing 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 [Overseer]. 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.’”** (Psalm 2:7-9) Jesus reiterated the results of this decree in the Garden of Gethsemane: **“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; *you gave them to me* and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.”** (John 17:6,7, italics mine)

We know that one God (Jesus) came to Earth to do the will of another God (the Father). (John 6:38) To redeem mankind from the curse of sin, Jesus had to *perfectly* carry out the plan of salvation which the Father prepared before sin began. (Revelation 17:8) When Jesus takes the oath in Revelation 10:6, He promises the Father that He will do everything that the Father requires, and the twenty-four elders, along with millions of angels, will be eye witnesses of this oath. We can compare Jesus’ oath with the *swearing in* of a new president of the United States. The president swears before God and witnesses (U.S. citizens) at his inauguration, that he will uphold the constitution (the laws) of the United States to be best of his ability, “so help me God.”

6. Ultimately, the little book that rests in the angel’s hands proves this angel is Michael/Jesus. Notice how this proof unfolds. Ezekiel was given a book to eat just like John. Ezekiel found it sweet in his mouth (that is, wonderful to understand), but the experience of delivering the words of God to obstinate people would be bitter. Jesus 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. . . . 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.’**” (Ezekiel 2:7-3:4,7, italics mine)

The selection and empowerment of 144,000 prophets was represented to John as though he would be one of them. John, like the prophet Ezekiel, was given a little book to eat and then told to prophesy again. This literary technique takes very few words to describe. By putting John into the experience of the 144,000, the final generation can quickly understand the mission and experience of the 144,000.

John’s experience: **“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 [preach] again about [before] many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’**” (Revelation 10:8-11, insertions mine)

We have examined six elements concerning the identity of the mighty angel in Revelation 10:1. They are as follows: (1) the rainbow indicating deity, (2) the deliberate posture indicating sovereign authority over land and sea, (3) as Commander-in-chief over the angels, Michael/Jesus declaring when the delay ends and the seven trumpets begin, (4) as God, Michael/Jesus resurrecting the dead on the last day with His own voice, (5) the mighty angel swearing with an oath that He will carry out the Great Tribulation plan which the Father has given Him, and (6) John and Ezekiel receiving the words from God. God told both of them to eat the book and speak for God. All of these elements harmoniously satisfy all of the specifications and prove the mighty angel described in Revelation 10 is Michael/Jesus.

### **The Loud Shout – A Sign of the End**

**“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 from Heaven to meet with the 144,000, He will give a loud shout – like the roar of a lion. I believe this shout will be heard

throughout Earth. (See Acts 9:7.) For the 144,000, this thunder will be an awesome sign. For the rest of mankind, this thunder will seem like a scary phenomenon. Heavy thunder will boom and roll throughout Earth, but nothing will be found in the Heavens or on Earth to produce such a awesome sound! (See Job 36:26-37:5.) This shout serves as a signal. Jesus Christ has planted His feet on land and sea. He has taken control of Earth away from mankind. John does not reveal what is said the shout, but I like to think that Jesus will say, "Prepare the earth to meet its Creator!" (Amos 4:12)

You may recall that the Father spoke openly 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 roars like a lion, John hears seven thunderous voices 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 they are for an appointed time, for those who 'have ears to hear' what I have say].'"** (Revelation 10:4, insertions mine)

The seven thunders are seven announcements which Jesus will speak during the Great Tribulation. We 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 how He spoke seven times while hanging on the cross.* Although this time, John is not permitted to write down each announcement – even though he heard them and understood them. Jesus wants each person who receives the seal of God to hear his Master's voice with his own ears. Can you imagine the joy of actually hearing the voice of Jesus? Can you imagine

the joyful assurance the seven thunders will bring to those who are standing firm in their faith?

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!* In other words, 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 and more and more people will hear and understand. I believe almost everyone who receives the seal of God will hear and understand at least one thunder! (I say “almost everyone” because the sealing process occurs over a period of 1,260 days and it is possible that some who are sealed could die before the next thunder occurs.)

This is a guess on my part, but it seems likely that the seven thunders could occur at seven moments of greatest 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” and the censer is cast down (possibly 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, I believe 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 Oath

**“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)

We briefly considered the importance of this oath when we were discussing the identity of the mighty angel. There are two more points about this oath that need to be presented, so please bear with me.

First, we already know that Michael swears by Himself because He is God – just like the Father is God. As the Creator of everything that exists, there is no higher power. (See also Isaiah 45:23, Jeremiah 22:5, Colossians 1:16, Ephesians 1:9,10.) Do not confuse the divinity of Jesus with His voluntary submission to the Father’s authority for the purpose of man’s salvation. Even though Jesus surrendered His prerogatives to the Father to save mankind, Jesus is just as much God as is the Father. (Revelation 11:17) So, the question rises, why does the command, **“There will be no more delay,”** require a solemn oath?

When the perfect time arrives for the administration of God’s wrath, Jesus will make a solemn promise to the Father to faithfully and completely carry out all of the objectives which the Father embedded into the plan of salvation. For example, Jesus will have to administer the Father’s wrath (seven redemptive judgments and seven destructive judgments), Jesus must ensure that the gospel will be presented to every person, and that every soul will be tested. Jesus will have to release the devil from the abyss and execute vengeance on the wicked – all this without any deviation from the plan which the Father gave Jesus. Most of all, Jesus promises to seal every person who is willing to obey the gospel. In other words, when Jesus declares there will be no more delay, *Jesus promises the Father that His plan for salvation will be carried out without the slightest deviation.* Therefore, one God (Jesus) swears to fully carry out the will of a second God (the Father). Jesus loves each person (saints and sinners alike) beyond human comprehension, to the point that He would gladly give up His eternal life to save each person. Consequently, this assignment will be more difficult for Jesus in some ways than going to the cross! It will crush

Jesus' heart, full of love and grace, to do what He has to do. In spite of this heavy burden, He promises to faithfully discharge His duties.

The second point that comes from this oath may seem oblique at first because we are not presently studying the book of Daniel, but it is important nonetheless. Daniel and John saw Jesus take the same oath and Daniel's view of this scene adds some details that are very helpful: **“The man clothed in linen [Jesus], who was [standing] 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 gospel] will be [preached throughout the world] 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 slain], all these things [that I am required to do] 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, ‘[you don’t need to be concerned about this] Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.’”** (Daniel 12:7-9, italics and insertion mine)

The oath in Daniel 12:7-9 and the oath in Revelation 10:6 align and through this alignment we learn two things. First, “the power of the holy people” will be broken. This is Daniel's way of describing the slaughter of the 144,000. When the empowerment of the Two Witnesses is terminated, most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be killed. (**Note:** 1,260 days equals a time, times, and half a time.) Second, the oath recorded in Daniel 12:7 forces the fulfillment of Daniel 11:36-12:13 to occur during the last days of Earth's history. In other words, the oath in Daniel 12 aligns with the oath in Revelation 10 and this forces the prophecy in Daniel 10-12 to cover twenty-six centuries. Daniel 10 begins during the time of the Persians and Daniel 12 ends at the Second Coming. These chronological matters were discussed in detail in Chapter 8 of my book, *Daniel: Unlocked for the Final Generation*, and they are mentioned here to refresh in your mind that the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation operate in lock-step. When Daniel and Revelation are properly put together, they form a precise matrix of events that shows us what has happened and what will surely come to pass.

### The Scroll

The apostle John is treated in Revelation 10 and 11 as though he is one of the 144,000. Remember that God uses this literary device so that much can be said about the experience of the 144,000 using 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 2,000 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. One gospel that perfectly aligns with the plumb line of God’s law will be delivered to the world and it will be free of traditions or opinions of men. The written Word (the Bible) and the spoken Word (the testimony of Jesus) will work together. The Bible will be studied and Jesus will be heard! (Revelation 1:9, 19:10) The Holy Spirit will be pounding on every heart – demanding that every sinner submit to the law of God!

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 2,000 years of “man-handling,” today’s versions of the gospel are badly distorted. Therefore, the gospel must be corrected and given *again*. The little scroll which John receives contains the *pure* gospel – the words of God which 144,000 prophets will speak.

Jesus warned 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)

One last, but emphatic point to remember: Theologians, scholars, pastors, priests, clergy, 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!

### Measuring the Temple

After eating the scroll (which represents the testimony of Jesus), John was told to “prophesy again” and it is this final proclamation of the *true* gospel of Christ that will determine the size of the inner court of the temple (those near to God). **“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.’”** (Revelation 11:1) 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, considered “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)

John was given a yardstick and told to measure the inner court. Putting the pieces together, this language means that the gospel will be proclaimed *again* by the 144,000 and the plumb line of God’s Word will determine who is close to God and who is not – regardless of religious background. Those who listen to the Holy Spirit and receive the Truth will be counted as the inner court. Those who reject the law of God and the Holy Spirit will not be counted as God’s children. In fact, the outer court (people having some form of godliness) will not even be counted because these people refuse to “line up” with the plumb line of God’s Word. Obviously, a person cannot obey the Holy Spirit and reject the law of God. This is why 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)

During the Great Tribulation, people who love Truth and righteousness will openly denounce their past religious views and embrace the gospel of Jesus. Speaking figuratively, these honest-hearted people will then enter “the inner court” of God’s temple (the area closest to God) and God will recognize 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 wedding garment, 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. Remember the fate of the man at the wedding banquet who did not have the wedding garment?

## Two Holy Cities

Currently, God has two holy cities. One is in Heaven and the other is on Earth. The one in Heaven has physical dimensions (Revelation 21:15-17) and its construction includes precious metals, pearls, and gem stones. (Revelation 21:18-21) The city in Heaven is called “*New Jerusalem*” because it replaces the original Jerusalem. God’s second holy city is on Earth, but it is not a physical city. It is a group of honest-hearted people who live all over the world. These people are called *citizens* of God’s kingdom on Earth. (Ephesians 2:19)

Many people erroneously think that the “holy city” trampled on in Revelation 11:2 is the original 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 experience another attack. Jerusalem has been attacked countless times throughout the centuries, but the “holy city” mentioned in Revelation 11:2 has nothing to do with the city of Jerusalem. The “holy city” in Revelation 11:2 represents God’s people.

When Israel rejected the Messiah, Jesus redefined Israel. For the past 2,000 years, the Bible declares a “Jew” to be anyone who submits to the teachings of Christ. (Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 3:28,29) Conversely, a Gentile is defined as anyone who refuses to submit to the teachings of Christ. This means that the city of Jerusalem today for the most part is a Gentile city, since most Jews do not believe in or submit to Jesus Christ. Therefore, most of the people living in Jerusalem today are Gentiles in God’s sight! (Revelation 2:9)

There is another city mentioned in the book of Revelation. It is called “*Babylon, city of power.*” (Revelation 18:10) This title reflects the great authority and power that Babylon will impose on the people of Earth.

In its day, ancient Babylon was a “city of power.” Until he spent seven years eating grass, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had no equal in arrogance and authority. (Daniel 5:18-21) Babylon (the Gentiles) will persecute God’s people (the holy city) for forty-two months. No one will be able to withstand the persecution unless the Holy Spirit enables them to stand firm in their faith!

Babylon’s forthcoming persecution and destruction of the saints parallels the experience of Jesus. The Jews did everything possible to destroy Jesus, but Jesus overcame them by going to His death. In this fallen world, victory is pinned on life, but in God’s economy, victory is pinned on dying without guilt. (1 John 5:4; Revelation 12:11) A God of love will permit the devil and his forces to conquer and kill millions of saints because He wants the universe to see that life itself must ever remain secondary to the law of love. Truth and righteousness are greater than life and they must be loved more than life. When a person allows the Holy Spirit to take control of his life, that person is given grace to live and die (if necessary) for something greater than himself. This produces a huge contrast. The wicked will prostitute their core beliefs and receive the mark of the beast to avoid death, but the saints would rather die than give up their love and faith in God.

### 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 [the Two 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) in Heaven serve as Two Witnesses on Earth? Before we address this question, a short study from the book of Zechariah is necessary because the identity of the Two Witnesses is explained and demonstrated there.

### A Really Neat 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 through Daniel) that the Most High God of the Jews had called him by name 150 years before he was born and appointed him to rebuild His temple, 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 Cyrus inherited the province of Babylon. In other words, a Persian king was put in a position where he could set the Jews free from a province that was formerly governed by a Mede and restore them to Judea. Because Cyrus ruled over Judea and Babylon during the seventieth year of Israel's captivity, the restoration of the Jews became possible through one man. With God, timing is everything.

**“In the first year [536 B.C.] of Cyrus king of Persia [that is, as ruler over the province of Babylon], in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah<sup>1</sup>, 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 and insertions mine)

### Get out of Jail!

After Cyrus issued the decree, an excited group of 42,360 Jews departed Babylon for the ruins of Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:64) However, their excitement soon turned into despair because during their absence from Judea, powerful warlords had overtaken their homeland. Of course the squatters did not want more Jews returning to Judea, so they made the lives of the arriving Jews as difficult and miserable as possible. Nevertheless, the Jewish king, Zerubbabel, and Israel's high priest, Joshua, appointed Levites to begin rebuilding and restoring the temple. There was great rejoicing and celebrating among the Jews that following spring when the foundation of the temple was laid, but their joy didn't last long.

**“Then the peoples [the warlords and the Canaanites] around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid**

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<sup>1</sup>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, insertions mine)

**to go on building** [the temple and the city]. [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)

**Note:** The resentment and actions of the squatters and warlords explains why three Persian kings had to issue four decrees to rebuild and restore Jerusalem and the temple over a period of ninety-three years. 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. Sixty-three years later, the Persian king, Artaxerxes, issued two decrees. His first decree was issued in 457 B.C. and the second was issued in 444 B.C.

Each time the Jews received permission to move 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. **“. . .They [the Jews] 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, we need to go back and consider the despair which beset King Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, at the beginning of the story. The reconstruction of the temple was halted almost as soon as it was started and the project “lay dead” for fourteen years. The warlords mocked Zerubbabel and Joshua, and as time went by, these good men were considered impotent and inept by many of their own people. It is true that Zerubbabel and Joshua *appeared* impotent and inept to the natural eye, but they wisely waited on the Lord.

The reconstruction project stopped because the warlords sent letters of accusation (about the past behavior of the Jews) to King Cyrus and the king shut down the rebuilding project until matters could be reviewed and sorted out. There was nothing that Zerubbabel and Joshua could

do but wait. One does not run ahead of a sovereign king. Fourteen years is a long time to wait and Zerubbabel and Joshua knew that with each passing year, their opportunity to complete the task became more unlikely. During this period of “gridlock,” the Lord gave the prophet Zechariah several visions to encourage His people.

Of course, Jesus saw everything that was going on. He saw the lies and accusations of the warlords. He saw the devil’s effort 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 off than the generation that came out of Egypt. The Jews who came out of Babylon possessed a corrupt religion. They had mixed the laws of God and Moses with the pagan beliefs of the Babylonians and this created a toxic religion. To clean up this mess, *God designed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and His temple to purify the rebuilders.* He wanted to teach a new generation of Jews the importance of living by faith (doing what is right in God’s eyes without regard for the consequences) because without faith, it is impossible to please God! (Hebrews 11:6)

Jesus wanted the rebuilt Jerusalem to be a city founded on 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, Jesus put the exiles in a “tunnel of hopelessness.” (This is a helpless situation that is bad, narrow and confining. There is no way out, forward or backward, up or down. It is a foreboding place where gridlock stops everything but the mighty hand of God.) Almost immediately, God wanted the rebuilders to understand that human effort could not rebuild His temple and His city. There was absolutely nothing that the Jews could do about it. After a few years of hopeless gridlock, God spoke to His people through Zechariah:

“[For many good reasons,] **The Lord was very angry with your forefathers** [and according to His promise, 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,”’ . . .** [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.**” (Zechariah 1:2-4, insertions mine)

Basically, the Lord says, “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 2:10-12, insertions mine)

Israel left a bad taste in the mouths of the Canaanites. This bad taste can be assessed by the hatred which the Gentiles had for the returning Jews. The Canaanites did not want the Jews living in their midst and they did everything possible to keep them from rebuilding. During this period of gridlock, the Lord gave Zechariah a vision concerning Joshua and a vision concerning Zerubbabel. As High Priest, Joshua represented the religious condition of Israel and as king, Zerubbabel represented the political condition of Israel. Because the vision concerning Joshua does not directly concern the Two Witnesses, I will reluctantly skip over it. (See Zechariah 3.)

### The Vision Concerning Zerubbabel

**“Then the angel who talked with me [earlier in the vision concerning Joshua] 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, gridlock 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 in gridlock when God gave this vision to Zechariah, the Lord promised that Zerubbabel himself would present the capstone (the final stone on the temple) to shouts of “God bless it! God bless it!” Jesus wanted the king to know that he would indeed 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, who was both a prophet and a priest, should have understood the meaning of what he saw.

We have reached bedrock in our study on 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 enables the lampstand to *shine* perpetually! What a marvelous design! Zechariah saw an eternal flame. A lampstand fed by two olive trees. (Remember, as we learned near the beginning of this study, the Two Witnesses have existed throughout eternity.)

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 [each day by humans] continually.”** (Leviticus 24:4, italics and insertion mine) Given his intimate knowledge of priestly duties, Zechariah should have connected the dots. He was looking at a living symbol of the Holy Spirit (the two olive trees) and the eternal flame of God’s Word (the lampstand with seven lamps on it). The Spirit of God enables the law of God to shine perpetually! **“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”** (Isaiah 55:10,11)

### Standing before the Lord of the Earth

Notice the location of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11:4: **“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”** 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.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the lampstand *stood before* the Table of Shewbread 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 two 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].”**

<sup>1</sup> 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*.

### The Lampstand with Seven Lamps

When God gave this vision to Zechariah, the temple in Jerusalem was not in service. This point is made because the temple in Heaven was operating and intact. (Hebrews 8:1-5) Zechariah's vision should be understood from the perspective of the Heavenly temple, where the Lord sits on His throne. (Psalm 11:4) The lampstand in Heaven's temple represented the nation of Israel, the *agent* through whom God's law was chosen to shine. The seven lamps on the lampstand represent the totality of God's Truth, the truth that displaces darkness, including the plumb line of His law that defines true vertical.

Because of God's great affection for Abraham, Abraham's offspring had been chosen as "keepers of the Word of God." They were trustees of His law. In other words, when Israel was delivered from Egypt, the nation was chosen to serve the world as trustees of the gospel of Christ. (Exodus 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 10:4) Jesus referred to this responsibility in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus told the Jews, "**You are the light [the lampstand] of the world. . . .**" (Matthew 5:14, insertion mine) In other words, Israel had been selected and anointed to serve the Lord of all Earth as trustees of God's Word. (Isaiah 42:6,7; Revelation 14:6) This explains 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 perfect law 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 [of sin] and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness [of ignorance].**" (Isaiah 42:6,7, italics and insertions mine)

The seven lamps on Israel's lampstand represent the sevenfold brilliance that shines from God's Word. No group of people has been given more blessing and spiritual advantage than the nation of Israel! Paul, lamenting Israel's defiant rebellion against Christ wrote, "**For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons;<sup>1</sup> theirs the divine glory,<sup>2</sup> the covenants,<sup>3</sup> the receiving of the law,<sup>4</sup> the temple worship<sup>5</sup> and the promises.<sup>6</sup> Theirs are the patriarchs,<sup>7</sup> and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.**" (Romans 9:3-5) Did you notice the little

superscript numbers? These numbers identify the sevenfold blessing given to Israel. God raised up a people to “prepare the world for the kingdom of God and He gave them every blessing and grace to do so, but they refused. **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** (John 1:11)

When Jesus began His ministry, Israel was thoroughly poisoned with idolatry. Israel worshiped God’s laws instead of God, and their legalism led them to reject the teachings of Jesus. If Jesus came to Earth to minister among Christians today, He would find Christians thoroughly poisoned with idolatry. A majority of Christians worship God’s grace instead of God! This point is proven by the total disregard for God’s seventh day Sabbath. Most Christians disregard God’s Sabbath because they believe the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross. The pendulum has swung from worshiping God’s law to worshiping God’s grace. In fact, mercy (grace) and justice (law) co-exist because God is love. (Psalm 89:14) Man’s need of God’s grace is based on the eternal presence of God’s law. Where there is no law, there is no need for grace! (Romans 4:15) When the Ten Commandments, specifically the fourth commandment, is presented to the world during the Great Tribulation, many Christians will be shocked to hear that they have blasphemed the law of God in the name of Grace. Although the doctrine of grace opposes the doctrine of legalism, they produce the same outcome. Anything that displaces the law of God with rules taught by men is blasphemy. (Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:7,8)

### Israel’s Failures

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 with all their hearts, minds, and souls and their neighbors as themselves, 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. Instead of worshiping and exalting the God of Heaven, they ended up worshiping and exalting false religion. Of course, if you had asked a Pharisee if he hated God, he would have indignantly said, “Absolutely not!” If you had asked him at the crucifixion if he hated Jesus of Nazareth, (who was God in the flesh) he would have said “Yes, absolutely!” As I have written before, the devil’s ultimate deception occurs when people believe right is wrong and wrong is right.

Jesus deliberately chose to begin His ministry at the peak of Israel’s apostasy. In spite of the signs and wonders Jesus performed, Israel

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.”** (John 1:10, 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: The trusteeship of the gospel was taken from Israel and given to Christians. Israel’s lampstand was removed and seven lampstands took 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 choose to enter into this covenant constitute a *new* Israel who will inherit *New* Jerusalem. Jesus established a new covenant because He wants His gospel of salvation and truth delivered to the whole world. (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 since the cross, God recognizes Israel as a Gentile nation. Israel lost their favored status, their trusteeship, through rebellion. Because God’s covenant with Israel was a mutual covenant (like a marriage), God was set free from Israel because Israel was unfaithful.

(Ezekiel 23) Many Christians do not understand the bilateral 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 as a result, they continue to lift passages from the Old Testament and apply them to the end time.<sup>1</sup> This errant practice has produced a series of prophetic concepts that are totally misleading. Millions of people are now anticipating prophetic events that will not occur.

The second issue that confuses a lot of people today is the identity of Israel. The new covenant *redefines* the seed (the sperm) of Abraham. **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”** (Galatians 3:28,29) God redefined Israel because God's covenant with Abraham is not conditional. The covenant God gave to Abraham was unilateral – one sided. Jesus made three promises to Abraham which He will keep. First, He promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:4) Second, God told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring. (Genesis 18:18) Last, God promised to give the land where Abraham lived to his descendants. (Genesis 15:18) 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*. (Revelation 7:9) Thus, Abraham will be called the father of the “faithful” from many nations. When the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven at the end of the 1,000 years, it will physically encompass *all of the land* promised to Abraham. (Revelation 21:16) Thus, Abraham's seed will inherit the land. Finally, because Jesus came through Abraham's lineage, people from every nation will be saved and this fulfills the promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring. (Acts 4:12; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 2) All three promises made to Abraham will be fulfilled – but not with Abraham's biological offspring!

Paul leaves no wiggle room on the redefinition of Israel: **“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.”** (Romans 2:28,29) **“If you belong to Christ, then you**

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<sup>1</sup> 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*.

**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. At the Second Coming, Jesus will "airlift" Abraham and all of his faith-full heirs (both from the dead and the living) to live in the New Jerusalem!

Paul understood God's abandonment of biological Israel. He also understood the redefinition of Israel, that is, the Christian church was the new Israel. **"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) Notice how Paul and Barnabas redirected Isaiah 42:6,7 toward the Christian faith.

### Removing One and Installing Seven

The abandonment of Israel and the establishment of Christianity has been briefly discussed in this study so that you can understand why seven lampstands replaced the lampstand that once stood before the Lord in Heaven's temple. The seven lampstands represent *a new covenant – a new trusteeship for the gospel of Christ.* **"It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel [Jacob] are Israel [God's children]. . . . In other words, it is not the natural children [of Jacob] who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise** [people who live by faith as did Abraham] **who are regarded as Abraham's offspring."** (Romans 9:6,8) Unlike the old covenant which was based on bloodline, the new covenant is an open covenant. It is based on the blood of Jesus. Anyone can become a believer in Christ, and through Jesus, receive all that was promised to Abraham!

You should now be able to see why seven golden lampstands replaced Israel's lampstand. John writes, **“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, italics mine)

Even though there were more than seven churches in Asia Minor in A.D. 95 when God gave John this 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. 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 the comforts of 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 in God's system of counting) – six churches having serious problems and one church hanging on under very difficult circumstances – so that He could praise the good and identify the bad in each case. Unfortunately, the testimony of Jesus to the seven churches did not keep the seven churches from falling into apostasy.

Before we go a step farther, 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 had been removed at the end of the seventy weeks, the words of Jesus must be treated seriously. His 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. I am highlighting this threat because the seven churches did not last long. They turned their backs on the Lord during the next seventy weeks (490 years). By A.D. 538, Christianity was in total apostasy.

The history of Christianity 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 (A.D. 249-251) and Diocletian (A.D. 284-305), 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 (A.D. 306-337) and the heresies taught by the Church at Rome, or they simply disappeared and went underground. Finally, Islamic conquests in Asia Minor during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. terminated the existence of all Christian churches in a region that is modern day Turkey. Even though the seven churches disappeared, God’s Word was not totally extinguished. **“The woman [faithful believers] 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 destroy anyone who rebelled against its authority. The church’s slide into apostasy parallels Israel’s history. History proves that human beings, whether Jew or Christian, are the same. We have already discussed the fall of Israel and the disappearance of the seven churches. Those loving the Word of God went underground because the devil chased the woman into the wilderness for 1,260 years. During this millennium of persecution, history describes two versions of Christianity. One church is lavishly headquartered at Rome and the other church is destitute, hiding in the desert. The world is in the dark and which is why this period of time is often called the Dark Ages. (538-1798)

### Lampstand Summary

We have seen how lampstands are used in prophecy. In Zechariah's day, there was one lampstand with seven lamps on it that stood before the Lord. That lampstand represented the nation of Israel, the *chosen agent* or trustee of God's Word. In John's day, there were seven lampstands, each lampstand representing a church – the *chosen agent* or trustee of God's Word. Then, the seven lampstands disappeared. Now, we ask, who are the two lampstands in Revelation 11? God's law is His *chosen agent* at the end of the Age. God has proven with Jews and Christians alike that human beings cannot be trusted as agents of His law. One lampstand represents the first tablet of stone and the other represents the second tablet of stone. The law of the Lord is changeless, a perfect light displacing darkness. The law of God is the plumb line of Truth. The law is found and explained in the Word of God and it testifies about the actions of the living. Our actions during the Great Tribulation will be measured by the law's definition of true vertical (the Truth).

One last point. When we studied the seven seals, we learned that the second seal was opened in 1800. The rider on the red horse went throughout Earth with a large sword. That sword represents the Word of God which has been widely translated and distributed throughout the world. God raised up numerous Bible Societies at the beginning of the nineteenth century for the purpose of distributing His Word. In Revelation 11, the purpose for distributing the Bible becomes self-evident. The Word of God (or portions of it) has been distributed throughout the world. When the Great Tribulation begins, the Holy Spirit will empower 144,000 to proclaim God's law. The 144,000 will present the law of God with clarity and great power, and sincere people will be "cut to the heart" through the power of the Holy Spirit. The wicked will be enraged by the law of God and they will persecute those who obey the gospel of Christ. To take this one step further, Jesus Himself will speak through the 144,000. The testimony of Jesus will be heard and this will cause people to give God's law due consideration. Make no mistake about this, the gospel of Jesus will be preached, as a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come. (Matthew 24:14)

### Two Olive Trees: Early Rain / Latter Rain

There were two major harvests each year in ancient Israel. The first harvest came from winter crops which were harvested in the spring. First fruits from the winter crops were presented to the Lord at the Feast of Weeks (also called the Feast of Pentecost) The second harvest

came from summer crops which were harvested in the fall. First fruits from the fall harvest were presented to the Lord at the Feast of Ingathering (the Feast of Tabernacles). (Exodus 23:16; 34:22) Given Israel's latitude in the northern hemisphere, the fall harvest was the largest and most abundant.

Generally speaking, there were two cycles of rain per crop. They were called "the early rain" and "the latter rain." (Joel 2:23) It is important to note that the names of the two rains were relative to their harvest, not the time of the year. This topic is important because the Holy Spirit is represented as Two Trees in Revelation 11. The work of the Holy Spirit can be described 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 – long before we could even know or want to know Him.

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 any need a Savior, but our need of a Savior is far greater than that of having a "warm fuzzy." We need a Savior to give us power to do what is right when the price for righteousness is great. We need a Savior who empowers us to forgive our debtors and love the unlovely. We need a Savior who will comfort us for doing right – even though the heavens may fall. Most of all, we need a Savior who has died in our place and paid the penalty for our sins. There is great peace and joy in having a Savior.

The Holy Spirit is anxious that we hear the gospel of Jesus because the truth about Jesus and our need of the Savior comes from hearing the Word of God. (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21) After hearing the terms and conditions of the gospel, the Holy Spirit is sometimes able to bring a person to repentance. The Spirit enables us to see ourselves as God sees us and this view is rather shocking. Suddenly, our need for a Savior becomes upmost!

Once 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 early rain came, seeds were planted, and of course, the early rain and the sunshine that followed caused the seeds to germinate and grow. In a few days, the bare ground produced new life! Once the seed of truth is planted in good soil, the Holy Spirit will "rain down" on a thirsty soul

and overnight, signs of new life will appear. This is the “early rain” experience.

Whether it is a summer crop (representing early in life) or a winter crop (representing late in life), the rain that produces the harvest is the latter rain. The world has never experienced the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, but it will only occur during the Great Tribulation. For 1,260 days, the law of God will be presented with power and clarity, and the Holy Spirit will pound on every heart. The contest will be difficult and painful. Those who submit to the law of God will suffer the penalties of Babylon. Those who submit to the laws of Babylon will receive the seven bowls and lose eternal life. 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 the carnal nature and seal that “faith-full” person with a sinless nature like that of Adam and Eve before they fell. (Genesis 3:7; Colossians 1:27; Romans 1:17; Revelation 7:1-4; 10:7) The sealing will be caused by the latter rain experience. This experience is also called “receiving the seal of the living God.” (Revelation 7:2) When Jesus concludes the sealing of His people, the saints will no longer need an intercessor or mediator in Heaven. The sins of the righteous will have been transferred to the scapegoat and God’s children will have sinless natures “sealed” within them. Jesus will then declare the end of His judgment bar 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) These words declare the latter rain has fallen and the harvest is finished.

### Review

We have examined the following:

1. John saw Jesus descend from Heaven to take control of Earth and 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 words which the 144,000 will speak during the Great Tribulation.
3. Jesus will take an oath, promising the Father that He will carry out the plans given to 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 (preach a true

gospel). The 144,000 will notify the world that the judgment bar of Christ is underway.

5. John was given a measuring rod and told to count the inner court and to ignore the outer court. The inner court will consist of sheep. The outer court will be filled with goats.
6. Jesus will empower 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 two "rains" of the Holy Spirit. The two lampstands represent the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.
8. The power given to the Two Witnesses will flow through 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 a basic 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.

## The Rest of the Story

**“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 Ten Commandments, written on two tablets of stone] 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 [At the appointed time, God will destroy those who reject the testimony of His Witnesses with fire]. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”** (Revelation 11:3-5; 20:15)

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 or a situation like the one that will be caused by the first four trumpets. God's wrath will tear down the foolishness that preoccupies people, and overnight, the Bible will become the most important book on Earth. For 1,260 days, 144,000 servants of God will be “gifted” with the empowerment of God's 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 genuine love among those who

receive the gospel of Jesus. Were it not for the special protection which the Holy Spirit will give the 144,000, they would be easy prey. In fact, wicked men would kill the 144,000 long before they could accomplish their task. I believe 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 killed 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) or at the end of 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:15)

**“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 they [like Moses and Aaron, the 144,000 will] 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 [that is, 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 chapter on the seven trumpets, we investigated the first global earthquake at length – the earthquake that marks the commencement of the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 8:5) I presented 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)

These matters congeal in a simple way. 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. Because everyone in each geographic cell has either been sealed or received the mark of the beast, the work and influence of the Two Witnesses will end. Lucifer’s forces will then be permitted to kill most, if not all, of the 144,000. If any of the 144,000 remain alive, they will not be able to work miracles or speak with power after the 1,260<sup>th</sup> 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 1,260<sup>th</sup> 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 his heart ten times], **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** [all over the world] **will gaze on their bodies** [of God’s servants] **and refuse them burial.** (Revelation 11:8)

Since this topic was addressed near the beginning of this study, two summary points will be made. First, the great city is the great whore, Lucifer’s theocracy, which will be set up during the sixth trumpet. (Revelation 17:18) Lucifer’s theocracy is also called “the image to the beast” – a modified replica of Babylon’s original church-state. (Revelation 13:15) 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 the Two Witnesses (actually, the bodies of the 144,000 through whom the Two Witnesses speak) are not going to be viewed at a particular street address in a given city. Geographically speaking, the dead bodies of the 144,000 will

be found *all over the world*.

Second, the language, “bodies lying in the street,” shows gross contempt. Consider these two passages 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)

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. Finally, notice that Jesus will avenge the death of His servants. (Jeremiah 51:6; Revelation 18:6) 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) The bodies of the wicked 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 before the wicked are slain. No one will be left on Earth to bury the dead.

### Day 1,265

**“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 God’s Word will torment each person spiritually until he or she either (1) submits to the gospel of Jesus, or (2) grieves away the Holy Spirit and commits the unpardonable sin. (Revelation 14:11) By the time the 1,260<sup>th</sup> day is reached, every decision will have been made and a large majority will rejoice to be set free from the torment caused by the Two Witnesses.] **But** [their celebration over the deaths of the 144,000 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 those who saw them** [the wicked, particularly those who participated in killing 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 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 end on a Tuesday, February 3 at sundown (local time). About twelve hours later, at sunrise local time, Wednesday morning, February 4, Lucifer announces the 144,000 have been annihilated and the wicked begin celebrating. Their drunken celebration continues through Wednesday (the day light part, that is, half a day), Thursday, Friday, and Sabbath. After the three and one-half days end, the 144,000 are resurrected during the early morning hours (like Jesus) on Sunday, February 8. I like to imagine something like this happening: Even though it is still dark, a glorious light illumines each dead prophet as he or she comes to life. They walk about. Word breaks out and everyone goes out 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, italics mine)

**"Then they** [the 144,000] **heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.'** **And they 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** [a portion of the great whore] **collapsed. Seven thousand people**

[Lucifer's employees] **were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors** [the saints who are in hiding or awaiting death in dungeons and prisons] **were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe** [the sixth trumpet] **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. There is no need to go over those details again. However, there is one interesting point that should be emphasized. During the seventh trumpet, the Ark of the Covenant will be displayed from Heaven. The whole world will see the box that contains one of the Two Witnesses! Even though this matter was also discussed at length in the previous chapter, it is important to understand that the people on Earth will be clearly divided. One group will have the plumb line of God's law written in their hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10-12) while the other group will be branded with an indelible tattoo showing that they preferred rebellion and defiance.

Finally, it is important to notice that the 144,000 will be glorified in the eyes of the wicked before they are taken to Heaven. God's *true* prophets will be taken to Heaven to watch the destruction of the *false* prophet, Lucifer. Their grueling 1,260 days are over and all that remains to be done on Earth is the execution of the seven bowls – God's merciless vengeance on the wicked. When Jesus appears at the Second Coming, 144,000 prophets will return with Him. At that time, a numberless multitude of people from every nation, people, language, and tribe – 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 law of God. Given the miserable failures of Israel (the single lampstand) and Christians (the seven lampstands), the harvest produced by God's Two Witnesses will be awesome – and the word awesome will prove to be a gross understatement.

**“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”** (Matthew 19:29)