

# Who Are the "TWO WITNESSES" of Revelation?

During the climactic End-Time, God will raise up TWO WITNESSES who will serve Him as true prophets who will bring plagues upon the world, and who will warn the wicked of their sins and evil. Who are these men? Are the two witnesses of Revelation 11 two angelic beings? Or are they human? Are they waiting in the wings to fulfill their calling? Do they know each other? Are they already active, today, in the Work of God, before being imbued with extra spiritual power to accomplish their final ministry?

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Who are the "Two Witnesses" of Revelation 11? What is their final role and function in the End-Time Work of God? We read of these two unique and fascinating servants of God:

"And I will give POWER to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the whole earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want" (Rev.11:3-6).

In recent times, a novel new theory has been put forth claiming that these two "witnesses" are not human beings at all, but two angelic messengers sent from heaven -- two "cherubim" -- mighty angels of God. According to the proponents of this theory, these two witnesses 1) do not appear on the scene until after the first "woe" of Revelation, and at the beginning of the "second woe" (Rev.9). This is the same as the sixth trumpet plague, and during this woe a third of mankind dies (Rev.9:13-16). This sixth trumpet woe, we are told, will last 3 1/2 years. The proponents of this theory further tell us that Christ will not return until the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, which will last another 3 1/2 years, during which the seven last plagues are poured out on the hapless earth.

2) The appearance of the two witnesses, we are told, is supposedly after the sealing of the 144,000 for protection during the final plagues poured out by God on a rebellious planet (Rev.7). They appear, ostensibly, after the first woe (fifth trumpet plague), which is supposed to be "an army of evil angels" led by a super powerful demonic angel.

Who are they? They prophesy for 42 months, or 3 1/2 years, and then are killed, and then "ascend to heaven in full view of their enemies." They are referred to as "two olive trees, two anointed ones" who stand before God.

To "prove" these are two angelic super beings, cherubim, the author points out that "no man" has ascended to heaven, according to Christ's own words (John 3:13). Furthermore, he says, there were two cherubim who stand in God's presence -- one of each end of the Ark of the covenant, hovering over the mercy seat. Furthermore, they are depicted in Scripture as being made of "olive wood" (I Kings 6:23). Voila! The two witnesses!

Sounds interesting -- even entertaining -- but is this theory true? Does it really have a "leg" to stand on?

We know, of course, that from time to time angels of God can appear as human beings, and have done so. Abraham met with three celestial visitors who appeared as men (Gen.18:1- 23). Paul speaks about Christians at times entertaining angels "unawares" (Heb.13:2). However, there is no evidence in all the Scriptures of angelic beings of God *ever being KILLED!* And we must remember, these two "witnesses" of Revelation, after they finish their ministry and prophecy for three and one-half years, *are killed!*

We read in Revelation 11:

"And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make WAR against them, and shall overcome them, and KILL THEM. And their *dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city*, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall *see their dead bodies three days and a half*, and shall not suffer their *dead bodies to be put in graves*, and they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because *THESE TWO PROPHETS* tormented them that dwell on the earth" (Rev.11:7-10).

Note well! God's Word says these two individuals are "PROPHETS"! -- not angels! In every case in the Scriptures, the word "prophet" refers to MEN -- HUMAN BEINGS! The office of "prophet" was held by Abraham, as well as Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, not to mention Noah, Enoch, and the prophet Samuel in the Old Testament. Even king David was also a "prophet" of God (Acts 2:29-30).

There were also "prophets" in the New Testament Church of God, such as Agabus (Acts 11:27-28), as well as Silas and Judas Barsabas (Acts 15:22, 32). The office of "prophet" was part of the established order of rank and responsibility in the Church. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "And God hath set some in the church, first, apostles, *secondarily prophets*, thirdly teachers, after that miracles . . ." (I Cor.12:28). Paul also wrote to the Ephesians, "And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph.4:11).

*Nowhere in the Bible is an "angel" ever called a "prophet"! Therefore, these two witnesses described in the book of Revelation are TWO HUMAN BEINGS WHOM GOD WILL USE, much as He used Moses and Aaron, also prophets, to witness to Pharaoh, during the time PLAGUES were poured out on Egypt! God will use these two men in a similar way, to pour out similar PLAGUES upon the kingdom of the Beast, the anti-typical fulfillment of ancient Pharaoh!*

### ***Ascend Up To Heaven?***

But what about the claim that "no man" has ascended up to "heaven"? First of all, notice that when Jesus Christ made that statement, He was clearly referring to the heaven of God's throne (John 3:13). Also, He spoke in the *past tense*. This statement, therefore, would not necessarily preclude two men *in the future*, from ascending up to "heaven."

However, we don't need to assume that the heaven of God's throne is referred to at all. When John tells us the two witnesses, when their dead bodies are revived, ascend up to heaven, *he did not specify WHICH heaven!* The truth is, the Bible itself speaks of at least three different "heavens." There is the heaven of God's throne (Rev.4:1-3); then there is the heaven where the planets and stars and galaxies circulate (Gen.1:1); and finally, there is the heaven which is the atmosphere of the earth -- the heaven where the birds fly (Gen.1:20).

*Which heaven did the two witnesses ascend up to?*

Actually, in history, the Bible does record *one man*, other than Christ Himself, who, like the two witnesses, "ascended to heaven" when his ministry was finished. He was, like them, a prophet of God -- a mighty prophet -- the prophet Elijah! We read the account in II Kings:

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up *by a whirlwind into HEAVEN*" (II Kgs.2:11).

Elijah was taken to "heaven"! But what "heaven" did he go to? Many have assumed that Elijah never died, and that he was taken to the heaven of God's throne. Some also assume that Enoch never died, because we read in the book of Genesis: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him" (Gen.5:24). Does this mean God took him to heaven?

But that would contradict the plain words of the Messiah Himself. So, what did happen to Enoch and Elijah?

### ***Did Enoch and Elijah Go to Heaven?***

Actually, this mystery is cleared up for us in the book of Hebrews, in the New Testament. The truth is, as the apostle Paul wrote, all the saints of God died. He enumerated specifically Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, and said: "These ALL *died* in faith, not having received the promises" (Heb.11:13). Enoch was among these mentioned (verse 5). What did Paul mean, then, when he said that Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him"? (v.5). Men have *assumed* this meant he went to heaven and never died. But Enoch was human flesh, and all flesh dies (Eccl.3:18-20). "

All go to one place; ALL are of the dust, and ALL turn to dust again" (v.20). The Greek word for "translated" here is *metatithemi* (#3346 in *Strong's Concordance*) and means, "to transfer, i.e., transport," by impl., "to exchange, carry over, change, remove, translate, turn."

In other words, Enoch was "removed" or "carried over" by God from one place to another, for his own protection. Since he was a prophet of God, and the world hated him for preaching the truth and warning them of their sins, they sought to kill him, as they have done to all God's prophets from the beginning of time. But God saw to it that he was protected -- God removed him from danger, and from their presence, to a "safe place." When his ministry was fulfilled, God "took him" -- that is, He had his angels remove him from danger and carried him to a "place of safety" on this earth. Thus, he did not ascend to heaven at all!

What about Elijah? Elijah, who was taken in the sky by a chariot and fiery horses (II Kings 2:11), was not taken to the heaven of God's throne, but also was merely transferred to another location on the earth. This occurred in 896 B.C., according to Ussher's chronology. In 893 B.C., about three years later, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, appoints his son Jehoram as king, at the age of 32 years; he reigned for eight years (II Kings 8:16-18). He was a wicked king and walked in the ways of the kings of Israel (v.18). He married the daughter of Ahab (II Chron.21:6). *During his reign, he received a letter from Elijah the prophet who reproached him for his apostasy and warned that he would die of a great disease of the bowels* (II Chron.21:12-15).

"And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. *And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness; so he died of sore diseases*" (vs.18-19). Jehoram's death occurred in 885 B.C., and his disease lasted about two years, so Elijah's letter must have been written and sent about 887 B.C. This would have been about *nine years after his supposed "ascension" into heaven* via the fiery chariot and horses! Thus, Elijah was not taken to the heaven of God's throne, thus contradicting the words of Christ, but was taken through the atmospheric heaven surrounding the earth, and taken to a remote location to live out his life. During this time, he wrote the letter mentioned above.

Again, we *know* that Elijah died from the New Testament witness. In Hebrews 11 we read of him, one of God's prophets who raised a woman's son to life again (Heb.11:32-35). Paul says of all these men, "And these ALL, having obtained a good report through faith,

**RECEIVED NOT THE PROMISE:** God having provided some better thing for us, that *they without us should not be made perfect*" -- that is, receive the promises, eternal life and salvation (Heb.11:39-40). Thus, they are still waiting in their graves for the resurrection, even as king David is (Acts 2:29).

There is no indication whatsoever that Enoch and Elijah will literally be resurrected and be brought back to earth to be the two witnesses. Rather, God Himself will raise up two men, "in the power and spirit of Elijah," men who are filled with the Spirit of God, the anti-types of Joshua and Zerubbabel (Zech.4-5). One of these men will be the one prophesied to come "in the spirit and power of Elijah," as John the Baptist did before Christ's second coming (Mal.4:5-6; Luke 1:13-17).

Thus, the fact that the two witnesses will "ascend to heaven" when their ministry is completed in no way "proves" that they are "two angels" of God, or two spirit beings!

### ***"Standing in His Presence"***

Does the mere fact that the two witnesses stand in God's presence prove that these must be two angelic beings, who stand before God's throne in heaven?

This, too, is not the case at all. True Christians stand in God's presence every day of their lives, as they serve God. Jesus Christ declared, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt.18:20). Moses also was on the earth, and yet stood in the "presence" of God (Exo.33:15). Jonah attempted to flee from God's presence, but found he could not do it (Jonah 1:3). Job, the patriarch, experienced God's presence, and it troubled him, and made him afraid (Job 23:15).

David himself prayed to God, "Cast me not away *from thy presence*; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). He also declared, in prayer, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from *thy presence*?" (Psalm 139:7).

To stand in God's presence, we don't need to be "in heaven"!

### ***"The Two Olive Trees"***

But the individual who claims these are two cherubim from God's throne also points out that the cherubim were fashioned out of "olive wood," and compares that fact to the fact that the two witnesses are called "two olive trees." Does this prove they are angelic beings?

Not at all! Notice!

In the book of Zechariah, we read another prophecy about a solid gold lampstand with seven lights on it, seven channels to the lights, and "two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left" (Zech.4:3). Who were these two "olive trees"? This description introduces a prophecy about *God's servant Zerubbabel*, a human being, saying:

"This is the word of the LORD *to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty.* What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone 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. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. Who despise the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel'" (Zech.4:6-10).

Zerubbabel was one of these two "olive trees" of the prophecy of Zechariah! He was used mightily of God, against powerful opposition, to REBUILD the Temple of God during his time!

Interestingly, in chapter 3 of Zechariah, we read about another servant of God, the high priest Joshua, with Satan the devil standing at his right hand to resist him and accuse him. Zechariah declares:

"The LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?' *Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.'* Then he said to Joshua, '*See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.*' Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head.' So, they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

"The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'If you will walk in my ways and keep my commandments, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here. Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are MEN SYMBOLIC OF TIMES TO COME: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it, says the LORD Almighty, and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day'" (Zech.3:2-9).

Joshua the high priest was a spiritual leader of Israel during the time of Zerubbabel. He was guilty of sin -- and had to repent of his sins, before God could use him. He bitterly and totally repented, and God kept His promise and gave him a great responsibility, a great service to do -- to restore the true worship of God! He was the other "olive tree." And he, too, was a human being!

Thus, the prophecy of Zechariah involved the rebuilding of the Temple of God during the days of Zerubbabel, governor of Judea, when Joshua was the high priest. These two men were used by God to lead in the REBUILDING of God's physical Temple and restoring the true worship of God! The Temple itself had been destroyed by king Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Although the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem in 537 B.C., during the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, after being in captivity for 70 years, since 607 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar first invaded the land, Temple reconstruction did not really get under way until 520 B.C., and was not finished until 515 B.C.

### *Joshua and Zerubbabel*

Now notice what Zechariah says about them:

"Then I asked the angel, 'What are these TWO OLIVE TREES on the right hand and the left on the lampstand?' Again, I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?' He replied, 'Do you not know what these are?' 'No, my lord,' I said. So, he said, '*These are the TWO WHO ARE ANOINTED TO SERVE THE LORD of all the earth*'" (Zech.4:11-14).

As we can see, therefore, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, who were used of God to rebuild His Temple, after the Babylonian captivity, were TYPES of the two END-TIME servants of God mentioned in Revelation 11, who ALSO are called the "two olive trees"! Olive oil, of course is a type of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, these two men are "sons of oil," or men who will be mightily endowed by the Spirit of God to perform their unique End-Time ministry! In the Hebrew, the word for "anointed ones" here is *ben* ["son of"] *yitshar* ["oil," "anointing," as producing light], thus these are the "sons of oil" or "sons of light." They are filled with God's Holy Spirit, and proclaim the true light of the gospel -- the truth of God!

Notice! Cherubim are never called "olive trees" in Scripture, nor are they compared to olive trees. The fact that they were composed of olive wood, in the Temple, is an illustration of the fact that they are filled with God's Spirit, which olive oil is a type of. But they are not called olive "trees."

However, men who are filled with God's Spirit ARE compared to "olive trees" in Scripture! Notice! David declares, "But I am *like a GREEN OLIVE TREE in the house of God*: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever" (Psalm 52:8).

God also says of the righteous, that their "children are like *olive plants* round about thy table" (Psal.128:3). Israel, God's people, are also compared to an olive plant. God says through Jeremiah the prophet, "The LORD called thy name, *a green olive tree*, fair, and of goodly fruit" (Jer.11:16). And speaking of Israel after Christ returns, Hosea the prophet declares, "His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be *as the olive tree*, and his smell as Lebanon" (Hos.14:6).

Who could these two men be? Why are they called "sons of oil"?

### ***Men Like Moses and Aaron***

This means that like Elijah and Elisha, they will be given a DOUBLE-PORTION of the Spirit of God, which will manifest itself in the mighty miracles and wonders which God will give them POWER to perform, according to His will and direction -- just as Moses and Aaron were led of God to prophesy and pour out mighty plagues upon ancient Egypt to compel Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, so these two End-Time servants of God will prophesy plagues on the End-Time "New World Order" led by modern "Babylon the Great," the prophesied Kingdom of the Beast (Rev.13 and 17-18).

In spiritual power, they will be like Moses and Aaron, and Elijah and Elisha. One will be the leader, and the other will be working with him as his right-hand man -- even as Moses had precedence over Aaron, and Elijah had precedence over Elisha, but they were all used mightily by Almighty YEHOVAH, the Lord of heaven and earth!

Moses and Aaron brought a plague of turning waters into blood upon the Egyptians (Exodus 7:14-24). Even so, the two witnesses will turn the waters into blood in the kingdom of the Beast (Rev.11:6). This plague is described in Rev.16:

The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died. The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: 'You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve'" (Rev. 16:3-6).

God used Moses and Aaron to smite Egypt with nine plagues -- including turning water to blood, frogs, gnats, a plague on livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of all the Egyptian firstborn, which Jewish tradition tells us may have involved a seismic earthquake, in which only all the firstborn miraculously died (see Exodus 7-12). The End-Time plagues which will be poured out on the kingdom of the Beast are listed in Revelation 16. These are the major earth-wrenching plagues which the two witnesses of God will announce and prophesy! They include seven horrendous plagues -- ugly and painful sores upon men (Rev.16:2), waters turned to blood (verses 3-6), scorching, intense heat from the sun (verses 8- 9), incredible darkness (vs.10-11), drought and diversion of the Euphrates river (vs.12-16), preparing the world for Armageddon -- and a horrendous hail storm and earthquake (vs.17-21), unlike anything the world has ever seen before or experienced!

Notice how similar these plagues are to the ones God inspired Moses and Aaron to proclaim!

### *Men Like Elijah and Elisha*

The fact that the two witnesses will be inspired of God to declare a great drought is directly connected with the power that God also gave to Elijah, who did the same thing! The apostle James wrote:

"Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:17-18).

The fact that fire will destroy all those who attempt to harm the two witnesses is directly reminiscent of Elijah and Elisha. We read that during the ministry of Elijah, when he sent a message to the king of Judah telling him that he was going to die, because he had consulted with the pagan god of healing, the god of flies, Baal-Zebub, instead of looking to the God of Israel for healing (II Kings 1:1-8), the king became angry and sent several platoons of soldiers to bring Elijah the Tishbite to him. We read the awesome account:

"Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, 'Man of God, the king says, "Come down!'" Elijah answered the captain, 'If I am a man of God, may FIRE come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!' Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men.

"At this time, the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, 'Man of God, this is what the king says, "Come down at once!'" 'If I am a man of God, Elijah replied, 'may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!' Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

"So, the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. 'Man of God,' he begged, 'please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!'

"The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, 'Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.' So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king. He told the king, 'This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!' So he died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken" (II Kings 1:9-17).

Elisha was called of God to be Elijah's assistant. He was not somebody whom Elijah selected but a man whom God Himself picked (I Kings 19:15-21). When the time came that God was going to remove Elijah from the scene, to take him up in a whirlwind (II Kings 2:1), Elisha traveled with him, refusing to leave his side. They journeyed first to Bethel (vs.1-2), then to Jericho (vs.3-4), and then to the Jordan river (vs.5-6). They crossed the Jordan, as Elijah struck the river with his cloak or mantle, and the waters of the river parted, forming a dry path for them to walk across (v.8). At this point, Elijah asked Elisha what it was that he wanted. Notice:

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?' 'Let me inherit a DOUBLE PORTION of your spirit,' Elisha replied. 'You have asked a difficult thing,' Elijah said, 'yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours -- otherwise not.'

"As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and called out, 'My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!' And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. 'Where now is YEHOVAH, the God of Elijah?' he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

"The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, 'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha'" (II Kings 2:9-15).

### *Men with a Double Portion of God's Spirit*

The two end-time witnesses of God, described in the book of Revelation, will, like Elijah and Elisha, work together, and both of them will be filled with a double portion of the Spirit of God, and will do the works and miracles which are similar to those God used Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, to do, during their lifetimes. These great works will be necessary, as this End-Time is a time which is sunk into deep depravity, apostasy, and wickedness, and the world has forgotten the existence and the power of the true God of Israel! God called Moses and Aaron during a time when His people were mired in captivity in Egypt, with virtually all hope gone -- a time of great apostasy.

God then called Elijah and Elisha during another time when the truth of God was on the verge of being eclipsed and lost forever, as paganism swept over the land and awesome apostasy spread everywhere, and true servants of God were being martyred and hunted down by wicked king Ahab and his wife, and then their descendants (I Kings 17-19). It was a time of terrible tribulation for the saints of God. Queen Jezebel was on a killing rampage, as she sought to slay ALL the prophets of the Lord whom she could find in the land (I Kings 18:4, 13). To keep the forces of apostasy from conquering, and overrunning the land completely, God raised up His servants the prophets. That is why He raised up Elijah, and Elisha, to be a WITNESS to that generation!

### *The End-Time State of Affairs*

Similarly, this End-Time will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" prophesied by Jeremiah (30:7), Daniel (12:1), and Jesus Christ Himself. It also is a time of tremendous apostasy and departure from the truths of God, with every form of false prophet rising up to proclaim his own "ideas" and "interpretations," today! These things will culminate in tremendous warfare and great distress among nations -- the worst time of trouble the world has ever known.

Jesus Christ foretold:

*"For then will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Matt.24:21-22).*

It will be a time of awesome martyrdom of true saints, Israelites, and Christians who refuse to accept the mark of the Beast and to be identified with his system. The apostle John foretells in the book of Revelation, speaking of these End-Times:

*"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of the FELLOW SERVANTS and BROTHERS who were to be KILLED AS THEY HAD BEEN was completed" (Rev.6:9-11).*

Notice! The preaching of the two witnesses will be during the time when the BEAST has control over the earth, and is ruling over Jerusalem. During this time Temple worship will be restored (Rev.11:1-2). But the rest of the city of Jerusalem will be given over to the Gentiles for 42 months (v.2). This is the period when the Beast will reign (Rev.13:4-5). *This represents the final 3 and 1/2-year period of the final WEEK of Daniel 9:27!* This is the period of time covered by fifth, sixth, and seventh seals of the book of Revelation (Rev.6:9-17).

The fifth seal refers to the Great Tribulation (Rev.6:9-11). This Great Tribulation is instigated by the Beast himself while he is in authority! (Rev.13:6-8). The fifth seal is followed by "heavenly signs" (Rev.6:12) of the sixth seal. And these introduce the seventh seal, which is composed of the seven last trumpets (Rev.8:1-2). During the sixth seal, the 144,000 servants of God are sealed in the foreheads -- meaning they are given God's protection and spared from the wrath of God yet to come. They have repented and turned to God during the Great Tribulation, and have come "out" of it (Rev.7:1-4, especially verse 14). The fact that they are "sealed" means they will be protected -- come under God's mark or sealing (compare Ezek.9:1-6). Only those who are "sealed" or "marked" will come under God's protection (Ezek.9:4).

The final and seventh seal, then, is opened, containing the seven trumpets which pour out the wrath of God on the earth, as opposed to the wrath of Satan on the church of God and God's nations, during the Great Tribulation. Jesus Christ tells us that the heavenly signs (sixth seal) occur after the great tribulation (Matt.24:29-30), whereas the prophet Joel tells us these heavenly signs precede the day of the Lord (Joel 2:31-32).

The whole period of great tribulation through the wrath of God is to last a prophesied 42 months (Rev.13:5) -- the period that the BEAST is in power, and who pours out the tribulation!

*Therefore, contrary to the theory that the two witnesses only prophecy during the "second woe," the truth is that they prophecy during the fifth, sixth and seventh seals of Revelation -- beginning with the time of the great tribulation, lasting about 2 and 1/2 years (Hos.6:1-2), through the heavenly signs, and the final "day of the Lord" -- a period of about one year in length (a "day" equals a "year" so the "Day of the Lord" in this instance lasts one year in actual fulfillment!) -- a total, then, of 3 and 1/2 years!*

It is ludicrous to think that the two witnesses only preach during the "second woe" and that the second "woe" itself lasts 3 and 1/2 years. The second woe does not represent the Beast causing persecution of God's people. It foretells an invasion of the Beast power by the hordes of Asia at the closing months of the "Day of the Lord" (Rev.9:13-16). They must cross the Euphrates river in order to reach Palestine, where the final "SHOWDOWN" for world supremacy will occur (Rev.16:12-16). This is not the whole period of the witnessing of God's two appointed servants!

Yet those who claim the two witnesses will be two archangels -- possibly Michael and

Gabriel -- also claim that the final 3 1/2 year reign of the Beast is AFTER the two witnesses are killed -- AFTER the "second woe." They put the reign of the "Beast" as being commensurate with the "third woe" or "seventh seal."

But does this make any sense? Will the "Beast" or King of the North DEFEAT the two hundred million man army coming from Asia? This is preposterous! Rather, ALL the world's armies will converge at a place in Israel called "Armageddon" or "Har Megiddo" -- just north of Jerusalem about forty miles -- and then the battle for world control will be fought, as the world fights against Christ and HIS returning armies from heaven!

It is also ludicrous to think that the seventh trumpet (third woe) itself will last an additional 3 1/2 years, AFTER the two witnesses prophecy, and AFTER the second woe occurs, and that the reign of the Beast will begin at this! What? The "seventh angel" sounds his trumpet -- and that is supposed to introduce a *final three and one half years when the "Beast" rules*? Is that what the book of Revelation says?

Let's get this right -- once and for all! Let's *really* understand!

### ***The Seventh Trumpet Blows . . .***

What occurs at the seventh trumpet? Does it inaugurate the final 3 1/2 year reign of the "Beast"? Nonsense! Notice!

"And the seventh trumpet sounded: and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world ARE BECOME the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. . .

"And the nations were angry, and THY WRATH is come, and the TIME OF THE DEAD, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give REWARD unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev.11:15-18).

In plain English, when the seventh trumpet sounds, *that is when Christ returns, and takes over the kingdoms of this world, and JUDGES mankind!* The seventh trumpet *inaugurates the coming of Christ and heralds the Messianic kingdom -- not the kingdom of the Beast!*

In plain language, the apostle Paul explains, "Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, *IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, AT THE LAST TRUMP: FOR THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND, AND THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE, and we shall be CHANGED*" (1Cor.15:51-52).

Notice! Christ comes WHEN the trumpet sounds -- the seventh or LAST trumpet -- NOT 3 and 1/2 years *later!* "For the Lord himself shall *DESCEND FROM HEAVEN, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the TRUMP [TRUMPET] OF GOD: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the AIR; and so shall we ever be with the Lord*" (1Thess.4:16-17).

The great trumpet blows WHEN the Messiah returns -- not 3 1/2 years earlier! "And he shall send his angels WITH the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect . . ." (Matthew 24:30-31). The angels come with Christ, at His coming (Rev.19:11-14) -- not 3 1/2 years before His coming!

### ***End-Time Apostasy and Great Tribulation***

During the next few years, we are going to see and experience the end-time prophecies of God's Word fulfilled in stark reality -- living color. The martyrdom of saints has already begun in some parts of the world! The day is coming when all who will not receive the "mark of the Beast" and join in with this final apostate church-state system will be hunted down, and those who are caught will be punished, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death! God says of the Church-State system that is coming soon:

"He was given power to give breath to the IMAGE of the beast [the Church which is structured in the very image of the Roman/Babylonian Empire], so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image of the beast [the Roman Catholic Church system!] TO BE KILLED. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark . . ." (Rev.13:15-17).

It is during such a time of religious nadir, when the light of truth has all but been stamped out, and apostasy is rampant and rife everywhere, and true servants of God are in grave danger of losing their salvation because of apostasy, spiritual lethargy, compromise, and loss of true spiritual values, that God will RAISE UP two witnesses, filled with His Spirit, to bear witness to the truth of God! They will remind the people of Israel of THE COVENANT God wants to make with His people -- the true NEW COVENANT, based on His laws and commandments and promises!

The two witnesses will preach with power and authority, and will preach the truth of God which has been lost and buried and hidden from view for centuries and millennia! They will be a "witness" to both Jews and Gentiles alike -- to both Orthodox Jews, who deny the Messiah, and to professing "Christians," who deny the real Christ! All will be urged to repent of their blindness, their darkness, and their hypocrisy and deceit, and to turn to God with humble hearts and humbled minds, willing to be corrected.

### ***The End-Time Role of Elijah***

Isaiah prophesied of God's end-time Work:

"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD [YEHOVAH]; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:3-5).

Before the first coming of the Messiah, God sent John the Baptist to announce His coming and to prepare the way before Him. As an angel of God said to Zecharias, the father of John the Baptist, 1900 years ago, concerning the future ministry of his son:

"Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous -- to make READY a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:16-17).

The father of John the Baptist later said under divine inspiration of his son:

"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:76-79).

In addition to the two witnesses of Revelation, the Word of God speaks of an end-time servant of God who will fulfill the role of the "Elijah to come." He would be an individual whom God will use to RESTORE MUCH OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, during this final end-time age, before the second coming of the Messiah! He could be one of the two witnesses -- the one in overall charge -- like Moses or Elijah. If he is one of the two witnesses, then the second witness would be a man similar to Aaron or Elisha.

The "Elijah to come" will proclaim the truth of God, and his message will help prepare a people to MEET THE RETURNING CHRIST at His coming! He will be instrumental in preparing the end-time Church of God to GET READY to meet Christ, and to be ready to MARRY the Lamb (Rev.19:7). He will be a "*voice in the wilderness*," rebuking God's people for their sins, WARNING them of the urgent need to repent, to seek their God, NOW, while there is still time, and to DRAW NIGH to God, and to KEEP His commandments, and to remain FAITHFUL over the remaining years, till the Messiah comes!

During this End-Time, God will raise up a prophet, who will come in the Spirit and power of Elijah, and restore to the people of God the TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION! His message will cut through the cobwebs of error, and rebuke the high and the mighty, and reprove for sin and iniquity, and RESTORE THE TRUTH OF GOD!

Like John the Baptist, he will come in the power and spirit of the Lord, as a modern-day, end-time prophet of the Most High God. God Himself has selected and prepared him for this calling and office in His sight. He has taught and trained him, and will continue to do so, to fulfill his role and calling during the Great Tribulation and soon-coming Day of the LORD!

The word of God says:

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children,

and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse [Hebrew, utter destruction]" (Malachi 4:5-6).

This man of God, a servant of the Most High, cannot be an *unconverted* man -- he must be a man who is filled with the Spirit of God. Nor can the two witnesses be unconverted men. At some point, they must become converted, and become strong believers in the Messiah Yeshua. One of them, in the role of "Joshua the High Priest," will have to repent of much sin and spiritual baggage, in order to fulfill his role -- much as the apostle Paul had to repent of his terrible sins of persecuting the church of God, before he could be used of God as an apostle.

Nor can this prophesy refer to angelic beings, disguised as "men." Rather, these two servants of God must be true believers in the Messiah, men who know Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Messiah, men who possess the Spirit of God as a begettal, having repented of their sins, men who obey the laws of God (Acts 2:38; 5:32). The apostle Paul wrote, "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom.8:9).

They must know their Lord and Messiah, Jesus Christ, Yeshua Ha Mashiach, and their own personal Lord and Master and Savior and Redeemer. They must be men who have grown through personal trials and tests, difficulties and dilemmas, so that when the time comes they have been prepared spiritually for the task God will have them to do. They must be mature, men of faith and strong conviction -- not Laodicean Christians who are lukewarm, miserable, blind and naked spiritually (Rev.3:14-22). The indication is that they must be men of love and warmth, men who know the love of God, and who are truly "Philadelphian" Christians (Rev.3:7-13), men to whom God says:

"See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have NOT DENIED MY NAME. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars -- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3: 8-13).

Are these two men living today? Of course they are. Are they serving God at this very moment? Of course they are. God is no doubt right now preparing them, testing and trying them, and training them, in His own inimitable style and method, to get them ready for the work they must do during the three and one half years of Great Tribulation, which leads right into the awesome and dreadful "Day of the Lord," which will usher in the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom of God!

Yet, judging from the reaction of the world's population when they are finally killed after

witnessing for 3 and 1/2 years, their message -- despite the powerful miracles -- *will not be believed by the overwhelming vast majority of people! Most will REFUSE to repent! Nevertheless, the REMNANT will begin to listen, take heed, and repent, and turn to God -- even in the midst of great tribulation!*

***Stay Alert – The Day of Messiah is at Hand!***

What does all this mean? Simply this. Truly, the coming of the Messiah is at hand. Although we cannot know for certain the “day” or “hour” or “year” of the Messiah’s coming, we CAN know that He is close at hand – and His coming will be very SOON, and VERY SUDDENLY! The day of the Messiah is FAST APPROACHING. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is just around the corner!

People may laugh, and ridicule, and reproach, and disbelieve the truth. But the truth will win out. God's Word will be fulfilled. His prophecies will come to pass -- right on schedule!

As Yeshua Ha Moshiach Himself declared:

“Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour” (Matt.24: 42-44, NRSV).

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **BEWARE, KEEP ALERT;** *for you do not know WHEN the time will come.* It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be ON THE WATCH. *Therefore, KEEP AWAKE* – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes SUDDENLY. *And what I say to you I say to all: KEEP AWAKE*” (Mark 13:32-37, NRSV).

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD, O ISRAEL! Prepare to meet your Savior, O End-Time Church of God!