

## Revelation 11:3-6

### "Radical Witnessing"

Even in wrath, our God remembers mercy... We've come to realize that though this book is all about the *consummation* of all things & the ultimate *revelation* of J.C. that before Jesus takes His rightful place in ruling the earth *physically*, God will judge this world that has rejected Him (*collectively*) as Lord & has echoed (in their hearts) the same resolve today that was made in His day, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). As we've made mention before if you will not receive God's gracious offer of *salvation*, all that is left is to be subjected to His righteous *indignation*.

Yet for all of that even in the midst of His judgment, God goes to great lengths to evangelize the lost, to reach out to man & give him the opportunity to turn from his sin & trust in Jesus. We've noted along the way dramatic pauses in judgment; a moment of reprieve (so to speak) that man might reflect on his life, repent of his sin & turn to Christ. But more often than not man choose to harden himself *in* his sin rather than turning *from* his sin. We've seen 144,000 men, 12,000 of each of the 12 tribes of Israel, sealed and sent into all the world w/what would seem to be the express purpose of evangelism. In a few Ch's we'll even see an angel from heaven flying around the world preaching the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, tongue & people. God does not desire that any should perish; but that man would turn from his wicked ways & live...

Here in the Ch before us we have 2 *more* interesting fellas that will show up on the scene & testify to the truth of God's word, the Lordship of J.C. & the need to turn from your sin & trust in Him... There are *many* interesting/fascinating characters found throughout the book of Revelation & these 2 (the 2 witnesses of Revelation 11) rank right up there w/the most intriguing of them all...

John has just been instructed to measure the temple (that will be rebuilt in Jerusalem during this time) the altar & those who worship there. But he was told to leave out the court which is outside the temple & not to measure it, "for it has been given to the Gentiles". And they will tread the holy city underfoot for 42 months, or 3 ½ yrs (probably the last 3 ½ yrs after the A.C. breaks the covenant that he makes w/Israel & pours out his fury in both an unparalleled & unrelenting fashion upon the Jews. Now, turn your attention to Vs 3.

### Vs 3-6

Well this is certainly a section of scripture that is teeming w/intrigue & creates all kinds of questions ☺!

God will bring 2 men into the equation of the Great Tribulation who will *testify* of His truth & *toast* those who try to stand in their way! We note their # & the name ascribed to them, the number of them is 2 & the name placed on them is “witnesses”. Why are there 2 of them? Well, because these 2 will be witnesses & God has ordained that 2 be the # that would establish a testimony. We read in Deut 19, “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.”<sup>1</sup> Paul echoes that same truth in the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor where he says, “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”<sup>2</sup> And God will be establishing His word, His testimony through these 2 guys at this time.

3 things leap to our attention about their ministry straight out of the gate here in Vs 3; #1 It's a *powerful* ministry #2 it's a *prophetic* ministry & #3 it's a *penitent* ministry. These guys will come onto the scene & they'll be “kickin it old school” in the form & fashion of 2 OT prophets straight out of the pages of scripture.

Their ministry will be *penitent*. That is, they'll be dressed in sackcloth, the garb of the individual who is under great sorrow or stress, one who recognizes the need for repentance & illustrates that through their choice of fashion. These 2 men will be calling people to repentance, to turn from their sin, to trust in J.C. for the forgiveness of sin & the promise of everlasting life.

Their ministry will be *prophetic*. They will prophesy throughout the duration of their ministry. Now when I use the word “prophesy” you may be prone to think of someone telling the future (& certainly the foretelling of events can be included in *prophecy*). However the word literally means to simply “say publicly” or to “declare openly”. So more than foretelling the future the idea behind prophesying is to *bring forth* the word of God. So though these guys may certainly tell people what's coming down the prophetic pike in the sense of telling the future, more than not they'll be preaching & proclaiming the word of God, (again, repentance of sin & remission [forgiveness of sin] found in Christ.)

We also note that their ministry will be *powerful*. God says, “I will give them power”. Which means they'll be empowered to back up everything that they proclaim, their not all bark & no bite. They'll *bring it* & they'll *back it up*! Make sense?

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Dt 19:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (2 Co 13:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As a matter of fact they'll be so effective, their power will be so potent that even in the face of great antagonism & ill will no one will be able to even touch them & when someone tries to harm them fire proceeds from their mouths & devours them!!!

Now there is a sense in which "fire from one's mouth" can be understood as the word of God. For instance we read in Jeremiah where God says, "Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them."<sup>3</sup> And again, "Is not My word like a fire?" says the Lord, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'"<sup>4</sup> However it seems to me that in this particular passage "fire" means "fire"; because we read in Vs 5 that it's the manner in which those who try to harm them will be *killed*. (Now when it comes to your relationship w/the Lord, this is not the kind of "on fire" you wanna be ☺!)

These guys will be unstoppable, immovable & invulnerable until God is finished w/them (more on that next week). Their ministry will be one of power. However there is one more word that we need to ascribe to Vs 3 that we haven't yet, any guesses? It's the word, "parameters". **Their ministry is powerful, prophetic & penitent, yet it's been couched in some parameters, parameters of time, 1,260 days. Or 3 ½ yrs according to the 360 day yr (according to the Babylonian calendar) that John & Daniel was using when they uttered these prophecies. These guys will be unstoppable & untouchable for 3 ½ yrs.**

The question comes up, which 3 ½ yrs will these 2 witnesses be prophesying? Will it be during the 1<sup>st</sup> or the last 3 ½ yr period of the Great Tribulation? There are great people who see it either way, to me it makes more sense to place them in the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 ½ yrs recognizing from Vs 2 that Gentiles will trample Jerusalem underfoot for 42 months (or 3 ½ yrs) after the abomination which causes desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place. **Which is to say, 3 ½ yrs into the 7 yr covenant that the A.C. will make w/Israel he will break the covenant, stand in the holy place of the temple, declare himself to be God, demand to be worshiped as God at which time it would make sense to me that he will kill these 2 witnesses (as we'll see next week) & then unparalleled persecution will ensue.**

But will give them power. He gives us a picture of that power in Vs 4 where He says, "These are the 2 olive trees & the 2 lampstands standing before the God of the earth." ... Btw I'd like to point out to you that the book of Rev is w/out a doubt the single most OT book of the entire NT!

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [Je 5:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [Je 23:29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

If John ate a scroll in the book of Rev (which he did) than you can count on the fact that a prophet ate a scroll in the OT (I'll leave it to you to search out who it was). If John measured a temple in the book of Rev, than you can count on the fact that prophet measured a temple in the OT. [Here in reference to these 2 prophets we read where they are the 2 olive trees and 2 lampstands standing b4 the God of the earth... If you have any questions on the origins of this picture let me help you out, it's found in the OT ☺!](#)

It's found in Zech Ch 4. There you'll find Zechariah being awoken by an angel granting him a vision. The angel says, "What do you see?" He says, "I see a lampstand of solid gold w/a bowl on top of it, & it has 7 lamps (it was a menorah) and 7 pipes that lead to the 7 lamps." He continued on, "There are 2 olive trees beside it, 1 to the right & the other to the left." **What he saw was the olive trees (in essence) plumbed into the lampstands providing a nonstop supply of olive oil to the lamps so that they could keep burning bright. Now typically it was the work of the priest to keep fresh oil in the lampstands, but these had a direct line... Zechariah said, "Pre-tell, what is it?" The angel said, "You don't know" He said, "No, I don't know." The angel said, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts."**<sup>5</sup> You say, "Who's Zerubbabel?" He was the governor of Israel at the time who was responsible for the daunting task (along w/Joshua the high-priest) of re-establishing Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. **It was a monumental undertaking & overwhelming to say the least, & it wouldn't happen by his ingenuity, or his leadership savvy, not by the peoples ability collectively, or by his strength personally, but through the person & power of the Holy Spirit exclusively.**

You see God had ordained that Israel was to be a light in an otherwise dark world (hence the lampstand) & He would supply them w/the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the task to which He had called them (hence the olive trees & constant supply of olive oil [the oil in scripture being a picture of the Person & power of the Holy Spirit]). **God's work will always & only be accomplished through God's means; the means that He employs is the anointing, the empowering, the granting of the Person & power of the Holy Spirit moving in & through a person's life. Now men might do the labor, but God does the work.**

Zechariah continued saying, "What are these 2 olive trees?" The angels said, "You don't know?" He said, "No, I don't know."

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 (Zec 4:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The angel said, *"These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."*<sup>6</sup> Now we've mentioned before that scripture only has 1 interpretation, it only means what it means. But it has manifold application. The initial application of this Vs was to Joshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel the governor of the line of David. The 2 that God had called to be responsible for this incredible work against unbelievable odds.

Now here in Rev Ch 11 God says that these 2 witnesses are the 2 lampstands & olive trees who stand before the God of the earth. Which is to say that God has called them to an incredible work against unbelievable odds; but His calling is His equipping, His enlisting is His enabling. They won't accomplish the work through their efforts, their might nor their power, but by the Spirit of God. They will have a never ending, always filling & overflowing supply of the anointing & the ability of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives.

Ok, God has a plan for you. He has a purpose to which you've been called. How is it that He will accomplish that work in your life? Because you're blessed financially? Because you're real smart intellectually? Will it be through a group effort collectively? No, No, a 1,000 times No. It will happen through His Spirit flowing into & out through your life & no other way. It's not by might, it's not by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts. The only way we will ever be an effective witness for the Lord is through the continual supply of His Spirit flowing into & out through our lives.

Now as it pertains to Vs 5 the question is asked, "Will literal fire come from these guys mouths like some kind of comic book hero type super power, or is it more like they'll call fire down from heaven & their enemies will be consumed in that fashion?" I don't know. It doesn't say they'll call fire down from heaven, it says fire proceeds from their mouths. However if that's too fanciful for you & you need to see them as calling fire down from heaven I suppose that's ok. The point remains, no one will touch them & those who try they will toast! "He *must be* killed in this manner."

## Vs 6

So their ministry is powerful, prophetic, penitent...they preach the word, demonstrate & illustrate repentance, they're supplied by the power of the Holy Spirit, their enemies are consumed by fire that proceeds from their mouths & they can manifest miracles at will. Or to understand all that another way, these guys are *radical witnesses!*

<sup>6</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 [Zec 4:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Twice in Vs 6 we're told that they have power & we're told that they can invoke the power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles & strike the earth w/every conceivable plague as often as they desire...

So again I say, they're not all bark & no bite. They back up what they bring to the table. They preach God's word, then if they so desire they can perform these miraculous signs to undergird their message or to somehow warn the wicked or whatever.

To me this is incredible because most of us God can't even trust w/a nominal amount of money much less unlimited miraculous manifestations as often as we desire!

Ok, I know the question on many of your minds & you're wondering if I'm going to broach the topic of I.D.ing these 2 men who've been placed under God's witness protection program.

2 Things w/that; #1 let's concede right now that we don't know (nor will we know this side of heaven) who these 2 men are. If it were incredibly important that we know God would've told us. But for whatever reason He opted to leave their proper names out of the equation which leaves only speculation & drives commentators up the wall. Which leads to #2 & that is this, any conclusions we draw are at best guess work. Some theories have greater credence than others but the truth of the matter is that we can only guess.

For the sake of time we'll narrow it down to the top few speculations. As people look at the abilities that are granted them & that they employ, the 2 fellas that surface most readily to the top of our minds & seem to make the most sense (if God is indeed "kickin it old school") is Moses & Elijah.

There are a # of details that would lead one to this conclusion. For instance we know that Elijah called fire from heaven on more than a few occasions & devoured his enemies accordingly (2 Kings 1). It's also interesting as you read 1<sup>st</sup> Kings you discover that Elijah was fond of saying, "As the Lord of hosts lives, *before whom I stand*," & cross referencing that to Vs 4 of Rev 11 we see that these two are the 2 lampstands & olive trees who *stand before the God of the earth*... Elijah also prayed and shut the windows of heaven so that it didn't rain on the earth for how long? According to James 5:17 it didn't rain for 3 ½ yrs... interesting... Plus the bible says clearly, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 (Mal 4:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



Of course as we survey the plagues that they utilize, water to blood & the verbiage of “all plagues” we can’t help but think of Moses. Then when you realize that when Jesus was on the Mt of Transfiguration we discover that He was speaking to 2 fellas in His glorified state, their names were... Moses & Elijah...Combine that w/the information found in Jude 9 that Michael the archangel contended w/Satan over the body of Moses after Moses died (perhaps because God would have further purpose for him at another date) & it all begins to get real interesting. Fairly concrete in my opinion as pertains to the thought of God using OT prophets... We have a testimony (if you will) from both the law & the prophets.

Now some will contend: “Wait a minute!” they say. The bible says, *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,”*<sup>8</sup> therefore it can’t be Moses because he died, but Elijah didn’t physically die, he was raptured, he was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. *So he can come back but Moses can’t. The only other fella that didn’t die in the bible was Enoch who walked w/God & was not for God took him. Therefore it must be Moses & Enoch. To which I say; in reality that’s not necessary at all, here’s why.*

The idea of man being appointed to die once is a biblical principle, not a biblical law. How do we know this? Because we see exceptions all over the scriptures, Elijah raised a widow’s son from the dead (which means he had to die twice), Jesus raised more than 1 person from the dead, Paul the apostle raised a man from the dead, Peter raised a woman from the dead. *So if it’s possible only to die once then these people have a problem. But beyond that not everyone will die, there will be a generation who doesn’t taste death at all but will be translated at the rapture of the church. So some people die twice, some will never die. But we recognize those are by and large the exception, the rule is we die once & then the judgment.* A more appropriate application of that verse would be to say that the bible does not support the idea of reincarnation. We get one shot at life (everyone in scripture who was raised from the dead came back in their same body), after this life, there is no reincarnation, it’s judgment.

*So there really is no biblical rationale to toss Enoch in the ring, but there are those who do & I suppose it’s plausible, but to me not probable.*

The *final* thought I’ll present on the matter is that it may not be an OT prophet at all but rather two men whom God ordains at that time to fulfill this office. Two men who will minister in the spirit & power of Moses & Elijah.

<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*, 1982 (Heb 9:27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Perhaps you remember when Jesus was speaking about J.B. who had been thrown in prison. John being the one who was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah & Jesus said of him, "If you're willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come." Meaning that he technically fulfilled to promise there in Malachi concerning the sending of Elijah because John ministered in the spirit & power of Elijah.

Even so, these 2 men could be men who minister in the spirit & power of Moses & Elijah but it's not necessary that they be OT prophets at all.

What's necessary is that they be radical witnesses for J.C. & that they will fulfill. Even so God desires that we be radical witnesses for Him as well. **Oh, we may not manifest miracles at will, but certainly we can model repentance, speak God's word to the people around us, point people to Jesus & be conduits through whom the Holy Spirit flows into & out through, shining as lights in an otherwise dark world, amen? Amen.**

Prayer Points:

Father that's our prayer, open us up & clean us out that You might flow unobstructed into & out through our lives by the Person & power of Your Holy Spirit. Lord we want to learn the meaning of "Radical Witness" & exemplify that in our lives. God help us to humble ourselves & decrease, that you might increase in our lives. Heal marriages, break chains of addiction, give us hearts of repentance & ready obedience to Your word. Cause our light to so shine that people might see what's going on in our lives & give You glory.

God will give power to His witnesses. We can't do His work apart from His power. But before you can receive His power, He needs to have your heart. The message is one of repentance toward God & faith toward Jesus Christ. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved. Jesus was crucified for our transgressions & raised for our justification. You can be forgiven of all your sin & justified in the sight of God through faith in J.C. If you're ready to turn from your sin & trust in Jesus than do it now, give to God your heart.