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#30 The Two Witnesses

"And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them" (Revelation 11:3-12).

This passage cannot be understood unless one has a vested interest in the customs and culture of the Jewish people. Jewish Law demands two witnesses give competent evidence concerning matters of the Law, religion, or the dealings of men with one another.

"On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness" (Deut. 17:6).

"A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed" (Deut. 19:15).

Take a look at these New Testament verses:

"But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED" (Matthew 18:16).

"This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

"Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Hebrews 10:28).

Do you remember the two angels who were in Jesus' tomb the morning of his resurrection, stated in John 20:12? How about the two "men" who appeared to the disciples at the Lord's Ascension, in Acts 1:10? One of my favorites is the seventy who were sent out two by two

(Luke 10:1). Now, in Revelation 11, is the narrative about the two witnesses. God is obviously in the habit of requiring TWO witnesses at His Life events.

"And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth" (Revelation 11:3).

Any guesses who these two witnesses are? Scholars have been arguing over this for centuries! And I must say – what a waste of breath. By embracing the vested interest in the customs and cultures of the Hebrew lineage, we can be certain who they are. Hebrews 9:27 shows us:

"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

This leads us to two men of God who did not die a mortal death. All living humans must go through three (3) deaths – spiritual death (born into sin), physical death, and final death (Hell), *unless* they have become "born-again." Christians, on the other hand, experience only two (2) deaths: spiritual (born into sin) and physical death. (Some consider that Christians experience a third death, by "coming to the end of one's self" – being co-crucified with Christ.) This is a very important piece of theology for all believers to understand. For if a person does not understand and embrace this Truth, there is no way one can understand what the "Two Witnesses" in Revelation is all about.

Since the above is Truth, we can now look to the Book of Life to look who did not experience physical death – for even Christ was required to go through all three (3) deaths. Now, who are those listed to be temporarily removed from experiencing physical death, but MUST come back to finish the Three Baptisms of Death? It certainly is not Moses (the ever-so-popular Moses theory)! The Scriptures are clear regarding Moses' death.

"Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death" (Deuteronomy 33:1).

"Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying 'Moses My servant is dead...'" (Joshua 1:1-2, emphasis added).

Even though the evidence is overbearing regarding Moses' death, scholars continue to embarrass themselves with this "half-baked" theory. This leads us to the conclusion that since Enoch and Elijah were the only two men to leave this world without going through the baptism of physical death, they must be the two witnesses. Hebrew Law requires ALL of mankind to go through physical death - for no man can inherit their glorified body until this event occurs.

Enoch, for example, lived in the cold dark moments just before the judgment of God came upon the earth through the FLOOD. He walked with God and according to a chosen day, within those horrific days, he went home to be with God, the Father – without physically dying. He is the first living story of the parallel of the Rapture. Just as in those days, God was about to "clear the air" so to speak. He, God, was about to baptize the earth with water. Just as mankind must experience three baptisms, so must the earth - water (flood), spirit (Christ), and fire (final judgment). Soon, the day will be upon the earth when God will come to purify the earth through fire. When that time comes upon us, He will remove His existing children through the Rapture – just like he did with Enoch. Now we must look at the question regarding the physical death of the raptured. Are the Christians of that day going to die physically when they are raptured? No doubt! We do not understand the abilities of God.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1Thess. 4:16b-17).

Followers of *The Left Behind Series* ®¹ have interpreted this passage to mean that their bodies will be taken – while the clothes will be left behind – just like in the movies. I am not convinced the Hollywood concept is correct. But I will say that it will be a sight to behold. No matter how we look at it, the human body being transformed into a heavenly body is going to be an unearthing moment.

There is no question that Elijah is the other witness. The Old Testament, as well as the Lord Jesus, reveals to us that Elijah will come again before the coming of Jesus in the power and great glory of the Lord. In Revelation 11:5 we discover:

“And if anyone wants to harm them (the two witnesses), fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way” (parentheses added for clarity).

In verse six, we find Elijah is further identified. The miraculous works described here are certainly supportive of the characteristics of this great prophet: he called fire down from heaven and shut up the heavens, so it rained not for three and one-half years during the reign of the wicked ruling Ahab. This 3 ½ years obviously parallels the second half of the reign of the Antichrist. Remember when Elijah appeared to Israel during one of the most horrific times in their history? This was when the nation departed from the Lord and all of His mandates under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. This was also when the mighty prophet acquired his nickname, “prophet of fire.”

In the final end-times, these two prophets of God provide the way of deliverance for the nation of Israel. By this time, the Jews will be gathered back into their homeland and the Lord’s Temple will have been rebuilt. Understand that the followers of the Gospel will be reduced down to a faithful few. Up to this point, Christians were always required by the Lord to “turn the other cheek” and not to use the sword in acts of revenge. During this period, the two witnesses will be calling on a different phase of the Gospel; one that most, if not all, emergent Christians will find quite strange – the destruction of men.

These two witnesses will have the power to destroy men; they will for certain destroy men with fire pouring from their mouths. Imagine this: two witnesses are commanded by God to fulfill every pre-assigned agenda item of the Lord, with permission to burn anyone who tries to stop them – dust to dust and ashes to ashes. These prophets will add a new definition to cremation. These two witnesses who will make “hellfire and damnation” preaching sound like two kids on a playground.

These men will be dressed in sackcloth (Hebrew dress communicating calamity and judgment). No limos, TV interviews, or any such worldly helps. Dressed in humility and judgment, they will open their mouths and rivers will turn to blood. Plagues of sores and diseases will be released because of them. The two of them will remind us of the time when Jeroboam’s hand was withered by the unnamed man of God (1 Kings 13:4), and of the time when fire from heaven destroyed the warriors of Ahaziah – who by the way, came to Elijah on the hill (2 Kings 1). These two men are handpicked by God to “kick off” the judgment of the living God. Because of these men’s preaching, the gates of Hell will be opened!

From the abyss will come a mysterious beast to whom Satan, himself, will give power - limited and permissible authority as his chosen agent – a “Prime Minister” or “World Chancellor,” of sorts. The Beast will do what he does best – blaspheme God, the Holy Temple/Tabernacle, and all that is holy. He will certainly have power to conduct “makeshift” miracles, causing the masses of the earth’s satanic “wannabes” to accept him as the “messiah.” This period will be so terrible that wars will rise up against God, righteousness, and anyone who displays acts of purity. Once the work is done with the two prophets, they will also be destroyed (physically that is) by this Beast.

Critical Note: All humans must experience a physical death. These two men (Enoch and Elijah) are the only two men in biblical history who did not die. Their deaths are planned by God.

¹ The Left Behind Series®. By Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House), 1995-2007.

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