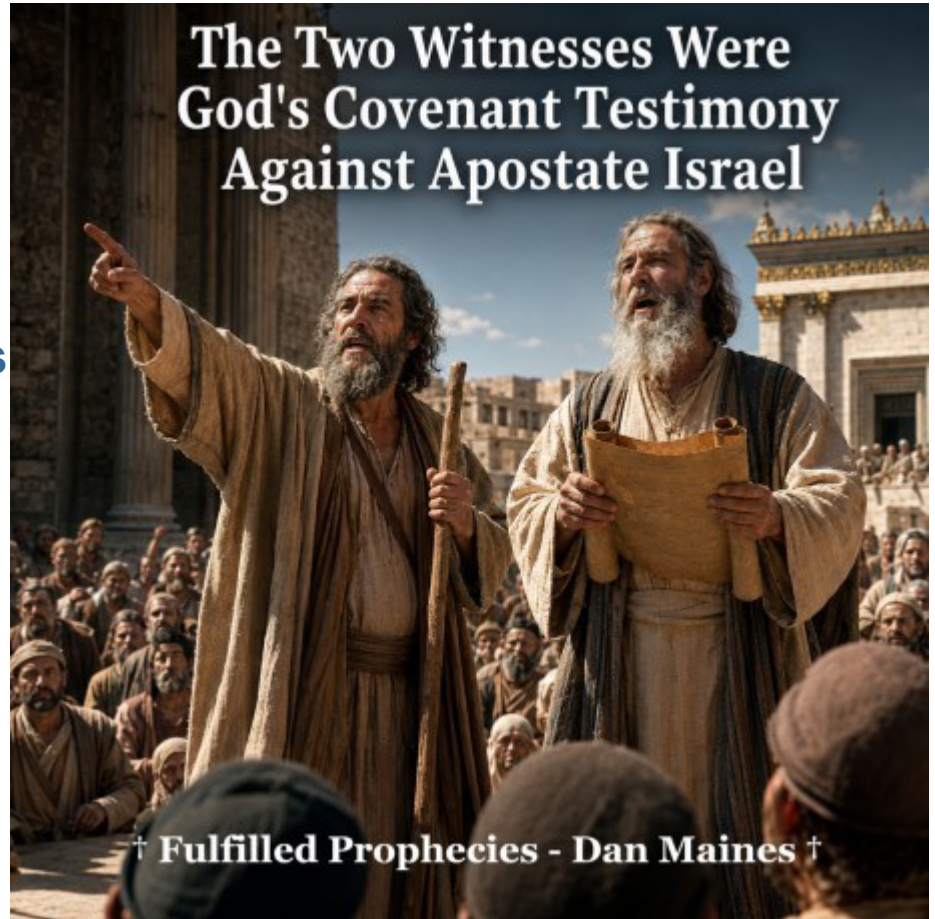


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## The Two Witnesses Were God's Covenant Testimony Against Apostate Israel



By Dan Maines

## The Two Witnesses Were God's Covenant Testimony Against Apostate Israel

### Introduction

† Revelation is one of the most symbolic books in Scripture. The dragon is symbolic. The beast is symbolic. The harlot is symbolic. The seven heads and ten horns are symbolic. The candlesticks are symbolic. Because Revelation is filled with symbolic imagery, we should not assume the Two Witnesses suddenly become two literal future individuals.

† The Two Witnesses appear during the last days of the Old

Covenant age as God's covenant testimony against apostate Israel. Their ministry, death, and vindication fit perfectly within the first-century setting of Revelation and the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem (Matthew 23:34-36; Luke 21:20-22).

† Throughout Scripture, God established truth through the testimony of two witnesses. The imagery of Revelation 11 points to God's covenant witness being proclaimed before the fall of Jerusalem, not to two miracle-working men appearing thousands of years later (Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17-18).

† Under the Law, every matter was established by the testimony of two witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15).

† Revelation presents two witnesses because God was bringing a covenant lawsuit against apostate Israel.

† Before judgment fell, God provided the required testimony against the nation just as His covenant required.

## **The Two Olive Trees And Two Candlesticks**

### **Revelation 11:3-4**

And I will grant authority 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 earth.

† The witnesses are immediately identified with symbolic imagery.

† They are called olive trees and candlesticks, language drawn directly from Zechariah's vision (Zechariah 4:2-14).

† The imagery of olive trees and lampstands did not originate in Revelation.

† John borrowed the imagery directly from Zechariah 4 where the olive trees symbolized God's anointed witness empowered by His Spirit.

† This strongly supports a symbolic interpretation rather than two future miracle workers.

† Revelation already defines lampstands as covenant communities rather than individual men (Revelation 1:20).

† Since the witnesses are called lampstands, the reader is expected to interpret them according to Revelation's own

symbolism.

† The book itself provides the key for understanding the imagery.

† Candlesticks in Revelation represent God's covenant people who bear His light and testimony in the world (Revelation 1:20).

† Olive trees symbolize God's anointed source of spiritual witness and testimony empowered by His Spirit (Zechariah 4:6; Romans 11:17-24).

† Nothing in the passage requires us to view the witnesses as two individual men. The language points instead to a corporate and covenantal testimony.

† The period of 1,260 days corresponds to the last days crisis leading to Jerusalem's destruction and appears repeatedly throughout Revelation's judgment context (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 12:6; Revelation 13:5).

## **The Witnesses Speak With Moses And Elijah Imagery Revelation 11:5-6**

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and 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.

† The power to shut heaven reflects Elijah's ministry when rain ceased in Israel (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17).

† The power to turn water into blood and strike with plagues reflects Moses and the judgments upon Egypt (Exodus 7:17-20).

† Revelation is presenting Moses and Elijah imagery, not necessarily Moses and Elijah literally returned to earth.

† Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets. Together they symbolize the complete covenant testimony of God against covenant-breaking Israel (Luke 16:29-31).

† The same Law and Prophets that testified of Christ also

testified against those who rejected Him (John 5:45-47).

## **The Beast Makes War Against The Witnesses**

### **Revelation 11:7**

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.

† God's covenant testimony appeared defeated as Jerusalem persecuted the prophets, Jesus, and the early church (Matthew 23:29-37).

† The beastly power of that generation opposed the gospel witness and sought to silence God's messengers (Acts 7:51-52).

† The death of the witnesses symbolizes the apparent defeat of God's testimony before divine judgment fell upon the city.

† Yet their testimony was completed exactly as God intended before judgment arrived (Matthew 24:14).

† Jesus declared that all the righteous blood shed upon the earth would come upon that generation (Matthew 23:35-36).

† The Two Witnesses stand as the final covenant testimony against the same generation Christ condemned.

† Their vindication parallels the vindication of all the prophets whom Jerusalem had rejected.

## **The Great City Where Their Lord Was Crucified**

### **Revelation 11:8**

And their dead bodies will lie on the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

† The location is clearly identified as Jerusalem because it is the city where the Lord was crucified.

† Jerusalem is spiritually called Sodom because of her corruption and Egypt because of her oppression and rebellion against God (Isaiah 1:10; Ezekiel 23:1-4).

† This verse anchors the prophecy firmly in a first-century covenant context rather than a distant future scenario.

† The focus of Revelation's judgment narrative continually

points toward apostate Jerusalem and her rejection of the Messiah (Matthew 23:37-38).

## **The Vindication Of The Witnesses**

### **Revelation 11:11-12**

And 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." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

† The witnesses were not ultimately defeated. God vindicated their testimony before all who opposed it.

† Their standing again reflects God's public vindication of His covenant witness (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

† Their ascension imagery echoes Christ's own vindication and exaltation (Acts 1:9; Revelation 12:5).

† The destruction of Jerusalem proved that God's witnesses had spoken the truth and that the covenant lawsuit against Israel had been upheld (Luke 21:22).

## **Historical References**

† Josephus recorded that Jerusalem became filled with bloodshed, famine, and devastation during the Jewish War, confirming the severity of the judgment foretold by Christ.

† Eusebius recorded that Christians remembered Jesus' warnings and fled before Jerusalem's destruction.

† Early Christian writers consistently viewed the fall of Jerusalem as a divine judgment upon the generation that rejected Christ and persecuted His witnesses.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† God's truth does not fail even when it appears rejected by the world (Isaiah 55:11).

† The church is still called to bear faithful witness regardless of opposition (Acts 1:8).

† God's people can trust that He will ultimately vindicate His

truth just as He vindicated His covenant witnesses (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

† The destruction of Jerusalem reminds us that God's warnings are real and His promises are certain (Luke 21:33).

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q: Who or what were the Two Witnesses, and why were there two of them?**

**A:** The Two Witnesses symbolized God's covenant testimony against apostate Israel during the last days of the Old Covenant age. They are described as olive trees and lampstands, imagery drawn from Zechariah 4 and Revelation 1, where God's Spirit-empowered witness and covenant people are symbolized. There were two witnesses because God's Law required the testimony of two witnesses to establish a matter. Before Jerusalem's judgment, God provided the covenant testimony required by His own Law (Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15; Zechariah 4:2-14; Revelation 1:20; Revelation 11:3-4).

**Q:** Were the Two Witnesses two future men who have not yet appeared?

**A:** The passage identifies them as olive trees and candlesticks, both symbolic images (Zechariah 4:2-14).

**Q:** Why do the witnesses have powers like Moses and Elijah?

**A:** Their powers intentionally echo Moses and Elijah because they symbolize God's covenant testimony through the Law and the Prophets (Exodus 7:17-20; 1 Kings 17:1; Luke 16:29-31).

**Q:** Could the Two Witnesses be Jesus Christ and Jesus ben Ananias?

**A:** No. Revelation identifies the witnesses as "two olive trees and the two candlesticks" (Revelation 11:4), which are symbolic images rather than personal names. Jesus Christ had already died, risen, and been exalted before Revelation was written. The witnesses are also portrayed as a unified covenant testimony carrying Moses and Elijah imagery, not as two specific historical individuals. While Jesus ben Ananias may provide an interesting historical parallel because he prophesied judgment upon Jerusalem before its fall, Revelation does not

identify either witness by name and instead presents them symbolically. The focus is on God's covenant witness against apostate Israel rather than on two individual men.

**Q:** What city is called Sodom and Egypt?

**A:** Revelation identifies it as the city where the Lord was crucified, which is Jerusalem.

**Q:** What does the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses represent?

**A:** It represents God's vindication of His covenant testimony after it appeared defeated by those who opposed it (Revelation 11:11-12; Luke 21:22).

**Q:** If the Two Witnesses are symbolic, why are they described as being killed and resurrected?

**A:** Revelation frequently uses symbolic death and resurrection imagery. The death of the witnesses represents the apparent defeat and rejection of God's covenant testimony, while their resurrection and ascension represent God's vindication of that testimony. The destruction of Jerusalem proved that the witnesses had spoken the truth and that God's judgment had been justified (Revelation 11:11-12; Luke 21:22).

**Q:** Why does Revelation call them "two" witnesses instead of one witness?

**A:** Under God's Law, a matter was established by the testimony of two witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15). The number two emphasizes that God's case against apostate Israel was legally established according to covenant requirements. Revelation presents a covenant lawsuit in which God provides the required witness before judgment falls upon the nation.

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## **Source Index**

† Revelation 11:3-4, Revelation 11:5-6, Revelation 11:7, Revelation 11:8, Revelation 11:11-12

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