

## BOOK OF REVELATION

### Lesson 23 - Chapter 11 Continued

Last week we got well into Revelation chapter 11 and discussed several important elements of that chapter including the use of the numbers 42, 3 1/2, and 1260. Briefly what we found was that 42 months, 3 1/2 years, and 1260 days need to be viewed as essentially the same amount of time. We discussed the complexity of the Hebrew calendar and why we should not expect the precision in their ancient calendar to the extent that our modern calendars give it to us. And therefore despite some scientific realities about the minor technical differences between 42 months, 3 1/2 years, and 1260 days, it is too insignificant to matter in the prophetic sphere. And further that we should not seek to focus on any minor differences in time measurement concerning prophetic issues because such exactness was never the point or concern of the ancient writer. That is, the precise time wasn't as important as the event to which the appointed time pointed towards. Or, as we like to say in our day: the main thing is the main thing. The main thing is what we need to keep our eye on that is doubly so concerning the Bible and the God principles we learn from it.

That said, we need to note that there is symbolic significance in the number 3 1/2 because 3 1/2 is half of 7. And 7 is the ideal number; it indicates divine direction, wholeness, perfection, completeness, and prophetically it can indicate finality. So 3 1/2 indicates something in which the journey towards wholeness has been arrested. 3 1/2 indicates something that has not achieved wholeness; it is neither complete nor perfect. This understanding about the significance of numbers then leads us to consider the duration of time that is presented to us in the next chapter of Revelation and in Daniel that is "a time, times, and half a time". I am convinced that this phrase is to be seen as numerically equivalent to 3 1/2 in its duration. And that duration could be expressed in hours, days, months, years, or whatever. However it is fair to ask why the Bible would even use such a puzzling and ambiguous phrase as "a time, times, and half a time" instead of just saying "3 1/2". In our previous lesson I offered the possibility that it was because of biblical numerology. That is, since numbers have symbolic meaning in the Bible, then when God wants to express an amount or a quantity or a duration of something in terms that DO NOT HAVE symbolic meaning then it can't be expressed using actual numbers....it can't use numerical digits.... instead it must be expressed with a word description.

So, while the number 3 1/2 has the symbolic meaning of imperfection or the lack of wholeness, the word description "a time, times, and half a time" does NOT have that same symbolism even though we find in Daniel and in Revelation that it means the same duration of time as 3 1/2. Thus as applied to Revelation chapter 12 (which we'll get into next week), when Israel goes into the desert to escape the Beast and is supernaturally protected by God for 3 1/2 years (also expressed as 1260 days), then we are not to take that time period as meaning something that is symbolically incomplete or imperfect. Therefore the number 3 1/2 is avoided and instead it is substituted with the word description "a time, times and half time". Even so, I want to make it clear that this is my personal assertion and I can't say with absolute certainty that this is why the number 3 1/2 at times is expressed in words as "a time, times, and half a time". You be the

judge.

Chapter 11 opened with John being handed a measuring rod (an ancient measuring tape) in order to measure a new Temple. I pointed out that this Temple was NOT the so-called Millennial Temple that will be built after the War of Armageddon; the Temple that Christ will occupy for 1000 years. Rather the Temple being measured is the Third Temple; the one that will be built to replace Herod's Temple, the 2nd Temple, that the Romans destroyed and to this day has not been rebuilt. It is the Temple that the Anti-Christ will encourage to be built, but later he will enter it, defile it, and declare that it is a Temple meant to glorify himself. And we are also meant to notice that there will be an enormous outer court called the Court of the Gentiles because, as with Herod's Temple, gentiles will be encouraged to come and gaze in awe at this amazing structure even though they are not allowed too near to the Holy Sanctuary. While on the surface such a thing as a Court of the Gentiles seems a fair, reasonable and practical thing to include in the new Temple complex, this is not adhering to the biblical pattern. Gentiles (by definition meaning non-worshippers of the God of Israel) are not supposed to be allowed into the Temple complex; it is only for Israelites. So right off the bat we see that even the architectural design of the next Temple is against God.

We ended our last lesson with the introduction of the mysterious "two witnesses" who are sent by God to prophesy. And we learned that they will be supernaturally protected for 1260 days (3 1/2 years) before they are finally killed. That's where we'll begin this week. So turn your Bibles to Revelation chapter 11.

### RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 11:3 - end

So the Lord is going to send two witnesses to prophesy for 1260 days. They'll be dressed in sackcloth and are to be identified as the 2 olive trees and 2 menorahs (lamp stands) that stand before the Lord of the earth. They have been given the ability to essentially protect themselves much like mythical dragons do; they breathe fire and kill those who threaten them. They even have the ability to stop the rain from falling, to turn water into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues. We're going to spend some time with this and add to what we discussed about them in our previous lesson.

To understand the substance of these two prophets and even to get a handle on who, or what, they are we must refer to the **Tanakh**, the Old Testament. Therefore last week we looked at passages from Deuteronomy, Zechariah, and 1st and 2nd Kings. We found that the numerical symbolism of there being **2** witnesses has to do with the law about bringing someone to trial for a capital offense. It is that either 2 or 3 witnesses are required to give testimony against the accused. In this case, we have 3 witnesses: God plus the 2 witnesses. The accused is humanity.

We find in those Old Testament Scriptures that Elijah brought down fire upon those who would harm him, and he stopped the rain. It is important that we remember that the rain was stopped for 3 1/2 years as that amount of time (and what it symbolizes) is central to End Times activities in Revelation. And it was Moses, of course, who struck the land of Egypt with plagues and turned the water to blood. So there is much similarity between these 2 witnesses

and Elijah and Moses. And in the case of both men, the purpose for their destructive activities was so that people would turn from their sin (mainly idolatry) and seek God.

So the mention of these two witnesses (who are prophets) wearing sackcloth is to connect them with the Old Testament prophets who wore sackcloth as a sign of mourning over the Israelites whom they were prophesying against. Their prophecy, as with most prophets, was condemning Israel for their rebellion and sin. The hope was for repentance. And the mourning garments the prophets wore, and that the two witnesses will wear, are therefore related to repentance.

So who are these 2 witnesses that play such a critical role in the End Times events and exactly when do they appear? These 2 questions are enormous in their impact on End Times doctrines and on the End Times timeline of events; so as you might imagine the answers to these 2 critical questions vary all over the map, mostly according to which denomination one belongs. The answers to these questions are so meaningful that we going to spend quite a bit of time with them; so here we go.

The best place to start is go back in time to the earliest of the Church Fathers who commented on the question of the identity of the two witnesses and what they might symbolize. I will summarize for you the positions of various of the early Church Fathers drawing heavily from the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. At times I'll quote, and at other times I'll paraphrase for the sake of expediency.

Oecumenius who lived in the 900's A.D. himself drew heavily on the recorded thoughts of the earliest Church Fathers from the 2nd and 3rd centuries and he had this to say about the identity of the two witnesses: ***Just as the coming of Christ in humiliation was announced by John the Baptist, so his coming in the glory of the Father will be announced by Elijah and Enoch.*** So the assertion is that the two witnesses are Elijah and Enoch and their primary purpose is to announce the 2nd coming of Messiah.

However Hippolytus, writing around 200 A.D. (not much more than 100 years after John wrote his visions down in Revelation) adds: ***It may be, however, that John also will return at the end along with Elijah and Enoch.*** He is referring to John the Baptist; not John the Apostle, the writer of this book. But he acknowledges that the two witnesses are Elijah and Enoch.

Victorinus, in the mid-200's A.D., wrote in his commentary on Revelation: ***.....or (instead of John) it will be (the prophet) Jeremiah who along with Elijah returns to announce the Lord's coming.***

Victorinus, then, thinks the two witnesses will be Elijah and Jeremiah. So we see that when these Early Church Fathers attempted to identify the two witnesses, it was a foregone conclusion that Elijah would be one of them; although the other one was not at agreed upon unanimously. And yet others of the Church Fathers saw things quite differently.

Tyconius, writing in the late 300's A.D. says: ***The two witnesses symbolize as well the two Testaments by which God governs and rules His church.*** Thus to Tyconius the two

witnesses are figurative of the Old and New Testaments. And, by the way, the New Testament had only been in existence about 150 years or so by his day. Also notice how Tyconius equally honored the Old and New Testaments and unlike the modern Church he saw the Old Testament as fully enforce during the End Times.

Primasius who lived in the mid 500's A.D. says: ***The two witnesses are said to be two olive trees and two lamp stands, for they represent the one church, which is formed from the two peoples of the Jews and the Gentiles.....and is illuminated by the two Testaments, which pour the oil of knowledge into the Church.*** Primasius, like Tyconius, views the two witnesses as symbolic and figurative. But we also have in Primasius an Early Church father who acknowledges that Jews are every bit as much part of the Church as are gentiles, and who agrees with Tyconius that both the Old and New Testaments remain as divine illumination for the Church. What an amazingly different attitude some of these early Church Fathers had about inclusions of the Jews and the continuing relevance of the Old Testament than what we hear from many pulpits today! And how far away modern Christian thoughts can be from those of the earliest Church leaders that were closest in history to the time of the Jewish Christ and the Jewish Apostles. Essentially, the modern Church is attempting to rewrite biblical history to its liking, mostly to appease the world. And yet, even in the time of the earliest Church Fathers, we see them separating the institution of the Church from its Hebrew heritage, for Tyconius also says this: ***All that God had done for the church, He has given to the church. Therefore the church has the power of binding and loosing so that she can cause the rain of blessing to cease to fall upon the earth.*** So while this is not quite Replacement Theology, it smacks of an attitude that these 2 witnesses are all about the gentile church. A church that operates on the assumption that even though Jews are a part it, their conversion to Christianity means that they are less Jewish and more gentile-like than their non-Believing Jewish brothers.

Oecumenius, commenting on the supernatural power given to the two witnesses, says that: ***Similarly, at the end of times God will give great power to his two prophets, for they will promote truth and light by signs and wonders, even as the Anti-Christ by false signs advances the cause of deceit and darkness.*** So now we're starting to deal with the "when" of the two witnesses. And Oecumenius says that the two witnesses will operate as prophets of truth and light during the same time period that the Anti-Christ will be operating as a false prophet of lies and darkness. That is, the two witnesses and the Anti-Christ will appear simultaneously.

Hippolytus writes that: ***The preaching of the two witnesses will be met with great resistance by the Anti-Christ, who will exalt himself and glorify himself as God.*** So Hippolytus and Oecumenius agree that the two witnesses and the Anti-Christ are contemporaries. But Hippolytus also thinks this: ***Yet tradition says that the Anti-Christ will arise by God's allowance from the tribe of Dan and hence from the iniquitous hearts of the Jews.*** So here we have firm evidence that early on some segments of the gentile church formed a doctrine that the Anti-Christ would be a Jew specifically from the tribe of Dan, and this because in their view Jews' hearts were incorrigibly sinful.

On yet another aspect of this section of Revelation chapter 11, Oecumenius reckons that: ***The***

**Jerusalem of the Anti-Christ will be as Sodom and Egypt because it will enslave and abuse the servants of Christ and will be noted for its licentiousness.** The term "servants of Christ" are referring to Believers in general, who, apparently, are still on earth.

So there we have a pretty good all-around picture of what early gentile Church Fathers thought about the two witnesses. Now let's go back and examine the Scriptures ourselves and see what conclusions we can draw.

In Malachi 3:23 in the CJB, or 4:5 in most other English translations, we read this:

**<sup>CJB</sup> Malachi 3:23 *Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of ADONAI.***

It is because of this prophetic passage that Jews look for Elijah to appear in the future, whereupon he will announce the arrival of a Messiah. Much of Judaism believes Elijah will come on Passover and so that is why it is traditional to set an extra place setting at the Passover table just in case Elijah shows up. Nonetheless, it is beyond a doubt that this passage in Malachi plainly says that prior to the great and terrible day of the Lord.....meaning judgment day..... Elijah the prophet will come to herald it. In light of that, it is no wonder that the Early Church Fathers more or less agreed with the Jews and said that one of the two witnesses must be Elijah. When you add in the reference to fire and stopping the rain for the 3 1/2 years he is prophesying, it is hard to argue against such a conclusion.

Another reason that many say that one of the witnesses must be Elijah is because he didn't die but was taken up into Heaven in a whirlwind. They see this as important because in the Book of Hebrews we read: **<sup>CJB</sup> Hebrews 9:27 *Just as human beings have to die once, but after this comes judgment*** or in its more familiar form found in the KJV: **<sup>KJV</sup> Hebrews 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.***

However it is my opinion that this statement about all humans dying once is all about prefacing what comes after it: **<sup>CJB</sup> Hebrews 9:28 *so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to deliver those who are eagerly waiting for him.***

So the idea is that just as humans have to die once, so also the Messiah dies only once; but He dies to bear the sins for everyone. And He doesn't have to die an individual death for each person who trusts Him; His one-time death on the cross is sufficient. However for humans after we die a day of our judgment will come; but Messiah will not have a day of judgment after He dies. Instead He will come again....fully alive.... in order to deliver those humans who wait for Him to come. The point being that the author of Hebrews is speaking of the obvious fact that all humans have to die once....there's no escape from that. The idea is not to make death a hard and fast **spiritual** principle; rather it is a self-evident general rule of all flesh.....human or animal.... that death comes to all creatures. And yet there are notable exceptions, and Elijah was one of them. Even so this statement in Hebrews does not imply that if a human like Elijah is translated into Heaven to avoid physical death, that at some point God **MUST** return that human to the earth so that person can die since death is required of all humans. Let me give

you another obvious example that death will NOT be required of all humans: the Rapture. The standard Christian belief about the Rapture is not that there will be a sudden mass, world-wide death and then, all at once, all Believers' souls will crowd their way into Heaven. Rather it is that in some instantaneous, painless and non-traumatic way we'll shed these fragile bodies on earth and appear in Heaven. That is, raptured Believers will **avoid** physical death. In fact, the avoidance of death and pain and anguish is supposed to be the entire point of the Rapture in the first place. So assuming that is the case, then there will be countless millions that, because of Rapture, will not "die once". And, there is nothing said in the Scriptures that those Believers who are raptured away and escape death must be sent back in awhile so that they will die once.

This issue of the Hebrews' statement of humans having to die once plays a role for some people in identifying the two witnesses because they insist we must find some Old Testament characters who did not die because these two witnesses of Revelation do die after 3 1/2 years of prophesying. And thus if they died before, then they are disqualified because we find them dying again. I think this entire notion is a red herring that throws us off track. So indeed one of the two witnesses could be Elijah because we have Scripture that says He will appear before Judgment Day, and because the description of what the witnesses can supernaturally do are exactly what Elijah did when he was alive.

And of course, while turning water to blood and striking the ground with plagues exactly fits Moses, some say even so it can't be Moses because he already died once. However I think there's another clue about the identity of the two witnesses that we shouldn't overlook.

**<sup>CJB</sup>Matthew 17:1-13** <sup>1</sup> *Six days later, Yeshua took Kefa, Ya'akov and his brother Yochanan and led them up a high mountain privately.* <sup>2</sup> *As they watched, he began to change form- his face shone like the sun, and his clothing became as white as light.* <sup>3</sup> *Then they looked and saw Moshe and Eliyahu speaking with him.* <sup>4</sup> *Kefa said to Yeshua, "It's good that we're here, Lord. I'll put up three shelters if you want- one for you, one for Moshe and one for Eliyahu."*

<sup>5</sup> *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them; and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!"* <sup>6</sup> *When the talmidim heard this, they were so frightened that they fell face down on the ground.* <sup>7</sup> *But Yeshua came and touched them. "Get up!" he said, "Don't be afraid."* <sup>8</sup> *So they opened their eyes, looked up and saw only Yeshua by himself.*

<sup>9</sup> *As they came down the mountain, Yeshua ordered them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."* <sup>10</sup> *The talmidim asked him, "Then why do the Torah-teachers say that Eliyahu must come first?"* <sup>11</sup> *He answered, "On the one hand, Eliyahu is coming and will restore all things; <sup>12</sup> on the other hand, I tell you that Eliyahu has come already, and people did not recognize him but did whatever they pleased to him. In the same way, the Son of Man too is about to suffer at their hands."*

<sup>13</sup> *Then the talmidim understood that he was talking to them about Yochanan the*

### ***Immerser.***

First: what is the significance of Elijah, Moses, and Yeshua all appearing together? It is to show the unity of God's Word. Elijah is the chief of all Prophets. Moses is the chief of the Torah and the Law. And Yeshua is the Messiah that the Prophets and the Torah together point to. In modern Christian terms, we have the chief representatives of the Old Testament together with the chief representative of the New Testament. If the Law and the Prophets were dead and gone or no longer relevant, but only the New Testament having relevance, then it makes no sense to have these 3 chief representatives dialoguing together in a show of unity.

Second: when Yeshua swears to secrecy His disciples who witnessed this amazing scene they were confused and so asked why, then, do the Torah teachers say that Elijah must come first? Yeshua replies with a statement that initially baffles the disciples but then they get it. It is that Elijah is coming in two different senses. The first sense is that he is coming in the future; but the second sense is that he has already come but people didn't recognize him. The disciples then understood the past tense sense of his coming as symbolically meaning John the Baptist.

Bottom line: Elijah indeed is going to come in the future, and according to the Prophet Malachi, it will be to announce the judgment of humankind on the Day of the Lord. Thus I agree with several of the Early Church Fathers that one of the two witnesses will be Elijah. And, although with less evidence, I also think the other witness will be Moses because the descriptions are just so strikingly familiar and similar, and because they both appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration. That said, some believe it could be two men who are very similar to Elijah and Moses. These men will be otherwise regular, normal humans living during the time of the End, but they will be empowered by God to do very similar things as Elijah and Moses did. Yet to that possibility I think some words in Revelation 11:4 make it unlikely.

***CJB Revelation 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two menorahs standing before the Lord of the earth.***

The key word is "standing". The two witnesses are here described figuratively as being the two lives trees and two menorahs. And they are said to be "standing before the Lord". In other words, the two witnesses are ALREADY in Heaven with the Lord, standing before Him. It would make little sense if these two witnesses were humans alive and already living on earth during the time of the Anti-Christ, because they could not possibly also have been "standing before the Lord" in Heaven as the two olive trees and two menorahs.

I add the caveat that since this is unfulfilled prophecy, I can't be 100% sure of my interpretations or identifications. So I'm not at all dogmatic about it, and my advice is for you to not be dogmatic about it either.

I want to point out a couple of facts before we move along. It would be accurate to say that the last prophet in the Bible is the Apostle John who wrote down His divine visions into the work we call The Book of Revelation. And I state confidently that there have been no divinely ordained prophets appearing to God's people since John (even though thousands of Christians have anointed themselves as prophets). Therefore the next divinely ordained prophet to

appear in history will be these two witnesses appearing together. And who better than the Chief of Prophets, Elijah, and Moses (who was also a prophet) that once famously said in Deuteronomy:

<sup>CJB</sup> **Deuteronomy 18:14-16** <sup>14</sup> *For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to soothsayers and diviners; but you, ADONAI your God does not allow you to do this.*

<sup>15</sup> *"ADONAI will raise up for you a prophet like me from among yourselves, from your own kinsmen. You are to pay attention to him, <sup>16</sup> just as when you were assembled at Horev.....*

Let's move on to Revelation 11 verse 7. There we read that when the two witnesses have finished their witnessing, the beast coming up from the Abyss will fight against them and kill them. We learned back in chapter 9 that the Abyss is not the grave, but rather it is the realm of unclean, rebellious demons. So the beast, a very special demon, is probably Satan himself or perhaps the spirit of Satan. I offer that alternative only because when speaking of God, we can also speak of the spirit of God (the *ruach*) and not necessarily mean God the Father even though they are *echad*: one. Another possibility is that this is speaking of the Anti-Christ (who kills the two witnesses) because the spirit of Satan (the beast) inhabits the Anti-Christ. Somewhere within that sphere of thought that the beast is satanic and probably the chief demon (Satan) that becomes personified in the Anti-Christ is where the reality lies.

But why are the two witnesses killed? Who wants them dead? I think the answer lies in what happened to the prophets of old. It was their job to take a message of warning and/or of reproof or even condemnation from God to a certain group of rebellious Israelites. The usual reaction was for the rebellious Israelites to try to kill the prophet. Why? Because people don't want to hear that they're doing wrong. People don't want to hear the truth if it rebukes their lifestyle or deprives them of something they want. People get angry if they're told they are behaving wickedly. Coupled with the fact that these witnesses are empowered to shut off the rain and turn water into blood and bring on unnamed plagues, no doubt they will do these things (why else would they be given the power?), and so people will hate them and desperately want to see them dead.

But notice that even through all the hatred against them, they survived because their God-appointed period of prophesying was not yet up. Their mission, and therefore their life spans, could not be interrupted until their purpose in life was completed. No doubt many will attempt to stop their teaching, prophesying, and destructive actions by killing them; but they will fail and most will instead be killed by the fire that these 2 witnesses can bellow from their mouths. What were they prophesying about? No doubt about the sins of mankind and the End that was but days or weeks away; and also the Good News of Salvation in Yeshua. Where were they prophesying? Verse 8 says it was in the city where their Lord was executed on a stake. It can be no other than Jerusalem. No doubt the people that were being spoken to were, primarily, the Jewish people. And since the bulk of Jews have resisted to this day of accepting their Messiah, it should be no surprise that when the two witnesses show up the bent against accepting Yeshua of Nazareth as Messiah is violent; especially in view of the catastrophic events of the seal and trumpet judgments that have been occurring. So here we have a couple



of Jews witnessing to hundreds of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem; and the Jerusalemites are not happy about it. Certainly their prophetic oracle was known of far and wide, and so many times more gentiles heard it than Jews. But God chose Jerusalem in Israel to send His prophets to witness because His main concern at this time was to save as many of His chosen people as possible.

It pains me to no end that the holy city I have visited so many times will have, by then, become so spiritually degraded that to God Jerusalem will seem no different in its level of wickedness than Egypt and Sodom. We'll continue in our study of Revelation 11 next week.