

Prophecy 9 - The Two Witnesses

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The Two Witnesses - Revelation 10:1-11:19

Beginning Point in Time: A few days before the censer in Revelation 8:5 is cast down.

Ending Point in Time: The 1,265th day of the Great Tribulation

Summary:

God will empower His Two Witnesses for 1,260 days at the end of Earth's history. Their work is vital during the Great Tribulation because the people who will be alive then (the living) cannot be judged without the input of His Two Witnesses. God told Moses that no one could be put to death on the testimony of one witness because condemnation had to be validated by two or more witnesses.^[1] God uses two witnesses in the book of Revelation to indicate the living will be judged and two infallible witnesses will exonerate or condemn each person. According to Matthew 24:14, the gospel of Jesus will be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all nations before the end will come. The 144,000 will deliver the gospel and Jesus will pass judgment on each person according to the testimony of His Two Witnesses. Shortly after His pre-Advent judgment is completed, Jesus will return to Earth to deal with humanity.

Introduction:

If the previous prophecy on the seven trumpets reveals the severity of God's redemptive wrath, this prophecy reveals the amazing reach of God's redemptive grace. The Bible declares that God is love.^[2] This means that God's actions are eternally consistent with principles of love. In other words, if you want to see what love does in any given situation, study God's actions. Because God has infinite wisdom, He knows how and when to impose justice and when to extend mercy.

Although it is not obvious at first, this prophecy aligns with the selection and empowerment of the 144,000 and it ends with a powerful display of physical phenomena at the seventh trumpet. The Two Witnesses and the 144,000 are inseparably linked because the Two Witnesses will validate the testimony of God's prophets. As you examine this prophecy, keep this crucial fact in mind: The Bible teaches that validation requires two or more witnesses. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If I testify about myself [claiming that I am the promised Messiah], my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor [you have heard John the Baptist testify about me], and I know that his testimony about me is valid. You have sent [a delegation of priests] to [question and investigate] John and he has testified to the truth. . . . And the Father who sent me has himself [also] testified concerning me. [But the testimony of the Father means nothing to you because] You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent."^[3]

Jesus came to Earth to reveal the truth about God. Jesus spoke the words which the Father

gave Him and His testimony was true, but His words created a firestorm of conflict because light is incompatible with darkness. We know that anyone can claim to speak for God. Anyone can claim to be born again. People often make outrageous claims, but self-made claims of legitimacy are not valid. Two or more witnesses are required for validation. This is why Jesus offered the testimony of John the Baptist and His Father's voice as two witnesses that validated His Messianic identity. The issue of legitimacy explains why the 144,000 will need two witnesses to validate their testimony!

The Bible declares that God loves everyone on Earth the same.^[4] Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the 144,000 will be dispersed among the inhabitants of Earth on the basis of population. This assertion is made on the basis that God will ensure everyone on Earth will have an equal opportunity to hear and consider the eternal gospel concerning Jesus Christ before the Second Coming. Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."^[5] The 144,000 will present a gospel that stands in conflict with almost everything people believe to be true. God knows this will be the case, so He will not ask anyone to believe His servants on the basis of their testimony or miracles. Instead, God's Two Witnesses will validate the gospel of Jesus and each person will determine his eternal destiny by his response to God's two witnesses!

If the 144,000 are distributed by population, then the United States will have approximately 6,200 of the 144,000 prophets. China and India will each have about 24,000 prophets and Mexico City's ten million people will have about 200 prophets. When the censer is cast down and the first four trumpets sound, life as we know it will dramatically change. Television, radio, telephone, banking, travel, and other infrastructures that we now depend on will become very limited or nonexistent. This means the 144,000 will work alone as did Elijah, who thought for a while that he was the only person left in Israel who had refused to worship Baal.^[6] As time passes though, honest-hearted people will listen to the 144,000 and these people will embrace the gospel because God's Two Witnesses will confirm and convict them that this gospel is true. These converts will join with the 144,000 during the Great Tribulation and encourage others to receive Christ and be saved. However, compared to the opposition, the number of people aligned with God's prophets will be a small minority. This is always the case. Remember how Elijah faced down 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.^[7]

When we contrast the singularity of God's prophets with the many clergy employed by the religious systems of the world (which are opposed to the gospel of Jesus), and add the number of people who have no interest in God or His gospel, a serious problem emerges for the 144,000. Who or what will validate their testimony? What will prove to the diverse people of the world that one lone voice speaks for Almighty God? This is the same situation that Jesus faced when He came to Earth to reveal the Father to the nation of Israel. Jesus fed multitudes, healed the sick, cast out demons, restored eyesight to the blind, and raised at least two dead people. These miracles did not affect the leaders or the majority of Israel at all. This brings us to a very important point: Miracles do not change hearts. Miracles affirm what the heart wants to believe. This explains why Lucifer's counterfeit miracles^[8] will be such a powerful delusion. He will call fire down out of the sky at will simply to affirm a false gospel which the wicked want to believe. Jesus knew that any self-made claims about His identity would be worthless and the same conclusion will be true for the 144,000.

Once we grasp the idea that the 144,000 will be geographically distributed all over the world, we can see why each prophet of God will require two witnesses. Something has to validate their testimony. Even more, God's Two Witnesses will observe each person's response to the gospel and report back to Jesus. Their testimony will enable Jesus to pass judgment on the living.

From Observer to Participant

John's role changes in this prophecy. Earlier in the book of Revelation, John writes from the perspective of an observer, but in this prophecy, he becomes a participant. John is transformed into a participant so he can describe the experience of the 144,000 to us. I think God made John a participant because false prophets are found everywhere. People all over the world prophesy out of their own imagination every day. They claim that God has shown them certain things when in reality, God has shown them nothing. People who do this are offensive in God's sight and He will punish them at the appointed time.^[9] God made John a participant in this prophecy so that ordinary people will have the ability to determine who is a member of the 144,000. Each person who is one of the 144,000 will have a personal encounter with Jesus similar to John's experience. Each person will be given words to speak (represented by the little book given to John) and like John, they will be commissioned to prophesy and measure the inner court in the temple. As an example for the final generation, God put John through the same experience that each last day prophet will have to endure. If a person claims to speak for God during the Great Tribulation and he or she has not had the experience recorded by John in this prophecy, and if his or her testimony is not validated by God's Two Witnesses, then he or she is a false prophet.

Many people, who do not realize what they are saying, express their desire to be one of the 144,000. If Jesus should call you to be among that group, then you must accept His calling. You can be sure He will enable and sustain those He calls. On the other hand, no human should desire the experience the 144,000 will face. There will be 1,260 days of strenuous effort, torture, rejection, imprisonment, and death. The 144,000 will suffer as Jesus suffered and there will be no relief from their burden until death. God gave John a participant's experience so that we can understand the sacrifice, the distress, and the victory of God's servants. Ordinary people will not know when the 144,000 are called and sealed. Unless one of the 144,000 happens to be a close friend who shares his experience of meeting the Lord and eating the little book, I do not think we will know who the 144,000 are until the censer is cast down on Day One of the Great Tribulation.

Personification

Personification is described as giving "life" to something that is inanimate. For example, after months of wrangling, in 2010, the House and Senate of the United States passed a health care bill that dramatically changed the health care system. Prior to the final vote, some protesters

carried signs on Capitol Hill that read, "Kill the Bill." Of course, no one can "kill" a piece of paper, but people treat House Bills as living things because once a bill is signed into law, it takes on a life of its own. Therefore, killing a bill (voting down some concepts written on a piece of paper) before it is signed into law is the only way to stop a bill from coming to "life."

God also uses personification in the Bible. For example, God personified the behavior of a divided Israel (ten tribes and two tribes) as two adulterous sisters in Ezekiel 23. Personification is effective because it says so much with so few words. By personifying Himself as Israel's faithful husband and Israel and Judah as two adulterous sisters, God wanted His people to understand His breaking heart. What better way could He reveal His sorrow than to portray His people as two adulterous women? This background information about the use of personification has been presented because in this prophecy, God personifies the work of His Two Witnesses. This literary technique has misled many people to reach conclusions that are not valid, but we will see in this prophecy that God also speaks of His Two Witnesses as two lampstands and two olive trees as well as two prophets.

Consider this: When Moses raised his staff and stretched out his hand over the Red Sea, the Red Sea parted, but we know that Moses did not make the Red Sea part.^[10] We know that an ordinary man does not have this kind of power. When Peter commanded the lame beggar to walk, Peter did not make the beggar walk, even though the beggar jumped up and began running around! Peter addressed the astonished crowd who had gathered saying, ". . . Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"^[11] God's power rested on Peter and it was God's power that healed the man; not Peter's power.

Metaphorically, Moses and Peter were "the arms and legs" through which the Holy Spirit's power was manifested. Keep in mind that even though Holy Spirit power rested upon them, Moses did not enter the Promised Land and Peter was martyred for his faith. In other words, Holy Spirit power did not keep Moses from sinning or Peter from death. Moses and Peter were ordinary mortals like you and me, but when God's power came upon them – His "power" enabled them to do signs and wonders.

We learned in Prophecy 6 that the Holy Spirit is an unseen member of the Godhead that works through people when directed by Jesus or the Father to do so. The Holy Spirit will not be one of the 144,000, but instead, the Holy Spirit will work through the 144,000 in the same way that He worked through Moses and Peter. We will discover in this study that one of the Two Witnesses is the Holy Spirit and the other witness is two great laws of love that govern the whole universe. God's Two Witnesses are personified in this prophecy because they are invisible. Keeping the Two Witnesses separate and distinct from the 144,000 makes their work and mission easier to understand. The 144,000 will proclaim the gospel of Jesus and they will appear to perform many signs and wonders, but the signs and wonders will actually come through Holy Spirit power and their words will come from the little book that Jesus will give them. And like Moses and Peter, Revelation 16:4-7 and other texts indicate that most, if not all of God's last day prophets, will die in the line of duty.

One more point must be refreshed before we begin with this prophecy. The 144,000 will receive

the seal of the living God prior to the beginning of their ministry for three reasons: First, there will be no hint of sin (dishonesty, greed, or immorality) in God's servants. Given the amazing powers that will rest upon them, the removal of the sinful nature will prove to be very important. God's holy name will not be profaned by some foolish choice of words or impetuous act. Second, the 144,000 will be living examples of what human beings can become when the sinful nature is removed. When a repentant sinner finally understands the incredible power that sin has over him, he wants to be set free of this curse. Therefore, Jesus will start the Great Tribulation with 144,000 living examples of what it really means to have freedom from sin's curse! This demonstration will be very encouraging to those who love truth because the gospel of Jesus includes the promise that anyone can be sealed – if only he will surrender to the demands of the gospel and live by faith! Finally, the 144,000 could not accomplish the task before them if they had sinful natures. The ridicule, rejection, persecution, and torment which they will endure would be too great for man's fallen nature. Remember how Moses met with God on several occasions and that Moses performed many signs and wonders, but God did not permit Moses to enter the Promised Land because his carnal nature rose up on one rebellious occasion and indignation caused him to sin.^[12]

The Sequence:

Revelation 10:1-4

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

{1} I was standing on Earth when I saw a mighty angel^[13] descend from Heaven. He came alone. This was not the Second Coming. Jesus was robed with a dark cloud and no one on Earth could see Him but me.^[14] He had a rainbow above His head^[15] and the brilliance of His face was like the Sun. His legs glowed like fiery pillars of molten metal.

{2} He held a little book in His hand that was open. As I watched, Jesus planted His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the land. His posture and position indicated sovereign authority over land and sea. There was a bold confidence about Him, like that of a military general. It appeared that Jesus had come to Earth to conduct specific business.

{3} He gave a loud command, like the roar of a lion and seven thunderous voices spoke.

{4} I clearly heard and understood the seven thunders and I was about to write down their testimony, but a voice from Heaven said, "John, do not write down the words that you have heard."

It may seem strange that John was forbidden to write down the testimony that he heard, but there is a simple reason for this. John, as one of the 144,000, heard Jesus speak seven times. During the Great Tribulation those who have been sealed along with the 144,000 will hear and understand Jesus' words as they roll like thunder throughout the Earth. Jesus will speak seven times and those who understand His words will know for themselves that they have been sealed! The saints will be greatly encouraged by each thunder to patiently endure. To the rest of the world, these seven events will be frightening, sounding like a deep rumbling in the Earth or peals of rolling thunder,^[16] but they will not hear Jesus' voice.

Revelation 10:5-7

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

{5} Then Jesus raised His right hand toward Heaven.

{6} With a loud voice He swore an oath in His own name,^[17] as the Creator of Heaven and everything that is in it, the Earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it,^[18] He said, "There will be no more delay!"^[19]

{7} But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be completed, just as he announced to His servants the prophets, the 144,000."

This scene will occur shortly before the censer in Revelation 8:5 is cast down. When this event occurs, Jesus will declare the end of God's patience with mankind. Then, the fourth seal will be broken and the censer at the Altar of Incense will be cast down. The four angels who have been waiting (since 1994) will be released to hurt the Earth. God's redemptive wrath will begin.^[20] Wicked places all over the world will be punished for degenerate and decadent behavior.^[21] The 144,000 will begin proclaiming the eternal gospel on Day One of the Great Tribulation and all who repent of their sins and embrace Jesus as their Creator and Savior will be tested, sealed, and saved.^[22]

The “mystery of God” that will be completed just before the seventh trumpet sounds is the sealing (removal of the carnal nature). Prior to the Great Tribulation, all born-again believers received the Holy Spirit as “a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”^[23] In other words, the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to God’s children ever since sin began. During the Great Tribulation, the righteousness of Christ will be imparted to God’s children. “The seal of the living God” described in Revelation 7:2,3 is the outpouring of the fullness of the Holy Spirit given to everyone who faithfully worships Jesus, the Creator.

This seal of God will be given first to the 144,000. The seal of God will not be a visible stamp. This seal is like a lock that keeps the sinless nature in and the carnal nature out. Remember how the tomb of Jesus was securely sealed so that His disciples could not steal His body.^[24] The seal of God is similar. When the curse of sin is removed from each saint, the door will be sealed. The seal of God can be compared to a king putting a wax seal on an important scroll. Once the scroll is written and sealed, the document cannot be changed. Similarly, during the Great Tribulation, God will test each living person to see who loves Him with all their heart, mind and soul, and his neighbor as himself. After the sinner is tested and found faithful, God will perform a miracle. He will remove the carnal nature from that sinner and put a seal on his forehead. This action indicates that sin will have no further influence on that person.

The sealing described in Revelation is the final step in sanctification. When Jesus removes the carnal nature and applies the seal of God to a sinner, this indicates a complete transformation^[25] has occurred. The 144,000 will be the first to experience this final step. Consider how this process works: Step one begins when a sinner surrenders his will to Jesus (to go-be-do as the Holy Spirit directs) and receives Christ as his Savior. Jesus immediately covers the sinner with His righteousness (this process is called “justification through faith”). Step two quickly follows. God requires that we turn from wickedness and walk in righteousness with Him! If a sinner is willing to undergo the sanctifying process, fights the good fight of faith and is an overcomer, Jesus keeps the sinner covered with His righteousness so that in God’s sight, the sinner appears to be a saint. (This process is called “sanctification through faith” – see Appendix A.) God’s willingness to cover sinners with Christ’s righteousness is called “imputed righteousness.” Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, God has been imputing righteousness to sinners.^[26]

The judgment of the living will occur during the first 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation. Since the 144,000 are the firstfruits of the harvest, they will be the first people to be judged, purified, and sealed. Currently, when we surrender our will to Jesus and receive Christ as our Savior, our surrender is less than perfect because the carnal nature is present. Paul, after being a Christian for about thirty years, reminds us in Romans 7 that it is impossible for anyone having a carnal nature to perfectly keep it subdued. The power of sin is greater than our best intentions and efforts. Even worse, it is possible to sin and not even know it! This explains why sanctification on Earth is an endless process. As we learn and overcome, we grow in Christ. We are cursed by the power of sin from within and the minute that we overcome one sin, another one pops up! God understands the problem and He has a profound remedy.

When a person dies, there is nothing further to worry about because a dead person cannot sin again. When the dead in Christ are resurrected to enjoy eternal life, they will receive a nature

that has no proclivity toward sin. I highlight this point because the judgment of the living (which takes place during the Great Tribulation) poses a problem. Everyone having a carnal nature will sin if given enough time. God's solution to this problem is unbelievably generous and dramatic. During the Great Tribulation, God will test each of us to see if we love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul and if we love our neighbors as ourselves. If we pass the test, Jesus will remove our carnal nature (that pesky attraction for sin that lives inside us) so that we can be set free of sin's power and attraction. The righteousness of Christ will be imparted (actually put within us). Then, Jesus will put His seal on us so that His righteousness within us does not change. I am sure one of the favorite songs of the saints during the sealing will be that old gospel song written by Fanny Crosby, "Redeemed how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am!" The sealing is "the mystery of God" that He will accomplish just prior to the seventh trumpet.

When their sinful natures are removed, the 144,000 will be a perfect reflection of Christ's character and so will everyone else who receives the seal of God. God's saints will be free of sin's power. They will be living examples of what God will do for any sinner, no matter how degenerate or evil a person may be or may have been. He will give righteousness to those who pass the test of faith and will completely transform him or her into a new person! Addicts, prostitutes, liars, thieves, murderers, and sinners of all kinds will see a living example of what they too can become through Christ. The really-really-really good news during the Great Tribulation is that God is willing to give the gift of sanctification to anyone putting their faith in Christ!

Prior to the 1,260 days allotted to the Two Witnesses, God's gift to mankind has been described as "justification." When the judgment of the living begins, God increases His gift to the faithful by imparting the righteousness of Jesus to each sinner. This is the gift of "sanctification." Words cannot describe the joy that "eleventh hour" sinners will experience when they receive the riches of God's grace and are set free from sin's power. The seal of God will keep every sanctified sinner safe from falling back into the clutches of sin. Revelation 7:1-4 indicates that the first people to receive the seal of God will be the 144,000. Revelation 14:4 reveals that the 144,000 will be the firstfruits of the end time harvest. Therefore, people who choose Christ as their Savior throughout the Great Tribulation will be sealed like the 144,000 because the harvest and its firstfruits are always identical. (For example, if the harvest is barley, the firstfruits are also barley.) The sealing process will remain operational until the 1,260th day ends. Five days later, the seventh trumpet will sound.

A person who has a sinful nature cannot enter Heaven. Many Christians have just assumed that the redeemed will receive sinless natures at the Second Coming and this assumption is true, but only for the righteous dead. However, for the living, their carnal nature has to be removed prior to the seven last plagues because the intercession of Jesus will end on the 1,260th day of the Great Tribulation (see Prophecy 12) and the Second Coming occurs on the 1,335th day. Ever since the day that sin began, there has been an intercessor in Heaven for sinners!^[27] For six thousand years the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to everyone who lives by faith^[28] and when the righteous dead are resurrected at the Second Coming, each will be given a sinless nature and a new body. However, a day is coming when the offer of redemption will end and there will be no further intercession in Heaven, because an intercessor will no longer

be needed. All of God's saints will be sealed!

Revelation 10:8-9

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

{8} While I was thinking about the mystery of God, I heard a voice from Heaven speak to me. It said, "John, take the little book from Jesus' hand."

{9} I went over to where Jesus was standing and asked for the little book. He said, "Take it and eat it. It will taste as sweet as honey in your mouth, but it will turn your stomach sour." I asked Jesus what was written in the little book. He said, "This little book contains my words. You will speak my words during the Great Tribulation."^[29]

Revelation 10:10-11

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

{10} So, I ate the little book. There came a rush, a heightened experience unlike anything I had ever known. There was an explosion of truth and knowledge in my mind. It was as though I saw and understood many new things. Words cannot describe the elation and joy that I felt. God's

love, character, ways, and plans were as sweet as honey in my mouth, but I soon discovered that proclaiming the words of Jesus produced great bitterness.^[30] Few people wanted to hear them. In fact, almost everyone seemed hostile toward me. I felt like wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes, my grief became so great.^[31]

{11} Jesus spoke to me as though I was one of the 144,000,^[32] “You must prophesy again before^[33] many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.”

The phrase, “must prophesy again” indicates the gospel of Jesus – in its present form – has become contaminated. Therefore, a purified gospel^[34] must be proclaimed again to the whole world. The little book Jesus gave John contains the words which the 144,000 will speak. God’s servants will not dilute or deviate from these words.^[35] They will clearly present the truth about Jesus and His salvation with no ambiguity. The unvarnished truth will be told and sin will be called by its right name. The gospel of Jesus is powerful, like a double edged sword. It separates people from each other (it separates honest-in-heart sheep from darkness-loving goats). The kingdom of God is like a great magnet. The pure in heart are attracted to it, but people with hearts of stone are unaffected. God’s children are people who love and exalt righteousness and truth as He does.^[36]

Each member of the 144,000 will eat the same little book that John ate. Even though they will not know each other, the 144,000 will proclaim the same gospel; a gospel that is pure and undefiled by men’s opinions. The Holy Spirit will anoint their lips with coals of fire, just as the Lord anointed the prophet Isaiah’s lips.^[37] The 144,000 will speak with power and penetrating clarity to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people as the first four trumpets devastate the Earth. The effects of the trumpets will traumatize and overwhelm the remaining inhabitants of the world. People will truly fear God for a short time. This fear will silence nations and people so that everyone can hear and consider a gospel that is unlike anything they have heard before. During the Great Tribulation, a numberless multitude of honest-hearted people will abandon their religious heritage and do whatever He asks once they know that God is truly speaking. God’s Two Witnesses will validate the testimony of the 144,000 and a numberless multitude will be sealed. God’s love for sinners is beyond understanding. He really loves us!

Revelation 11:1-3

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

{11:1} My first experience as one of the 144,000 was painful and difficult. Jesus handed a measuring stick to me and said, “Go measure my temple. Go into the inner court and see who ‘measures up’ to the terms and conditions of the eternal gospel because I want to know who loves me. Billions of people attend religious services each week, but in truth, I do not know them.^[38] Present the gospel to the inner court and if they refuse to measure up, drive them out. **{2}** Exclude the outer court because it will be used to collect the Gentiles. They will trample on my holy people^[39] for forty-two months.” **{3}** Jesus spoke again to John. “To validate your testimony, I will give power to my Two Witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D.70, the temple in Jerusalem had two courts. Gentile converts to Judaism worshiped in the outer court.^[40] The inner court was reserved for Jews and those converts who had achieved a “purified” ancestry. Using this imagery, John was sent to measure the inner court because it contains worshipers who say they know God. Before the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, the outer court contained people who God loved, but they did not have the same privileges and opportunities given to those in the inner court. God designed this separation to give Gentile converts time to assimilate into His ways before He gave them full rights as members of Israel.

The two courts in this prophecy represent Christianity (the inner court – sheep) and all non-Christians (the outer court – goats). Currently, Jesus has sheep in both courts and the devil has goats in both courts. During the Great Tribulation, Jesus will purify the inner court through the testimony presented by the 144,000. Those people who accept the testimony of the 144,000 will be persecuted. Persecution will cause the goats to run out of the inner court. Meanwhile, the gospel will attract God’s sheep who live in the outer court. At the end of the 1,260 days, all of the Lord’s sheep will be found in the inner court and all of the goats will be found in the outer court.

The book that John ate contains the gospel of Christ, words that must be spoken throughout the world as a testimony to all nations. John was given a measuring stick and sent to the inner court to measure the temple and count the worshipers. The measuring stick indicates judgment. The 144,000 will prophesy (preach the gospel) and the honest in heart will embrace it and “measure up.” Honest-hearted people will also hear the gospel and join with the worshipers in the inner court.^[41] This migration between the two courts is an important concept to understand. At the end of the Great Tribulation, all of the saints will be gathered in the inner court and all of the wicked will be gathered in the outer court. This separation process will produce much sorrow and bitterness. Families will be broken apart and many close relationships will end because of the sword of Christ’s gospel. Those in the outer court will hate those in the inner court and will persecute them.^[42] The outer court occupants will trample on God’s holy people for forty-two months, thinking that they are doing God a service.^[43] This painful process made John’s stomach turn sour during the vision.

The phrase, “clothed in sackcloth” means the 1,260 days will be a time of anguish, mourning, and discouragement.^[44] Please study this text: “The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, ‘It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of

the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.’”^[45] When we examine Prophecy 11 we will discover that 1,260 days equals “a time, time and half a time.” We will also discover that there are two separate and distinct time periods of 1,260 days. One period occurred between 538 and 1798 and the other is in the future. Because of Rule Four, one time period is translated a day for a year and the other is not. When these two time periods are added together, God’s people are persecuted for a total of seven times (periods of time). According to Daniel 12:7, the 1,260 days granted to the Two Witnesses will end “when the power of the holy people (the 144,000) has been finally broken.”

God’s Two Witnesses are eternal and omnipresent. They have always been and they will always be. They serve several purposes. One purpose is to detect sin and rebellion. The Two Witnesses report to the Father everything they see and this is why they are called “witnesses.” God’s first witness is two perfect laws; represented by the two lampstands. The highest laws in the universe are: You shall “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”^[46]

The following concept may surprise you, but a law is a witness.^[47] A law defines the will of the lawmaker and using personification; the law measures the actions of those who live under its obligation. If a person fulfills the intent of the law, he measures up to the law. The law also testifies to the lawmaker whether a person is with or without fault. If a person fails to fulfill the intent of the law, the law testifies the person does not measure up to its requirements. He falls short because he has done evil.^[48] The Bible is clear on this point, God’s laws are His witnesses.^[49]

The two laws of love are not hard to understand, but they are impossible to obey consistently because our carnal nature stands in opposition to them. Our thoughts and actions naturally spring from love for self. If we try to obey the law because it is the law, compliance will not necessarily fulfill the intent of the law. Paul wrote, “If I give all that I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”^[50] It is possible to show piety and generosity without having love. Everyone is capable of deception and history teaches that religious leaders are among the worst. Because everyone has a carnal nature, we do not naturally love God with all of our heart, mind, and soul. Further, it is not natural to love our neighbors as ourselves. Those in power usually love power more than they love others. To fulfill the two laws of love that God has imposed on mankind, we must receive a new heart and a new mind each day. This daily transformation is compared to being “born again” and our need of this transformation brings us to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God’s second witness. The Holy Spirit reads our minds. He knows our thoughts, affections, and motives. Nothing is hidden from the Holy Spirit. (Remember, the four living creatures in Revelation 4 and 5 are covered with eyes!) The Holy Spirit faithfully reports to God everything that He hears and sees. He is a living witness! If a person hears the gospel of Jesus and sincerely wants a new heart and mind, the Holy Spirit makes it happen. Through the transforming ministry of the Spirit, things the sinner used to hate, he will love and things he used to love, he will hate!^[51] Each time a sinner petitions the Lord for a pure heart, the Lord sends the Holy Spirit with another dose of transforming power. The Bible describes the daily process as

crucifying the carnal nature so that God's love can reign supreme in the "born again" life.^[52]

The only act which God cannot forgive is blaspheming (insulting) the Holy Spirit.^[53] When a person knows to do right, but does not do it, the law testifies without prejudice or deviation that the rebel is a sinner. If a person refuses to obey the Holy Spirit's "prompting from within," or if a person refuses to do what the Holy Spirit says is holy and right, the Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus that the sinner is defiant. The Spirit knows a defiant rebel when He sees him because He reads each sinner's heart!^[54] So, a defiant rebel is condemned by the testimony of two witnesses.^[55] If a person knowingly and persistently defies the laws of God, eventually the Holy Spirit will abandon that person because the Holy Spirit is not permitted to overrule defiance. When the Holy Spirit abandons a person because of defiance, the sinner has committed the unpardonable sin.^[56] When the Holy Spirit finally abandons a defiant rebel, that person will have no further interest in doing what is right. That person may think that he is free to do whatever he wants, but instead he has been given over to destruction. His carnal nature will lead him deeper into sin and his degenerate behavior will eventually lead to demonic bondage.^[57] A person abandoned by the Holy Spirit is selfish, cruel, narcissistic, and a predator. Such a person has no feelings or compassion for others. He has no peace or happiness. When the heart of a rebel becomes hard as stone, it cannot be transformed, even by Almighty God, unless the rebel repents. Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, repentance is impossible!

To appreciate the eternal role of God's Two Witnesses throughout His universe, we must understand that in God's economy, no one is condemned on the testimony of one witness. In other words, God's laws of love and the testimony of the Holy Spirit must be in perfect agreement. God's two laws of love measure behavior, defining righteousness and unrighteousness, and the Spirit reads our hearts and knows our motives. God requires the law and the Holy Spirit to perfectly agree about a person before a defiant rebel can be condemned to death. If a person does something wrong (violates God's law), but the Spirit (who reads the heart) testifies that the deed was done in ignorance, that person is not condemned in God's sight!^[58] God is so good! His generosity never ends! God does not condemn anyone who is ignorant of sin; however, God will condemn a person if he refuses to do the good that he knows he should do.^[59]

During the time of Moses, two or more witnesses were required to condemn a person to death.^[60] During the Great Tribulation, the same holds true. Here is the process: God will ensure that everyone hears His demands. The 144,000, through their ministry, will proclaim God's two laws of love. The Holy Spirit will deeply impress every person that obeying these two laws is God's will. The 144,000 will perform signs and wonders to affirm that God's two laws are holy and true. After the clearest evidences of God's will have been set before the people, and after the Holy Spirit has done everything possible to convict people that God's laws are righteous and true, God's Two Witnesses will condemn everyone rejecting the gospel of Jesus. Ultimately, defiant rebels will be put to death. They must die because of rebellion.

Once God's Two Witnesses agree that a person should be condemned, there is no higher court for further appeal. Down through the centuries, various judicial systems on Earth have offered defendants the right to appeal their case to a higher court. A defendant might hope for a better outcome if he can show that the first trial was not conducted properly or perhaps he can bring

new or better facts to a second trial. However, in God's judicial system, there is no higher court. There are no appeals because God's Two Witnesses never make a mistake. They cannot be fooled with lies or clever arguments. If a person is clearly informed about God's will and he chooses to rebel against it, that is his privilege. However, the law will testify that his actions were evil and the Holy Spirit will testify that his heart was defiant. When a person rebels against the Holy Spirit's inner push to obey God's will, the Holy Spirit detects the resistance. If a person insists on defiance day after day, a time will come when the Holy Spirit will report to Jesus that there is nothing further that can be done. Defiance produces a sin that is unpardonable. During the Great Tribulation, God's Ten Commandments will measure our actions. The Holy Spirit will see our motives. Together, they will report to Jesus and He will pass judgment on each person. Everyone who surrenders to the will and love of God will be given the gift of sanctification and sealed. The sinful nature will be removed. Everyone else will end up hopelessly selfish and totally defiant. All of the wicked will end up at the same place – committing the unpardonable sin. All rebels will be destroyed at the Second Coming.^[61]

Revelation 11:4

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

{4} Jesus said to me, "To help you better understand the role and purpose of my Two Witnesses, they are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before my throne."

To understand these symbols (the two olive trees and the two lampstands), we need first to examine a vision given to Zechariah.^[62] Zechariah was a Levite who received a vision from God shortly after Israel's Babylonian captivity ended. In his vision, Zechariah saw a golden lampstand located in Heaven. He saw a bowl sitting on top of the lampstand and seven lamps were located around the edge of this fixture. He also saw seven golden pipes coming from two olive trees that were located on each side of the lampstand. The seven pipes carried fresh olive oil to each lamp so that the seven lights never went out. As a priest, Zechariah should have had some understanding of what he saw, but he could not figure out the meaning. Finally, an angel explained the vision to Zechariah.

The lampstand represented the nation of Israel. God had chosen the descendants of Abraham to be a nation of priests, a light to the Gentiles. Israel had been set apart from the other nations to be trustees of His gospel, but over the years, Israel became unfaithful to God and the Benefactor sent His trustees into Babylonian captivity for seventy years. Now that Israel's captivity was nearly over, a new beginning was underway for Israel. God wanted Zechariah to

understand why Israel had previously failed. He also wanted to make sure that Israel understood His purpose for choosing it as a nation of trustees/priests.^[63]

In the vision, Zechariah saw two olive trees on each side of a golden lampstand. The olive trees were alive and they produced an endless supply of fuel oil. (The two olive trees represent the never ending energy and power of the Holy Spirit.) As long as the candlestick remained connected to the two olive trees, the lamps would burn forever. The seven lights on the lampstand represented God's love. God wanted Israel to radiate His two laws of love throughout the world and He wanted Israel to teach others about the Lord's perfect ways and laws.^[64] The candlestick with its seven lamps and the two olive trees beautifully portrayed God's connection and purposes for Israel.^[65] This imagery also contained a warning. If Israel did not remain connected to the two olive trees (the Holy Spirit), Israel could not be a light to the Gentiles and Israel's trusteeship would end.

About 500 years later after Zechariah's vision, Israel rejected the Son of God when He came to Earth as the Messiah. God responded by abandoning the nation of Israel. Using a new covenant, God redefined the offspring of Abraham because He had made several promises to Abraham. All believers in Christ are now the heirs of Abraham.^[66] God gave the trusteeship of His gospel to Christians. The transition from one lampstand in Zechariah's vision to seven lampstands in John's vision reveals that the seven churches replaced Israel as the trustees of the gospel.^[67]

Unfortunately, church history confirms that the seven churches in Revelation mirrored Israel's behavior. Like Israel, Christianity has gone through endless cycles of apostasy and revival and God will soon turn the trusteeship of His gospel over to 144,000 servants. Just before the Great Tribulation begins, God will raise up a diverse group of honest-hearted people from every language, religion, and culture. These people will be the final trustees of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like Gideon's tiny army of three hundred soldiers,^[68] this tiny group of diverse people will accomplish all that God wants done. Not by might or human power, but by God's Spirit the gospel will go quickly throughout the world. Jesus will give the 144,000 the words to speak and Jesus will validate their testimony through His Two Witnesses.

The Holy Spirit (represented by the two olive trees) will bear witness that the 144,000 speak for God by enabling the 144,000 to speak about subjects which they could not otherwise know. I believe the 144,000 will be able, as needed, to read people's thoughts, just as Jesus read the thoughts of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 12:25-37. They will also work signs and wonders just like Jesus.^[69] The 144,000 will proclaim God's will; specifically the demands of His two laws of love (represented by the two lampstands). The demands of the Ten Commandments will test the heart and faith of each person.^[70] Currently, few people will listen to the gospel of Jesus, but God will shake up the world with an overwhelming display of wrath. He will bring the world to a standstill so that everyone can hear His servants, the 144,000. God's Two Witnesses will validate the testimony of the 144,000.^[71] The Ten Commandments will declare their gospel is true. The Holy Spirit will impress every sinner's heart with their need of a Savior. Persecution will intensify and everyone will be tested.

The two olive trees represent the two functions of the Holy Spirit. These functions are

sometimes described in the Bible as two rains such as the early rain and the latter rain.^[72] To appreciate the importance and function of these two rains, please consider the setting. In Bible times, Israel's economy was based on agriculture. Farmers planted crops in the autumn and in the spring. The autumn crop matured in early spring and the spring crop matured in the autumn. Both crops were nourished by two rains, the early and the latter rain. The early rain softened the soil to receive the seeds and weeks later, the latter rain brought the crops to maturity. So it is with the work of the Holy Spirit. His first work is to soften the soil of the human heart so that seeds of truth might take root and grow. His second work is to bring people to spiritual maturity in preparation for the harvest.^[73] For 1,260 days, during a period of great distress (sackcloth and ashes), the Holy Spirit will "rain" on everyone.^[74] Millions of people will hear and thoughtfully consider the gospel of Jesus for the first time in their lives (the early rain experience) and a numberless multitude will embrace the gospel of Jesus. They will be tested and after passing the test of faith, given a sinless nature. Jesus will impart His righteousness to the sinner and place a seal on his forehead; indicating that he will not fall back into sin.

Remember, two lampstands plus two olive trees equals Two Witnesses. Together, the Ten Commandments (two tablets defining the two laws of love) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit make up the Two Witnesses. As you know, God's two laws are very simple to understand, but they are exceedingly difficult to fulfill because of our sinful natures. The carnal nature inherently loves self above everything else and it will do whatever it takes to honor, exalt, defend, and fulfill itself. The carnal nature is self seeking, selfish, arrogant, competitive, and subtle. The carnal nature is naturally hostile toward God's two laws of love. Paul wrote, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."^[75] Man's biggest problem is his carnal nature and the removal of the carnal nature (the sealing process) is the most wonderful gift that God can bestow upon those who live during the judgment of the living! When the carnal nature is removed, ex-sinners will have no further conflict with God's two laws of love! "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."^[76]

Revelation 11:5

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

{5} If anyone tries to harm my Two Witnesses, fire comes from their mouths and devours them.

This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.

The Two Witnesses are described as fire-breathing witnesses because in John's day, fire-breathing dragons were the most invincible objects that John knew about. For example, in the fifth trumpet John saw an angel come down from Heaven with the key to the Abyss and after the Abyss was opened, he saw a great swarm of locusts come out. God used language and concepts which John understood, using mythical objects to describe spiritual concepts. Of course, we know there is no literal key to the Abyss because the Abyss that John saw does not exist physically. The devil's angels are not an actual swarm of locusts and fire-breathing lampstands and olive trees do not exist. Metaphors and personification are literary tools that can be used to describe things when language is insufficient.

Jesus used a metaphor to describe the Two Witnesses when he told John they will be fire-breathing witnesses. I believe John understood that no one can thwart their mission and everyone who rejects their testimony will be destroyed by fire – eventually. Jesus frequently silenced the arguments and sophistry of the Pharisees and Sadducees with a few well chosen words^[77] and the same will hold true for the 144,000. Their testimony will be invincible. The leaders of the world will not be able to trap the 144,000 with clever arguments because Jesus Himself will be speaking through the lips of His servants. Thus, the whole world will hear “the testimony of Jesus” because the Holy Spirit will take words from Jesus and put them in the mouths of the 144,000.^[78]

Revelation 11:6

These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

{6} These men [witnesses] 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.

The word “men” is not found in the Greek text. It has been supplied by well-meaning translators. The antecedent of the pronoun “These” refers to “the Two Witnesses” mentioned in the previous verse. The KJV correctly translates this phrase saying, “These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy. . .”

We learned in Prophecy 7 that the 144,000 will be ordinary people like Moses and Peter. When

Moses was filled with Holy Spirit power, he could call down plagues on Egypt at will. Peter healed the lame man at will because Holy Spirit power had been given to him. Remember, the 144,000 will be sealed and empowered before the Great Tribulation begins. Once empowered, God will work signs and miracles through them. This power will be safe in the hands of the 144,000 because their carnal natures have been removed. Like Elijah, they will ask God to withhold the rain^[79] so that multitudes of disbelieving people will witness that they truly speak for Almighty God. Months and months without rain can be a powerful validation! This end time display of divine power parallels the showdown that took place on Mount Carmel long ago when Elijah triumphed over Jezebel's 450 prophets of Baal.

Revelation 11:7

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

{7} When the Two Witnesses have finished their testimony (at the end of their 1,260 days of empowerment), the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, overpower them, and kill them.

Three passages of Scripture are required to identify the beast that comes up from the Abyss. First, we know that an angel king is released from the Abyss in Revelation 9:1-11. Second, we know that a beast will come up out of the Earth in Revelation 13:11-18. Third, Revelation 17:8 says the wicked will be astonished when they actually see the beast that comes up from the Abyss (comes up out of the Earth) because he once was visible, he is not visible today, but he will come out of the Abyss and be visible! When these specifications are aligned, it is obvious that Lucifer, the angel king of the Abyss, is "the lamblike-dragon-speaking" beast that will kill the influence and testimony of God's Two Witnesses at the end of their 1,260 days.

The story of Lucifer is described in different places and different ways in the Bible^[80] because God wants His people to be prepared for the physical appearing of this incredible enemy. The world has never seen anything that can compare with the appearing of Lucifer. It is ironic that millions of Christians anticipate a coming Antichrist, but their expectations are far too low for the Antichrist who is coming. What man on Earth can descend from the sky with millions of angels in attendance? What man on Earth can call down fire from Heaven at will? What man on Earth can abolish the religions and governments of the world? Earth has never seen an equivalent to the appearing of Lucifer. To make this matter clear, God uses repetition and enlargement to give mankind an encompassing view of Lucifer and his purposes, ambition, and ultimate

destruction. There is so much more to Lucifer's physical appearing than one prophecy can convey. The devil's signs and wonders will be so deceptive that if possible, the very elect (the 144,000) would be deceived.^[81]

The Bible declares the beast from the Abyss will kill God's Two Witnesses. This one specification has misled millions of people into believing the Two Witnesses have to be two people. When people hear me say that the Two Witnesses are not two people, they often ask: "If the Two Witnesses are the Ten Commandments and the Holy Spirit, how can Lucifer kill them?" Actually, this question has to be restated. "If the Two Witnesses are two lampstands and two olive trees, how can Lucifer kill them?" The solution is found in personification.

To understand God's use of personification, we need to review some basic facts. We know that the influence of the Holy Spirit is terminated in a person's heart when that person commits the unpardonable sin. When God's Spirit cannot live in a person's heart, it becomes impossible for that sinner to submit to God's two laws of love. Of course, no one can kill the Holy Spirit, but a sinner can kill the influence of the Holy Spirit through defiance. In Zechariah 4, Zechariah saw a lampstand and two olive trees that were in Heaven. In Revelation 1, John also saw seven lampstands that were in Heaven. Obviously, the devil cannot touch these objects and neither can mankind, but Lucifer can kill the influence of the Ten Commandments and the Holy Spirit by leading people into defiance against the eternal gospel. (See Prophecy 12.)

When Lucifer sets life and death choices before everyone on Earth during the sixth trumpet, millions of people will attempt to save themselves from death. People will acquiesce to the devil's demands – knowing that what they are doing is evil. Everyone who rushes to be among the first to receive the mark of the beast willingly and willfully "kills" whatever influence the Two Witnesses may have had in his heart.^[82] When a person commits the unpardonable sin, there is no motive to repent! The following passage describes the actions of those people who grieved away the Holy Spirit: "And the rest of mankind that were not killed [during the sixth trumpet] still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts."^[83]

The Two Lampstands Cannot Represent a Human Agency

Some Bible students conclude that if the lampstand in Zechariah's day represented the nation of Israel and the seven lampstands in John's day represented the seven churches, the two lampstands in Revelation 11:4 should also represent some form of a human agency. While this argument seems logical, my response to this conclusion consists of four steps:

1. In round numbers, God has invested 6,000 years in human agents (the Patriarchs, Israel, and Christianity). These groups failed because the carnal nature of man overtook them. This explains why the last group of trustees (the 144,000) will be sealed before they begin their work! The 144,000 must be sealed so that the carnal nature will not interfere and ruin God's final efforts to redeem mankind!

2. The two olive trees in Revelation 11:4 and Zechariah 4:3 are identical. The two trees represent the renewing and endless energy of the Holy Spirit.^[84] His work comes in two phases; the early rain and the latter rain.^[85] There is no question that the Holy Spirit reports to God. He is the living witness who sees^[86] and hears everything.^[87] (Remember, the four living creatures are covered with eyes. The phrase, "the eyes of the Lord" is used more than eighty-five times in the Bible.)

3. The two lampstands in Revelation 11:4 represent one of the Two Witnesses. I believe the two lampstands represent God's two immutable laws of love because laws can be witnesses and these two laws are infallible. They define righteousness and wickedness. God's laws of love testify about the behavior of God, the angels, and human beings. The Bible declares that God is love because His actions are always consistent with His two laws of love. God's two laws testify without prejudice or fear and their testimony is righteous and perfect.^[88] Consider the words of Moses: "After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord: 'Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.'"^[89]

4. The Ten Commandments are not to be confused with the laws that Moses wrote. This is a very important point! Moses' laws were temporary and written on parchment by a man. The principles underlying the Ten Commandments are eternal. God spoke them on Mount Sinai before He wrote them with His own finger on two tablets of stone. This may come as a surprise, but the Ten Commandments are also called "the two tablets of the Testimony." Look at this text: "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God."^[90] The golden box that contained the two tablets of the Testimony (the Ten Commandments) is called, "the Ark of the Testimony" thirteen times in the Bible, because the Ten Commandments testify. The Ten Commandments are an infallible witness. They declare what pure love is and is not, what pure love will do and will not do. These two tablets measure every action and the Holy Spirit measures every motive.

The story of the Two Witnesses significantly increases our understanding of end time events. Consider what we have learned regarding the Two Witnesses:

1. The testimony of the 144,000 must be validated with two witnesses.
2. Two witnesses are needed to exonerate or condemn each living person.
3. The two olive trees represent the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
4. The two lampstands represent God's two eternal laws of love.

When we consider that the Two Witnesses will be empowered during the judgment of the living,

there is perfect harmony rising from the sum of all of the parts.

People often ask this question: "If the Two Witnesses are two eternal laws of love and the Holy Spirit, why is their power limited to 1,260 days?" God's Two Witnesses are eternal and in a limited way, they have been effective on Earth during the past 6,000 years. However, their empowerment is required for the judgment of the living, a one-time process that will occur near the end of the world. This process will take 1,260 days.

Soul Sleep and Pre-advent Judgment

Contrary to what many Christians believe, a person's soul does not go to Heaven or hell at the time of death. The Bible says "The soul who sins is the one who will die."^[91] At death, the soul ceases to exist with no consciousness. Even though some Bible texts seem to support the idea that souls are alive in Heaven or hell, a dead person does not have any knowledge or awareness of what is happening.^[92] All people go into a grave of silence at death.^[93] It is as though the dead are in a deep sleep caused by anesthesia. The Bible teaches there are two deaths.^[94] Like sleep, the first death is temporary."^[95] Jesus referred to the death of Lazarus as though he was asleep.^[96] The only difference between the first death and the second death is duration. The second death will be a state of eternal non-existence like Sodom and Gomorrah.^[97] At the Second Coming, only the righteous dead will be awakened out of their "sleep." Those judged to be unfit for eternal life will be awakened out of their sleep at the end of the 1,000 years.

The righteous and the unrighteous are tested and separated prior to the Second Coming.^[98] This explains why a pre-Advent judgment is necessary. Most Christians have not considered the implications of a pre-Advent judgment because they assume that a person is judged at the time of death and sent immediately to his eternal reward in Heaven or hell. Catholics believe that judgment occurs at death and the wicked are immediately sent to hell, but "good people" are sent to "Purgatory" where they must suffer through a purification process before being pure enough to enter Heaven.

Apocalyptic prophecy informs us that the judgment of the dead has been occurring since 1844. When Jesus appears in clouds of glory, He will resurrect the righteous because He determined earlier who was righteous during His pre-Advent judgment.^[99] On the other hand, the wicked who are alive at the Second Coming will be slain by the sword that comes out of His mouth.^[100] This outcome is only possible because Jesus will determine each person's reward before He appears in clouds of glory.^[101] (Further information about the state of man in death and the pre-Advent judgment is available in Chapter 13 of my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.^[102])

The judgment of the dead requires the testimony of three witnesses. The first witness is the actual record of the dead person's actions. The second witness is a record revealing the knowledge base of the dead person. (Each person on Earth has a unique set of beliefs about

right and wrong and I call this set of beliefs a knowledge base of good and evil.) The third witness is the Holy Spirit. When Jesus investigates the life record of a dead person, He compares the dead person's actions, his knowledge of good and evil, and He listens to the testimony of the Holy Spirit. For example, if the dead person's actions align with his knowledge base and his actions demonstrate that he lived up to all that he knew to be right and true, and if the Holy Spirit testifies that this person was open to His guidance, then Jesus has sufficient evidence to determine the dead person was honest in heart. On the basis of the dead man's honesty and fidelity to what he knew to be right, Jesus imparts His righteousness to the dead man and he will be saved.

When Jesus judges mankind (both the dead and the living), He consistently follows one principle: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."^[103]3 The phrase, "the good he knows he ought to do" is a reference to our knowledge of good and evil or our conscience. Man's conscience is an interesting governor. Unless the conscience is dead,^[104] it contains our sense of right and wrong (acquired through parental training, cultural influence, education, etc.) and it is the doorway for the Holy Spirit. The "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God to every person. Those who nurture the still small voice of the Holy Spirit please God because spirit-led people love honesty and truth. An honest heart means more to God than anything else. When we honestly know that something is right and good and we do not do it, God considers our action(s) to be sinful because we have violated our knowledge base of good and evil and we have violated the voice of the Holy Spirit.

From a larger perspective, billions of people lived on Earth before Jesus was born to Mary. After He returned to Heaven, billions more have lived and died without any knowledge of His redemption. To make this matter even more complicated, millions of Christians have lived and died believing erroneous concepts about God and His redemption. These facts are not a problem for God because God does not condemn people for being ignorant! Salvation is not based on knowledge (perfect or imperfect). Salvation is based on faith and doing what is right regardless of the cost. The honest in heart live by faith and their actions prove it! They do the good they know they ought to do. "Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins." This is not to say that a person will be saved for doing good acts. We cannot save ourselves with good works, but we can show God our love for truth and honesty. Jesus bases His judgment of mankind (both the dead and the living) on our faith. Our faith is revealed when we do the good that we know we ought to do regardless of the consequences.

The judgment of the living will occur during the Great Tribulation and this process will begin with global enlightenment. The 144,000 will proclaim the eternal gospel and they will proclaim to everyone living on Earth "the good he ought to do" (the two laws of love). Naturally, the devil will move quickly to make it very difficult to do the good we ought to do! Torture and persecution will intimidate millions of people, but the honest in heart will put their faith in Christ and embrace His eternal gospel. For 1,260 days, every living soul will have an opportunity to hear and thoughtfully consider God's will. Because everyone will be informed on good and evil, Jesus can judge the living and base His judgment on each individual's response to God's two laws of love. To help us submit to the two laws of love, the Holy Spirit will do everything possible to convict us of God's will.

Each person will be tested as though he was the only person on Earth. If a person chooses to defy the two laws of love, if he defies the Holy Spirit's attempt to bring conviction that this is God's will, the Two Witnesses will condemn that person. They will declare that the person does not love God with all his heart, mind, and soul and does not love his neighbor as he should. Of course, this person should not be given eternal life! At the end of the sixth trumpet, Jesus will bring the judgment of the living to a close because every decision will be made. The living will either have the seal of God or the mark of the beast. At the end of 1,260 days, the work of the Two Witnesses will be finished and their influence on the wicked will vanish.

Theological Vacuum

The Bible is clear that God will separate the sheep from the goats at the end of the world. Today the world is full of antagonistic religions and competing gospels. This is not a problem for God. The Father decided long ago to demolish the religious gridlock that would exist at the end of the world with seven "justifiable" judgments on mankind. These judgments are designed to accomplish several objectives at the same time. For example, they will shatter billions of false paradigms, humble everyone, prove the reality of God, and will reveal man's need of a Savior.

When the censer is cast down and the seven trumpets begin, Jesus will create a theological vacuum. This vacuum will suddenly form because the world's clergy do not properly understand the Bible, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. They do not anticipate the seven trumpets and seven bowls. Consequently, they do not understand God's end time plans or purposes. The clergy of the world will be caught by total surprise when the censer is cast down. Jesus will use the seven trumpets to discredit the clergy because He wants laymen to consider a gospel they have not heard before. Jesus will use overwhelming destruction and the temporary vacuum that follows to propel the eternal gospel throughout the world with a minimum of resistance.

The 144,000 will have an opportunity to present a gospel that is contrary to what most people currently believe. The 144,000 will proclaim:

1. The Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything in them is Jesus Christ. (This will be a hard pill for Atheists, Hindus, Jews, and Muslims to swallow.)
2. Jesus Christ is Sovereign God and He is angry with man's degenerate behavior. He is responsible for the judgments that are striking the Earth. (This will be a very hard pill for many Christians to swallow.)
3. After creating the world in six days, Jesus rested on the seventh day of the week^[105] and declared it holy and he commands all mankind to rest from labor on His holy day, Saturday, the seventh day of the week. (This will be a very hard pill for Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Atheists to swallow.)

4. All have sinned and everyone is condemned to death because of his sins. There is only one way to escape the second death and that is to worship Jesus and do as He commands. (This will be a hard pill for billions of religious people to swallow.)

5. Jesus has paid the price for every repentant sinner with His own blood. There is no other means to salvation.

6. Jesus will gather His followers on the 1,335th day of the Great Tribulation. (Billions of people will scorn this information.)

The religious and political leaders of the world will respond to the testimony of the 144,000 with hatred and blasphemy. They will claim to have a better idea, a better solution. They will create a global government (called Babylon in the book of Revelation) which (they think) will appease God's wrath. They will demand uniformity and will eventually persecute everyone who rests on Sabbath, the seventh day of the week!

Demonstrating a Profound Point

Remember, Jesus consistently judges the dead and the living according to this principle: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."^[106] While this principle sounds very simple, it is profoundly wise! Please consider two points:

1. The religious and cultural diversity of mankind is infinite. Suppose fifty billion people have lived on Earth during the past 6,000 years and most of these people lived and died without even hearing the eternal gospel. This is not a problem for God because Jesus came to Earth and paid the penalty for sin for every honest-hearted person. "For God so loved the world that He gave"^[107] Many Christians do not understand that Jesus paid the penalty for sin for everyone – including those who died without hearing about Jesus and His redemption! As we just discussed, Jesus fairly and justly uses three witnesses to judge the dead and two witnesses to judge the living.

2. Knowledge expands over time. Have you marveled at the explosion of knowledge over the past two hundred years? For thousands of years, man could travel no faster than a horse could run and today we think nothing of commercial jets flying from city to city at 350+ mph. Knowledge has radically transformed life on Earth during the past two centuries, but some people still live in very primitive conditions. The gulf between people flying in jets and those people living in primitive conditions has been highlighted to make an important point. Suppose that at any given time in Earth's history, the gulf in man's knowledge of eternal truth ranges between 1% and 10%. (No one is totally ignorant of the laws of love and no one but God has 100% perfect knowledge.) When Jesus judges a dead person who has a knowledge base that contains 1% truth, He judges that person according to what he knew to be right and true. When Jesus judges a living person during the Great Tribulation who has heard ten times more truth,

He will judge that person in the same way He judges a dead person, according to what that person knew to be right and true. Since Jesus judges according to this principle, everyone is judged in the same way.

God's policy for judging people illuminates a profound fact: Anyone who conscientiously does the good that he knows he should do is honest-hearted. Each time our knowledge expands, God challenges our honesty all over again. God constantly challenges us to see if we will be happy in an environment where advancing knowledge of eternal truth never ends. An honest-hearted person will embrace truth (regardless of the consequences) because he loves truth. Such a person, even if he died having only 1% truth, would be eternally happy in the company of God and the holy angels because his knowledge of God's truth will forever expand. Jesus said, "But whoever lives by the truth comes [continues coming] into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has [learned and] done has been done through God."^[108] The 144,000 will proclaim the eternal gospel throughout the whole world with great power and authority for 1,260 days. To make sure that the living know that the 144,000's testimony is true, the Holy Spirit will torment every heart and convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment!^[109] The honest in heart will respond to this enlightenment just like steel responds to the pull of a magnet. A love for truth will separate the sheep from the goats!

Long ago, the Father predetermined that the living would be tested with enlightenment at the end of the age. Because the Kingdom of God is built upon the two laws of love, God wants to test mankind to see who will embrace His two laws of love after the 144,000 proclaim them and after they are fully proclaimed and validated. The amazing thing about this coming test is that two self-selecting groups of people will form. In other words, the sheep (the honest in heart) and the goats (those who disdain honesty) will voluntarily separate themselves from each other by exercising their power of choice! The Father foreknew the whole process could be accomplished in 1,260 days. Actually, every human being will make his decision before the 1,260th day ends, but God will hold the door open a little longer to make sure that everyone is settled in his or her decision. This is why Jesus will empower the Two Witnesses for 1,260 days at the end of the world. The living must be tested and separated. The influence of the Two Witnesses cannot be killed until this mission is accomplished.

The Sequence Continues

Revelation 11:8-9

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 an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

{8} The bodies of the Two Witnesses will lie in the street of the great city, figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

{9} For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language, and nation will look at their bodies and refuse to bury them.

Remember, God is using personification to describe the experience of the 144,000 and His Two Witnesses. John's experience in this prophecy represents the experience of the 144,000. The Two Witnesses are personified as two prophets because they testify – they confirm the testimony of the 144,000. The death of the Two Witnesses personifies the death of the 144,000 (who serve as the arms and legs of the Two Witnesses). One-third of mankind will be killed during the sixth trumpet.^[110] Many of God's people, and most, if not all of the 144,000, will be killed. These are the martyrs described in the fifth seal.^[111] Because of their contempt and hatred for the saints, Satan's forces will refuse to bury God's saints and prophets when they are slaughtered. Throughout history, armies have left their enemies to rot in the street as a display of utter contempt for their foes. Scenes of dead people rotting in the street; providing food for vultures and vermin sent a repulsive message to anyone who might want to rebel.^[112]

It is interesting to notice that the language used in verses 8 and 9 parallels the language used in Revelation 19:19-21. When Jesus destroys His enemies at the Second Coming, He too, will not bury His defiant foes. They will be left to rot in the street and vultures will gorge themselves on their flesh!^[113]

The phrase "the great city that is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified" is symbolic and the Bible defines this symbol with a relevant text. The Bible says "the woman is the great city that rules over the kings of the Earth."^[114] The book of Revelation contrasts two women. One is pure and gives birth to the Savior of the world.^[115] The other woman is a wealthy whore.^[116] The pure woman represents the people of God (His holy city). The whore represents the wicked (a great city containing people who worship Lucifer). The pure woman is called "the bride of Christ." The corrupt woman is called "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth." The whore has no conscience. She sits on a beast having seven heads and ten horns (Babylon), drinking the blood of God's prophets and saints.^[117] Corporately speaking, the wicked who join Lucifer's theocracy will make up "the great city." When the Bible says the bodies of the Two Witnesses will lie in the street of the great city (the whore), the Bible is not talking about a geographical location. It is talking about a worldwide group of defiant people described as Sodom (sexual perverts), Egypt (hard hearts) and Jerusalem (people who rejected the clearest evidences of truth).

God uses repetition and enlargement in the book of Revelation to help us understand the counterfeit theocracy that Lucifer will establish. Lucifer's whore (Lucifer's theocracy) is given another name in Revelation 13. She is also called "an image to the beast."^[118] Lucifer's theocracy will be a mirror image of the crisis government that man created during the first four trumpets. The essential difference between the formation of the crisis government (Babylon – Phase I) and the formation of the whore/image (Babylon – Phase II) is consolidation. When the

seven trumpets begin, world leaders will create Babylon (a crisis government – Phase I) and the governments of the world will obey the instructions of the seven heads (the seven religious systems on Earth). When the sixth trumpet sounds, Lucifer will assert his authority and abolish the religions and governments of the world so that he can set up a counterfeit theocracy (Babylon – Phase II). He will rule over the world as king of kings and lord of lords. The devil will create a one-world-church-state religion and ten puppet kings (the ten horns on the composite beast) will report to him. During the time of the whore/image, (Babylon – Phase II), Lucifer will do his best to kill the opposition. He will kill a third of mankind. Babylon – Phase II, is described as a prostitute because everyone participating in Lucifer’s theocracy knowingly does wrong. The wicked will prostitute themselves to do whatever Lucifer demands in exchange for survival.

Now that we have identified the prostitute (the great city, Lucifer’s theocracy) which will be established during the sixth trumpet, let us return to the phrase in verse 8 that says, “their bodies will lie in the street of the great city.” Lucifer’s theocracy (his great city) will encompass the whole world. Therefore, the street of the great city cannot be a geographical spot or street. When the 144,000 [the arms and legs of the two witnesses] are slain, their dead bodies will be found all over the world. The wicked, because of defiance and hatred of God’s servants, will refuse to bury them. Later on, however, the table will turn and Jesus will resurrect the 144,000, vindicate them in the presence of their enemies and take them to Heaven. During the seven bowls, Jesus will prove to the wicked that Lucifer and his great whore have nothing to do with the God of Heaven. The ten kings will discover Lucifer’s deception during the fifth bowl and they will turn on him and burn his prostitute (theocracy) with fire.^[119]

Lucifer’s whore is described as “a great city” because in Bible times certain cities were fortified as cities of refuge.^[120] No one dared to live very far from a city in Bible times because there was no other means of protection. Marauding tribal kings looted and plundered everything they could steal and they made slaves of everyone who could be captured. It is interesting that Cain feared for his life after killing Abel and he was the first person to build a city.^[121] During the Great Tribulation, the saints will put their faith in Jesus. They will obey the gospel of Jesus and depend upon the Lord as their city of refuge.^[122] On the other hand, the wicked will trust in Lucifer and they will depend on him as their great city of refuge.^[123]

Revelation’s story personifies the people of Earth as a tale of two women and two cities. During the Great Tribulation, the inhabitants of Earth will be required to make an informed choice between two different forms of government. Choice will determine citizenship. One government, directed by Jesus, will be based on God’s two laws of love. The other government will have an arbitrary dictator. Those willing to put their faith in Christ will be eagerly accepted into the city of God (personified). Those defying God’s demands will be “herded” out of fear of death or persecution into a great city (personified) that offers temporary refuge, but there is no safety in the arms of a whore. She cannot be trusted. She is immoral. She always sells out to the highest bidder.

Trampling on the Holy City 42 Months

Revelation 11:2 indicates Gentiles will trample on the holy city for 42 months. What does this mean? New Jerusalem is a city in Heaven. It is holy because God dwells there.^[124] The language in verse 2 does not point to New Jerusalem or the ancient city of Jerusalem located in the Middle East. (At one time, ancient Jerusalem was said to be a holy city because God dwelled there, but Israel's rejection of Messiah caused God to destroy the city.) The phrase, "holy city" in Revelation 11:2 must be compared to "the great city," the whore, in Revelation 17. The wicked at the end of the world are called "the great city" and the saints are called

"the holy city." The reason for dividing the people of Earth into two cities is "refuge." Every believer in Jesus is granted citizenship in God's kingdom when he surrenders to the authority of Jesus.^[125] His refuge is in Christ and even though he may die, he knows he will not perish.^[126] The Bible is clear. The holy city in Revelation 11:2 and the saints in Revelation 13:5 will be trampled on for 42 months.^[127] Repetition and enlargement clarify the meaning of this phrase.

Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem

Figuratively speaking, the prostitute (Lucifer's counterfeit theocracy) is called Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem (the city where our Lord was crucified) and for good reason. Sodom was notorious for sexual perversion and immorality^[128] and Egypt was notorious for hardness of heart. Pharaoh was given the clearest evidences of God's will, yet he hardened his heart ten times!^[129] Those who rush to join Lucifer's counterfeit theocracy and receive his tattoo "666" will have the same attitude toward God as did Pharaoh (in Egypt) and the perverts in Sodom who insisted on having sex with the angels who had come to rescue Lot. Think about this: Defiance toward God's laws of love requires the death of God or the death of those in defiance. There can be no compromise. The leaders of Israel appeared to be very righteous in the eyes of ordinary people, but when Jesus came to Earth, He revealed that they were hypocrites.^[130] Even though the Pharisees put on a great show of piety, many of Israel's religious leaders were totally corrupt, sexually immoral, and hardhearted.^[131] For fear of humiliation, loss of power, wealth and position, Jewish leaders crucified Jesus.^[132] If He had been allowed to live, Jesus would have exposed their sinful actions to the people and the people would have destroyed them.^[133] Jesus said, "Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."^[134] The same will be true at the end of the 1,260 days. The attitudes of the wicked during the Great Tribulation will mirror Egypt (hardness of heart), Sodom (unrestrained evil), and Jerusalem (where Jesus (the Truth) was crucified).

The Sequence Continues

Revelation 11:10

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 dwelt on the earth.

{10} The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over the death of the Two Witnesses. They will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

At the close of the 1,260th day most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be dead – their testimony silenced. Many of God’s saints will also be dead. At the 1,260th day, the population of the world will be half of what it was when the Great Tribulation began. The whole world will be in shambles, but instead of shuddering with fear for what is about to happen (the third woe), the wicked will be elated! They will rejoice and be jubilant because the Holy Spirit no longer torments them.^[135] The annoying prophets (the 144,000) who continually stirred up controversy and condemned their evil ways will be gone. At last, the conflict for souls between Christ and Satan will be over. God’s Two Witnesses have reported everything to Jesus and each person has been judged. To celebrate their Pyrrhic* victory over truth and righteousness, Lucifer will declare a great global holiday. Four days will be dedicated to rejoicing and celebration. The wicked will interpret the slaughter of one-third of mankind and the establishment of Lucifer’s counterfeit theocracy as a glorious development because there will be no more opposition. Other than small numbers of saints hiding in caves and remote places around the world, only those having the tattoo on their right hand will be alive at this time in Earth’s history. Resources (food, energy, and the necessities of life) will last longer now that the population of Earth has been greatly reduced. During the celebration, Lucifer’s grandest lie will be presented to cheering crowds. The devil will triumphantly announce the beginning of a thousand years of peace and happiness. The wicked will rejoice and “God’s” millennial reign will be declared. The crowds will roar with approval and excitement.

***Note:** The phrase “Pyrrhic victory” is named after King Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose army suffered irreplaceable casualties in defeating the Romans at Heraclea in 280 B.C. and Asculum in 279 B.C. After these wars, Plutarch quotes King Pyrrhus as saying, “If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined.” Even though King Pyrrhus won two battles against the Romans, he did not make a dent in the number of soldiers that belonged to Rome’s army. Ultimately, he lost his kingdom because the price of victory robbed him of the soldiers necessary to defend his territory. Hence the ironic term, “Pyrrhic victory.”

Verse 10 describes the Two Witnesses as “two prophets” and if it were not for the larger context of personification (the two lampstands and two olive trees), the context in verse 10 could indicate the Two Witnesses are two human beings. This oversight has led many Bible

students to erroneously conclude that the Two Witnesses are two people. There are two reasons why this conclusion cannot be true!

First, let us suppose that at the 1,260th day, the Two Witnesses are two people living in Washington D.C. What impact would the deaths of these two people have in Russia, Australia, and Germany given the fact that Lucifer and his forces just killed 1.75 billion people for refusing to receive the mark of the beast? (Remember, the infrastructures of travel and communication will be practically non-existent at the time. How long will it take for news of their death to travel around the entire world?) We know that the wicked will celebrate for 3.5 days when the 1,260 days end, but why should the wicked rejoice over the death of two prophets when there are 144,000 prophets? Actually, the wicked will not celebrate the death of two prophets, they will celebrate their freedom from the Holy Spirit's torment! This is a key point that many Christians do not understand.

Do you remember the note that Pilate's wife sent to her husband when he was about to condemn Jesus to death? She wrote, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."^[136] The Holy Spirit tormented Pilate's wife by revealing the identity of Jesus to her and I am sure that her unsolicited note haunted Pilate for the rest of his life. During the Great Tribulation, the Holy Spirit will torment the wicked as He tormented Pilate's wife. The Bible says, "There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."^[137] During the sixth trumpet, the Holy Spirit will cause every wicked person to suffer enormous guilt. The torment will be awful. The Holy Spirit will do everything short of violating a person's will to save that person from the penalty of sin. While this torment is occurring, the 144,000 will proclaim a fourth and final message from Jesus, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes"^[138] and in spite of these divine endeavors, millions of people will rush forward to be among the first to receive the tattoo on their right hand (the mark of the beast). When a person receives the tattoo, the Holy Spirit gives up and departs. There is nothing further that He can do to save that soul. As the Holy Spirit withdraws from the wicked, any desire or conviction within them to do right also leaves. Lucifer will seize this opportunity and beginning on the 1,261st day of the Great Tribulation, he will lead the wicked into a victory festival! This uninhibited celebration will parallel, in a perverse way, the exuberance which the Jews experienced after destroying their enemies in the days of Queen Esther. In fact, many Jews still celebrate Purim by giving gifts to each other to mark their nation's victory over their enemies!^[139]

Second, the Bible calls the Two Witnesses "two prophets." We need to consider the Greek word prophetes. The word is usually translated "prophets," but the word includes a broader meaning, such as "an inspired speaker" or "one who speaks for God." Abraham is the first man in the Bible to be called a prophet,^[140] but Noah could also be called a prophet because he was an inspired speaker.^[141] The Two Witnesses are called two prophetes because they will be inspired speakers. They will speak for God. When ordinary men and women are enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak words they could not say on their own, these people are called prophetes.^[142] In fact, the 144,000 are called prophetes in Revelation 10:7 and they are separately identified from the saints in the book of Revelation^[143] in several places. We have

already learned in this study that God wrote His two laws of love on two tablets of stone. These two stones are called “the Testimony” and they reside in “the Ark of the Testimony” because the Ten Commandments testify. They declare what pure love will do and will not do. The Ten Commandments have a divine origin and they speak for God, therefore the Ten Commandments (the two lampstands) are one witness and this witness can be called a prophete.

The two olive trees represent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a prophete because it speaks for God. The Holy Spirit will impress God’s two laws on the hearts of people. Their common objective is conviction – a moment of truth which requires a pivotal decision. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the 144,000 will speak with authority as did Jesus and John the Baptist.^[144] God’s Two Witnesses will work through 144,000 prophetes and Jesus will pass judgment on the living according to their response. Even if the Two Witnesses were two people sent from Heaven, their deaths at the end of the 1,260 days would have no more impact on the whole world than did Jesus’ death. When we consider the population of the whole world in A.D. 30, very, very few people rejoiced at the death of Jesus.

Revelation 11:11

And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

{11} But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, they stood on their feet, and the people celebrating their death were struck with terror.

The Two Witnesses will remain dead for 3.5 days. Jesus will resurrect them in the presence of their enemies and He will take them to Heaven. There is evidence indicating the 144,000 could be taken to Heaven on a Sunday because first fruits were presented to God on the first day of the week.^[145] For example, in Numbers 28:26, a presentation of firstfruits took place at the feast of Pentecost which always fell on a Sunday.^[146] We know that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, and He ascended to the Father that morning as the first fruits of the dead.^[147] If the 144,000 are resurrected, taken to Heaven, and presented to God and the Lamb on a Sunday, this is consistent with first fruits being offered on a Sunday. The Bible does declare the 144,000

will be the first fruits of the coming harvest.^[148]

The three and a half days can be easily demonstrated using an example with actual dates. Suppose, for sake of discussion, that the 1,260th day of the Great Tribulation ends on Wednesday, sundown, February 4, 2015, in New York City. Remember, that with God, a day begins and ends at sundown – local time.^[149] Suppose the wicked in New York City gaze upon the dead bodies of God’s prophets for three full days – Thursday, Friday, and Sabbath. Also, suppose the 144,000 are resurrected at dawn on Sunday morning, February 8, 2015. The elapsed time would be three and a half days. Although the actual date of their resurrection is unknown at this time, we do know that the 144,000 are the firstfruits of the coming harvest and it is possible they could be taken to Heaven and presented to God and the Lamb on a Sunday, the first day of the week.

Imagine the anxiety that will overwhelm murderous revelers when they actually see the resurrection of God’s prophets. Words cannot possibly describe their terror when they see the dead awoken and stand up. The 144,000 will shine with the same glory that radiated from Moses when He descended Mt. Sinai. The courage and bravado of the wicked will melt. Fearing for their lives, the wicked will run for cover like cockroaches when exposed to light.

Revelation 11:12-13

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

{12} Then, a loud voice spoke from Heaven to the 144,000: “Come up here.” And immediately, the 144,000 ascended to Heaven in a cloud while their enemies looked on.^[150]

{13} At that very hour, there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the great city (that is, a tenth of Lucifer’s government) was destroyed by the earthquake. The ground swallowed up the highest ranking administrators within Lucifer’s government (all seven thousand of them).^[151]

This text may indicate that Lucifer’s government will consist of 70,000 officials. If so, each king (there will be ten kings) may rule over 7,000 officials. When the 144,000 are resurrected and taken to Heaven, 7,000 of Lucifer’s highest officials will perish. I believe this divine event declares, “Game Over.” Maybe Jesus will destroy 7,000 demon possessed officials who were known and feared for their inhumane cruelty. Regardless, Lucifer and his officials used their

power to destroy God's people and now Jesus will use higher power to destroy them. The earthquake will terrify the surviving saints, but they will rejoice and give glory to Jesus because they know He is about to end their misery and suffering! Lucifer's government will be badly damaged by the loss of this leadership, but Lucifer will not care. The celebration will end abruptly and a cloud of heavy worry will fall on the wicked.

Revelation 11:14

The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly

{14} Then a loud thunder came from Heaven. A voice said: "The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon."

Prior to the seventh trumpet, the gospel of Jesus Christ will reach every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. When the 1,260th day arrives, everyone on Earth either has the seal of God or the mark of the beast. The saints will have their carnal natures removed and the wicked will have committed the unpardonable sin. What a contrast! After 3.5 days of celebration, the seventh trumpet will sound on the 1,265th day, perhaps a Sunday. Jesus will resurrect the 144,000 and take them to Heaven. The seventh trumpet will sound in Heaven shortly after the 144,000 arrive in Heaven and an earthquake will swallow up 7,000 of Lucifer's officials. The seventh trumpet marks a very important transition in Earth's history. All that remains is the execution of justice. Remember, during the Great Tribulation there will be no justice for God's people. Therefore, Jesus avenges their suffering and death. Over a period of seventy days, the wicked and ultimately, planet Earth itself, will be totally destroyed.

Jesus has several purposes for the seven bowls and we will examine them when we study Prophecy 14:

1. Jesus will use the first five bowls to incrementally undo Lucifer's deception. Jesus will unmask the devil because He wants every wicked person to recognize and acknowledge that the glorious being masquerading as Almighty God is the devil himself. As you can imagine, forcing defiant people into this position will take a great deal of pain.
2. Jesus will use the seven last plagues to punish the wicked for defiance. No sovereign can tolerate open and defiant contempt within his kingdom. The wicked must be punished because they deliberately insulted and willfully defied the commandments of the Creator of the Universe who is King of kings and Lord of lords. For 1,260 days the clearest evidences of God's will and

truth were set before all mankind, but the wicked refused to hear God's servants and they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. They willingly and knowingly refused to obey Almighty God. Not only this, they tortured and killed God's saints knowing that what they were doing was wrong! Now, the table turns. Almighty God will deal with these rebels. For seventy days, they will suffer in the extreme and there will be NO mercy! The defiant cannot escape drinking the bitter dregs of God's wrath. ^[152]

3. Finally, Jesus will repay the wicked for the suffering which they heaped upon His people. Justice demands that the golden rule be applied. This rule declares: "As you did unto others, the same will be done unto you." ^[153] The pain and suffering, sorrow and death imposed upon God's saints during the Great Tribulation will be the equivalent of war crimes in God's sight. Therefore, Jesus will punish the wicked for crimes against humanity. Remember that the punishment inflicted on the wicked during the seven bowls does not affect or eliminate the restitution which will be extracted from the wicked at the end of the 1,000 years.

The second thing that must be discussed before considering the horrors of the third woe is that God's anger with the wicked is limited by His two laws of love. God does not extract revenge beyond the demands of justice. ^[154] God faithfully adheres to His two laws of love. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. ^[155] Restitution is a cornerstone of God's government of love. This is why God said in the Old Testament, "But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." ^[156] By closely studying God's actions, we see what pure love is and what pure love does and how pure love behaves – under all circumstances. God is righteous and pure; He demands the highest standards of conduct for Himself and from His creation.

Seventh Trumpet Sounds

Revelation 11:15

And the seventh angel 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.

{15} I heard the seventh trumpet sound and I heard loud voices in Heaven say, "The kingdom

of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

Some Christians believe that Jesus received the kingdom of this world when He ascended to the Father after His resurrection. There is some confusion on this topic, so please consider the following:

In the beginning, Jesus created everything in the universe for the Father.^[157] Jesus is the creative agent of the Godhead, but everything He created belonged to the Father. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were to be immediately executed because the Father has “a sudden death law.”^[158] The wages of sin is death by execution, but Jesus went to the Father and offered to be executed in man’s place. The Father told Jesus that His plan for man’s redemption required a perfect substitute. In other words, if Jesus perfectly carried out the Father’s will, sinners could be saved if they put their faith in Christ’s atonement and did their best to carry out the teachings of Jesus. (see Appendix C.) The Father also promised to give the world to Jesus if He successfully carried out His plans.

On the day that Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus relinquished His rights and privileges as a co-eternal member of the Godhead to the Father. Jesus subjected Himself to the Father’s will and Jesus became known as the Son [the subject] of God.^[159] The title, “Son of God” does not mean that the Father created Jesus or that Jesus is not equal to the Father. Jesus is fully God just like the Father. The Hebrew word ben (son) means subject – as a child is subject to the will of his parents or a citizen is subject to his nation’s constitution or the will of His king. Jesus humiliated Himself [subjected Himself] to the Father’s will for man’s redemption and this is why the title, ‘the Son of God’ means, ‘the Subject of God.’ Four thousand years after sin began, Jesus came to Earth to carry out the will of the Father in His flesh^[160] and just before going to the cross, Jesus prayed these words:

“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. . . . I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. . . . For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. . . . All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.”^[161]

When Jesus ascended to Heaven on Resurrection Sunday, the Father did not give the kingdom of the world to Jesus as many people think. Instead, He made Jesus the head of the church. Paul wrote, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.”^[162] During the first century following the ascension of Jesus, the disciples believed that Jesus had been given sovereign power over everything and they also believed that Jesus would shortly return to Earth. This understanding was not harmful, but it was not fact. Just before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He spoke to His disciples: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go

and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”^[163] The disciples heard these words, but they did not understand that the authority given to Jesus was limited to His church. The apostle Paul also thought that Jesus had received all authority after returning to Heaven. Paul did not understand the timing of apocalyptic prophecy when He wrote, “And he [the Father] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment— to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”^[164] (See commentary on Prophecy 2 for further discussion of the time when Christ is given sovereign power.)

These and other Bible texts have given many people the idea that Jesus received the kingdom of this world when He ascended, but apocalyptic prophecy indicates this is not the case. The book of Daniel teaches that Jesus was found worthy to receive sovereign power in 1798.^[165] Because the book of Daniel was sealed up until the time of the end,^[166] the disciples and the apostle Paul could not possibly know certain things about the future. However, the disciples did understand that Jesus would be given all authority and the kingdom of this world, but no one could know the truth on this matter until the book of Daniel was unsealed.

All Bible writers have one flaw in common. They try to put everything shown to them in vision within the context of their knowledge or life span. Of course, an infinite God is not limited by time or our knowledge. So, the limitations of Bible writers are not a problem once we understand the four rules that govern the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy. For example, Peter, John, Paul, and James had no idea that 2,000 years would pass before Jesus returned to Earth. Look at their thoughts: Paul wrote, “What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none.”^[167] John wrote, “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.”^[168] Peter wrote, “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”^[169] James wrote, “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”^[170] Obviously, these godly men would not have written such things if they had known that Jesus’ return would be 2,000 years in the future.

Earlier in this book, we examined Revelation 5. We found that Jesus was found worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals in 1798 for several reasons. Jesus also began breaking the seven seals on The Book of Life in 1798. We have examined the alignment of the third seal with 1844, the alignment of the fourth seal and the commencement of the seven trumpets, and the alignment of the fifth seal with the sixth trumpet. After the Two Witnesses complete their work, the 144,000 will be taken to Heaven and then the seventh trumpet will sound. What a privilege and honor for the 144,000 to be there and see Jesus receive the kingdom which the Father will give Him. This is why the angels and the elders rejoice! “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”^[171]

Revelation 11:16-18

And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 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.

{16} The twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped Him,

{17} saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have exercised your great authority and have now begun to reign [as King of kings and Lord of lords].

{18} I also heard the elders sing a passage from Isaiah: "Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the Earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! The Lord is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree. My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; see, it descends in judgment on Edom [my enemies], the people I have totally destroyed."^[172]

The elders continued, "Oh Lord God, we give thanks to you, the time has come for avenging the sacrificial blood of your martyrs. The number permitted to die during the fifth seal has been completed. The time has come to reward your servants, the 144,000, who stand before your throne. The time has come to reward your waiting saints on Earth and all who reverence your holy name; both small and great. Mercy has ended and justice has come. Destroy the whore and all who belong to her, destroy those who ruined the Earth with violence, hostility, murder, sexual immorality and every evil known to mankind."

Revelation 11:19

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

{19} When the elders finished, I looked up into the sky and saw a marvelous sight. I was not alone as everyone on Earth could see God's temple in Heaven. Words cannot describe the dazzling glory that radiated from His temple. Inside the temple, in full view of everyone, was a golden box. Our eyes were drawn to that box because brilliant beams of light flashed from it. A loud voice said to the inhabitants of Earth, "Look at the Ark of God's covenant!"

There has been considerable debate through the centuries on the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant. The Bible indicates the temple veil in Jerusalem was torn from top to bottom when Jesus was crucified,^[173] but the Ark of the Covenant was not found in the Most Holy Place in Jerusalem's temple! God evidently took the Ark of the Covenant to Heaven for safe keeping after Israel rejected Messiah. For reasons why I believe that the Ark of Moses has been taken to Heaven for everyone to see at the seventh trumpet see this reference.^[174]

The Ark of the Covenant was a small box overlaid with gold. God had it built shortly after Israel was delivered from Egypt. God had this special box made so that Israel would have a resting place for the two tablets of His Testimony, His covenant with mankind. When the Ark of the Covenant was on Earth, no one saw it other than Israel's high priests – and only then, once a year on the Day of Atonement. God prevented Israel from seeing the Ark of the Covenant because He did not want Israel worshipping a golden box or the two tablets of stone. Because the Ten Commandments are based on two laws of love, God's law is not effective unless it is written in the hearts of His subjects.^[175]

Jesus will reveal the Ark of the Covenant to everyone on Earth at the seventh trumpet (1,265th day of the Great Tribulation). God's two laws of love are called a covenant (a promise) because they declare what pure love will do and will not do. When God's two laws are written in a person's heart, that person naturally lives in harmony with everything the law declares!^[176] The first four commandments reveal what pure love for God will produce and the last six reveal what pure love for your neighbor will produce. In other words, at Mount Sinai, God wrote a promise on two tablets of stone. He declared what pure love will produce within man if man will follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Many people claim to love God, but who determines what pure love will do? Love for God is not pure unless it produces results that conform to the first four commandments. Love for our neighbor is not pure unless it produces results that conform to the last six commandments. This is why the Ten Commandments are called a covenant. God promises that pure love will produce everything that is written in the Ten Commandments. When the carnal nature is removed, God's children will naturally do what is written in the Ten Commandments! This is why Paul wrote, "Love is the fulfillment of the law!"^[177] Until the carnal nature is removed, God's children cannot consistently do what is written in the Ten Commandments, even though it is their

greatest desire. This is why the sealing process is so important. During the Great Tribulation, everyone will be tested. Jesus wants to see who loves God and his neighbor with a pure heart. God will generously reward everyone who passes the two tests of love. Their carnal nature will be removed. God will then put a seal on that person and he will be free from falling back into the power of sin!

Consider this: A person can obey the Ten Commandments without fulfilling the Ten Commandments. For example, a person may not commit murder because the law says that murder is forbidden. Of course, avoiding murder (even if the action is not out of love) is beneficial for society, but avoiding murder is not the full intent of the law. The promise in God's covenant is this: If you love your neighbor as God loves you, you will never have a desire to commit murder. You would rather die for your neighbor than take his life. Thus, pure love fulfills the intent of the law and as a covenant, the Ten Commandments predict how pure love will be expressed in the human heart!

According to God, love is not a loosely defined sentiment that everyone defines to his own satisfaction. God governs the universe according to two eternal rules of love that are clearly defined. The world has all kinds of ideas about love, but God's definition of love is all that matters. God is love. This means that the actions of the Godhead are a demonstration of what love is and is not. Three co-eternal members of the Godhead live within these two laws and on the basis of their combined powers, they guarantee these two laws will never be amended and they will never cease to exist. The Father's goal is to bring fallen man back into harmony with these two laws so that our union and communion with the Godhead might be perfect!

God's two laws of love are so important that Jesus Himself descended to Mount Sinai to speak the Ten Commandments. To keep "the Testimony" from being altered by fallen man, Jesus wrote the two laws of love on two tablets of stone with His own finger. Moses knew the Ten Commandments were a covenant. Moses understood that if Israel surrendered to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, He would fill them with God's love and the outcome would be a nation reflecting God's two great commandments. When pure love is present, the obligation of law goes unnoticed! Think about this: Adam and Eve did not have a single conflict with God's laws of love before they fell, because God's laws were written in their hearts and minds. After Adam and Eve fell, they immediately came into conflict with God's laws of love at every turn because the carnal nature is hostile toward pure love. "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."^[178]

God Shows the Ark of the Covenant to the World

Revelation 11:19 says, "Then God's temple in Heaven was opened and within His temple was seen the Ark of His Covenant. . . ." When we consider the timing and setting of this event, we have to ask what is the purpose and significance of showing the Ark of His covenant to the world? Before we proceed into this explanation, please review the sequence of events surrounding this amazing revelation:

1. The Two Witnesses are killed on the 1,260th day.

2. The wicked will celebrate for 3.5 days.
3. All of the wicked will be wearing the mark of the beast.
4. The 144,000 will be resurrected and taken to Heaven.
5. Seven thousand of Lucifer's officials will be killed by an earthquake.
6. The Ark of the Covenant will be seen and. . . .
7. The seven bowls will begin immediately.

Jesus will show the Ark of the Covenant to the world at the appointed time because it contains His two laws of love, the Ten Commandments, written on two stone tablets with His own finger. In other words, Jesus will show the wicked "the Testimony" that condemned them. God wants the wicked to see "the two highest laws of the universe," the laws they rejected, despised and defied. Like King Belshazzar, the wicked will clearly understand that their actions have been examined and they did not measure up.^[179] The seventh trumpet marks the end of the judgment of the living. It also marks the commencement of the third and final woe: The seven last plagues.

To put this event in a better perspective, we need to examine the origin and God's purpose for the Ark of the Covenant. Notice what Moses said to the Israelites before entering Canaan, "The Lord gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the Lord proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. At the end of the forty days and forty nights, the Lord gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant."^[180]

When Moses came down from the mountain, "He [Moses] took the Testimony [the Ten Commandments] and placed it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it. Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the Testimony [from view], as the Lord commanded him."^[181] The Ark of the Covenant was "holy" because "God's presence" protected the Ark. Whenever the Israelite priests carried the ark from one location to another, the rest of the camp had to keep a distance of a thousand yards between themselves and the Ark of the Covenant.^[182]

Millions of Christians have been led to believe the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross with Jesus. They believe the Ten Commandments were part of "the old covenant" which was abolished when Jesus died. But ironically, most Christians believe that nine of the Ten Commandments should be obeyed! So here is the question: If the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross, why does God show the golden box containing the Ten Commandments to the world at the seventh trumpet?

The answer is simple. There will be a great controversy during the Great Tribulation over the topic of worship. The Holy Spirit will demand (through the preaching of the 144,000) that everyone must obey God's two laws of love and this includes observing God's seventh-day rest (the fourth commandment). Of course, obeying the Ten Commandments cannot produce salvation. However, when persecution and/or death is promised to everyone obeying God's Ten Commandments, faith and love for God will be tested and we know that it is through faith that we are saved! This is a critical point: When worship requires a sacrifice, when obeying God means the loss of family, friends, and possessions, faith is severely tested and those who pass

the test of love and faith will be sealed and saved!

The religious leaders of the world will also demand worship, but the worship which Babylon demands will be contrary to the worship that God demands. This is how the issue of worship will become a hotly debated topic during the Great Tribulation. Revelation 13:5-8 indicates that all who honor and observe God's Sabbath rest will suffer persecution. When the judgment of the living ends, God will open the temple in Heaven and show the wicked why they are evil in His sight. Wickedness occurs when God's two laws of love are violated. This is the testimony of His law and its conclusion is beyond impeachment or appeal.

When the surviving saints see the Ark of the Covenant beaming from Heaven's temple, they will rejoice because they will know that God's two laws of love are sealed within their hearts. The saints will know from personal experience why the Ten Commandments are called a covenant. They have been transformed, literally, by God's pure love. Their sinful natures have been removed and they find themselves in perfect harmony with God and His two laws of love. God's laws of love are noble, wise, honorable, and everlasting. " 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.' "[183]

The wicked will not be able to hide themselves from the glory of this event. They will gaze at the Ark of the Covenant. This spectacle in the sky will leave them speechless and dumbfounded. They will be awestruck by the somber reality and importance of God's eternal laws. Mortals will remember their defiance against Almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords and will sense their impending doom. The wicked will realize that they rejected every opportunity to repent and that they rejected every overture made by the Holy Spirit who was prompting them to submit to God's two laws of love. The tattoos on their right hands (the mark of the beast) confirms they willingly and knowingly chose to worship and obey a demon. This will be a horrible moment of truth for the wicked. During the seventy days of the seven bowls, the wicked will not forget the Ark of the Covenant. God has predetermined that those who rebel against Him will remember the law that testifies against them as they suffer the seven bowls of His wrath. [184]

{19 - Continued} After everyone on Earth saw the Ark of His Covenant, there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm of burning meteors. Once again, fire from Heaven fell on particularly evil places and they were incinerated like Sodom and Gomorrah. The saints heard a loud voice. (One of the seven thunders?) It was Jesus. He said, "Let him who does wrong, continue to do wrong; let him who is vile, continue to be vile; let him who does right, continue to do right; and let him who is holy, continue to be holy." [185]

The Rules of Interpretation

Consider how the Rules of Interpretation (discussed in the Introduction of this book) are observed in this prophecy:

Rule One says an apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning point and ending point in time and the events within the prophecy occur in the order given. This prophecy has a beginning point in time, but the date cannot be precisely known. However, we do know from Revelation 7 and 8 that the 144,000 will be selected and sealed shortly before the commencement of the first four trumpets. We also know that the Two Witnesses will be empowered for 1,260 days and we know from Daniel 12:11,12 that the Great Tribulation will last 1,335 days. Therefore, it appears that Revelation 10:1 occurs a few days before the censer is cast down and the 144,000 are empowered.

Rule Two says a fulfillment only occurs when all of the specifications are met, and this includes the order stated in the prophecy. Of course, this prophecy has not yet begun, therefore it has not been fulfilled. On the other hand, we clearly see a chronological flow within this prophecy:

1. John saw Jesus come to Earth, he was told to eat the little book (the selection of the 144,000)
2. John was told to prophesy again (the 144,000 will proclaim an undefiled gospel)
3. John was given a measuring rod (the 144,000 will deliver a message that measures people)
4. God's Two Witnesses empowered for 1,260 days (the 144,000 are empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim God's two laws of love)
5. The Two Witnesses are killed (the ministry of the 144,000 ends)
6. The Two Witnesses are resurrected (the 144,000 will be resurrected and taken to Heaven)
7. The seventh trumpet sounds (the judgment of the living concludes)
8. Ark of the Covenant is shown (the wicked are condemned)
9. Physical phenomenon occur (lightning, rumblings, thunder, earthquake, hail)

Rule Three says apocalyptic language can be literal, analogous, or symbolic. To reach the intended meaning of a prophecy, the reader must consider (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language in the Bible, and (c) if an element is thought to be symbolic, the Bible must interpret the symbol with a relevant text.

This prophecy uses all three types of language. For example, the two lampstands and the two olive trees are symbolic. There are relevant texts in the Bible to define these symbols. The great harlot symbolizes a great city (of refuge), but the Ark of the Covenant in God's temple is literal. This prophecy also uses parallel Scripture. Ezekiel and John ate books that were given to them. The message was sweet in their mouths (the truth is wonderful), but bitter in their stomachs (telling those who do not want to hear is very difficult). John's experience in this vision personifies the experience of the 144,000. The two lampstands and two olive trees personify the

two laws of love and the Holy Spirit.

Rule Four says the presence or absence of the Jubilee Calendar determines how God measures time. The 1,260 days allotted for the empowerment of the two witnesses does not require translation because the 1,260 days occur after the Jubilee Calendar ended in 1994. (See Appendix A.)

References:

1. Numbers 35:30; Hebrews 10:28; Matthew 18:15-17 [Return](#)
2. 1 John 4:8,16 [Return](#)
3. John 5:31-33,37,38 [Return](#)
4. Acts 10:34,35 [Return](#)
5. Matthew 24:14 [Return](#)
6. 1 Kings 19:14-18 [Return](#)
7. 1 Kings 18 [Return](#)
8. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11; Revelation 13:13,14 [Return](#)
9. Ezekiel 13 [Return](#)
10. Exodus 14:16-21 [Return](#)
11. Acts 3:2-12 [Return](#)
12. Numbers 20:11,12; Deuteronomy 31:2; Romans 7:14-23 [Return](#)
13. Jesus is described as a mighty angel because He is the Archangel. 1 Thessalonian 4:16; John 5:25-28 (See also Chapter 2 in my book, Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega. You can freely download this chapter at: <http://www.wake-up.org/Alpha/Chapter1.htm>.) [Return](#)
14. Compare Daniel 10:7 with Acts 9:7. [Return](#)
15. The rainbow suggests the presence of divinity, see Revelation 4:3. (See also pages 108-114 in my book, A study on the Seven Trumpets, Two Witnesses and Four Beasts. You can freely download this chapter at: <http://www.wake-up.org/Revelation/RevWitnesses.pdf>.) [Return](#)
16. John 12:28-30 [Return](#)
17. Genesis 22:16; Jeremiah 22:5 [Return](#)
18. John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:13-17; Ephesians 1:9-11 [Return](#)
19. This delay began in Revelation 7:2,3. Please compare with Daniel 12:7. The 1,335 days mentioned in Daniel 12:11,12 begin with this declaration. [Return](#)
20. Daniel 8:17,19; Luke 21:23. Please compare with Isaiah 24:1-6. [Return](#)
21. Luke 21:22; Colossians 3:5,6; Ephesians 5:6 [Return](#)
22. For parallel texts, see Acts 2:17-21 and Joel 2:28-32. [Return](#)
23. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 [Return](#)
24. Matthew 27:66 [Return](#)
25. Hebrews 8:10,11; 1 John 3:2,3 [Return](#)
26. Genesis 3:21; 15:6 [Return](#)
27. Hebrews 7:25 [Return](#)
28. Genesis 15:6 [Return](#)

29. See a parallel in Ezekiel 2 and 3. See also Deuteronomy 18:18-22. [Return](#)
30. See parallel experience in Ezekiel 3:14,15. [Return](#)
31. Daniel 9:3 [Return](#)
32. See Zechariah 3:7,8 for a parallel. God spoke to Joshua and those with him as though they were people that would later appear on Earth. [Return](#)
33. The Greek preposition epi can be and should be translated 'before' instead of 'about' in this passage. (See also the KJV translation and Revelation 10:11.) [Return](#)
34. Revelation 14:6,7 [Return](#)
35. Revelation 14:5 [Return](#)
36. Hebrews 4:12,13; Matthew 5:3-11; Revelation 22:11 [Return](#)
37. Isaiah 6:5-12 [Return](#)
38. Revelation 2:9; Matthew 7:16-23 [Return](#)
39. For a discussion on the holy city representing God's people, see commentary following Revelation 11:8 in this prophecy. (See also Revelation 13:5 for confirmation on the 42 months.) [Return](#)
40. Deuteronomy 23:2-8 [Return](#)
41. John 10:14-16; 14:21-27 [Return](#)
42. Revelation 13:5-7; Daniel 12:7. [Return](#)
43. John 16:1-3 [Return](#)
44. Genesis 37:34; 1 Kings 21:27; Psalm 69:7-13 [Return](#)
45. Daniel 12:7 [Return](#)
46. Matthew 22:37-39 [Return](#)
47. Deuteronomy 31:26 [Return](#)
48. Daniel 9:11-13; 1 John 3:4; Romans 7:7-12 [Return](#)
49. Genesis 31:44-48; Deuteronomy 31:19,26; Isaiah 8:20 [Return](#)
50. 1 Corinthians 13:3 [Return](#)
51. 2 Corinthians 5:17 [Return](#)
52. 1 Peter 1:22-2:2 [Return](#)
53. Matthew 12:31,32 [Return](#)
54. Romans 8:26,27 [Return](#)
55. See Numbers 35:30. [Return](#)
56. Matthew 12:31,32, 43-45; Hebrews 10:26 [Return](#)
57. Romans 1:18-32 [Return](#)
58. Leviticus 4:13,14,20; Romans 2:14,15; James 4:17 [Return](#)
59. James 4:17 [Return](#)
60. Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1 [Return](#)
61. Revelation 9:20,21; 19:19-21 [Return](#)
62. Zechariah 4:1-14 [Return](#)
63. Exodus 19:4-6; Isaiah 42:6,7; Matthew 5:14 [Return](#)
64. Psalm 19:7 [Return](#)
65. Isaiah 42:6; 49:6 [Return](#)
66. Galatians 3:28,29 [Return](#)
67. Matthew 23:37,38; Ephesians 2:10-22; Galatians 3:28,29; Revelation 2:5 [Return](#)
68. Judges 7 [Return](#)
69. Acts 14:3 [Return](#)
70. Revelation 3:10 [Return](#)

71. John 8:13-18 [Return](#)
72. See KJV Deuteronomy 11:14; Joel 2:23; James 5:7 [Return](#)
73. Ephesians 4:11-16 [Return](#)
74. Joel 2:27-29 [Return](#)
75. Romans 8:5-8 [Return](#)
76. Hebrews 8:10 [Return](#)
77. Matthew 22:34 [Return](#)
78. Revelation 14:5 [Return](#)
79. James 5:17,18 [Return](#)
80. Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:12-19; Daniel 8:9-13; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:2-12; Revelation 9:1-11; 13:11-18; 17:11-17; 20:2 [Return](#)
81. Matthew 24:24-26 [Return](#)
82. Mark 8:35; Revelation 13:15 [Return](#)
83. Revelation 9:20,21, insertion mine [Return](#)
84. Zechariah 4:6 [Return](#)
85. KJV Deuteronomy 11:14; Joel 2:23; James 5:7 [Return](#)
86. 2 Chronicles 16:9 [Return](#)
87. Acts 5:32; Romans 8:16 [Return](#)
88. Psalm 19:7,8 [Return](#)
89. Deuteronomy 31:24-26 [Return](#)
90. Exodus 31:18, italics mine [Return](#)
91. Ezekiel 18:4 [Return](#)
92. Ecclesiastes 9:5,6 [Return](#)
93. Psalm 115:17 [Return](#)
94. Revelation 2:11; 20:14 [Return](#)
95. John 11:11-15; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; John 5:25-29; 2 Peter 3:4; Revelation 20:5 [Return](#)
96. John 11:11 [Return](#)
97. Malachi 4:3; 2 Peter 2:6 [Return](#)
98. 2 Corinthians 5:10 [Return](#)
99. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 [Return](#)
100. Revelation 19:21 [Return](#)
101. Revelation 22:12 [Return](#)
102. You can freely download this chapter at:
<http://www.wake-up.org/Alpha/Chapter13.htm>. [Return](#)
103. James 4:17 [Return](#)
104. 1 Timothy 4:2 [Return](#)
105. Genesis 2:1-3 [Return](#)
106. James 4:17 [Return](#)
107. John 3:16 [Return](#)
108. John 3:21, insertion mine [Return](#)
109. John 16:8 [Return](#)
110. Revelation 9:15 [Return](#)
111. Revelation 6:9-11; 16:4-7; 18:24, 20:4 [Return](#)
112. Deuteronomy 28:15-28; Psalm 79:1-3; Jeremiah 19:7; Ezekiel 29:5 [Return](#)
113. Revelation 19:17-21 [Return](#)

114. Revelation 17:18 [Return](#)
115. Revelation 12:1-6 [Return](#)
116. Revelation 17:3-6 [Return](#)
117. Revelation 17:3-6 [Return](#)
118. Revelation 13:14 [Return](#)
119. Revelation 17:16 [Return](#)
120. See Numbers 35. [Return](#)
121. Genesis 4:14-17 [Return](#)
122. Psalm 48:8; 14 and 91. [Return](#)
123. For a parallel passage, see Isaiah 1:21-26. [Return](#)
124. Revelation 21:2,10 [Return](#)
125. Ephesians 2:19,20 [Return](#) [Return](#)
126. John 11:25,26 [Return](#)
127. Compare Revelation 11:2,3 with Revelation 13:5-7. See also Daniel 12:7. [Return](#)
128. Genesis 18:16 - 19:13 [Return](#)
129. See chapters 8-11 and 14 in Exodus. [Return](#)
130. Matthew 5:20; 6:1-4 [Return](#)
131. John 8:3-11; Matthew 19:7,8; Matthew 23 [Return](#)
132. John 3:19-21; 19:5-7; Acts 3:13-15 [Return](#)
133. John 11:50 [Return](#)
134. John 3:20 [Return](#)
135. Compare Revelation 11:10 with 14:11. [Return](#)
136. Matthew 27:19 [Return](#)
137. Revelation 14:11 [Return](#)
138. Revelation 18:4,5 [Return](#)
139. Esther 9:17-32 [Return](#)
140. Genesis 20:7 [Return](#)
141. Genesis 6:8- [Return](#)
142. 2 Peter 1:20,21; Joel 2:27-30 [Return](#)
143. Revelation 10:7; 11:18; 16:6; 18:24 [Return](#)
144. Matthew 7:28,29; 11:7-14 [Return](#)
145. Leviticus 23:10,11; Numbers 28:26 [Return](#)
146. Leviticus 23:16 [Return](#)
147. 1 Corinthians 15:20 [Return](#)
148. Revelation 14:4 [Return](#)
149. Genesis 1:5 [Return](#)
150. Compare the timing in Revelation 14:1-5 with 19:1-8 for evidence showing the 144,000 are in Heaven prior to the Second Coming. [Return](#)
151. For a parallel event, see Numbers 16:24-34. [Return](#)
152. Revelation 14:9,10; 15:1,4 [Return](#)
153. Matthew 7:12 [Return](#)
154. Romans 12:19 [Return](#)
155. Psalm 89:14 [Return](#)
156. Exodus 21:23-25; Luke 12:2-9 [Return](#)
157. Hebrews 1:1,2 [Return](#)
158. Genesis 2:17 [Return](#)

159. Psalm 2:7-12; Hebrews 5:5 [Return](#)
160. John 6:38 [Return](#)
161. John 17:1-10, italics mine [Return](#)
162. Ephesians 1:22 [Return](#)
163. Matthew 28:18,19 [Return](#)
164. Ephesians 1:9,10 [Return](#)
165. Daniel 7:13,14 [Return](#)
166. Daniel 12:4,9 [Return](#)
167. 1 Corinthians 7:29 [Return](#)
168. 1 John 2:18 [Return](#)
169. 1 Peter 4:7 [Return](#)
170. James 5:8 [Return](#)
171. Revelation 11:15 [Return](#)
172. Isaiah 34:1-5 Note: The title Edom is another name for Easu and it is sometimes used in the Old Testament to identify those who despise God's covenant. See Genesis 25:34. [Return](#)
173. Mark 15:38 [Return](#)
174. The Bible does not explicitly say that the Ark of the Covenant was taken to Heaven after Jeremiah hid it from the approaching Babylonians. Contrary to the claims of many, here are nine reasons why this author is convinced the Ark of the Covenant was taken to Heaven after Israel rejected Messiah and it awaits a glorious display before the whole world at the appointed time.
1. During the Great Tribulation, travel and communication for ordinary people will be basically nonexistent. There would be no value of finding the Ark in or near Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation if only a few thousand people in the Middle East will hear about it and only a few thousand get to see it. Other than local interest, there would be no global impact.
 2. If, prior to the Great Tribulation, the Ark of the Covenant was found in a cave and put on display in a museum in Jerusalem, it would gain worldwide attention, but for the wrong reason. It would be regarded as a historical relic. As a religious relic, the Ark of the Covenant would have no authority. Its end time value would not be understood. Therefore, in terms of defining rebellion or producing guilt on the wicked, the global impact would be zero if the Ark of the Covenant was found on Earth prior to the Great Tribulation.
 3. If the Ark of the Covenant is found prior to the Great Tribulation, the Jews would immediately lay claim to the Ark and they would do whatever is necessary to take possession of it. They would likely keep it in a place that had limited access. The result would be the same as it is now – the Ark would essentially remain hidden from view and worse, the religious property of the Jews. I say "worse" because most Christians think the Ten Commandments are Jewish laws anyway. In terms of defining rebellion or producing guilt, there would be no impact on the world in this scenario.
 4. If the Ark of the Covenant was found prior to the Great Tribulation and no one was killed after touching it (as was Uzzah - see 1 Chronicles 13:10), this would prove that God's power did not rest on the Ark. This would also prove that the Ark is nothing more

than a religious relic. This would give many Christians the proof they need that the Ten Commandments are null and void, because millions believe the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross. Again, in terms of defining rebellion or producing guilt, there would be no global impact in this scenario.⁵ The only people permitted to touch the Ark were the descendants of Kohath. (Numbers 4:15) Even an ordinary Levite could not touch the Ark. So, if the Ark were found on Earth prior to the Great Tribulation, who could move it or handle it if God's power still rests upon it? If God's power does not rest upon the laws which He wrote with His own finger, the Ten Commandments are interesting stone tablets and nothing more. In this scenario, we are back to the issue of a religious relic or the worship of a religious object.

6. I believe God took the Ark to Heaven because He plans to show it to the whole world at the appointed time. We know that God took Enoch and Elijah to Heaven, so surely He can take a small golden box to Heaven. It seems obvious from Revelation's context that when the Ark is unveiled and shown to the world from Heaven's temple, it will not be regarded as a relic by any scoffer at that time. It will be a divine display from the Lawmaker Himself condemning all who refused to submit to the terms and conditions of His two laws of love.

7. Imagine a brilliant Ark with its two stone tablets surrounded with blazing light in the sky. The scene would be an impressive and awesome sight. A display of the Ark will confirm the faith of the obedient – there is the law they accepted by faith. On the other hand, this display will condemn the wicked who willingly defied the sovereign authority of Jesus. The wicked will shiver with guilt. Showing the Ark of the Covenant to everyone on Earth is designed to be an ominous event that marks the close of salvation. The global impact will be huge! A museum piece hidden under a blanket can not achieve this.

8. Another point to consider is that Jesus Himself delivered the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai with such power and majesty that the Israelites thought they were going to die. (Exodus 20:18,19) Another Mt. Sinai experience is coming again. The same thing will happen when the Law Maker of the Universe shows the Ark of His Covenant from Heaven's temple.

9. Finally, Jesus wrote the two tablets of stone placed in the Ark of the Covenant. (Deuteronomy 10:4) This makes the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant originals, not copies. I conclude that the Ark of the Covenant in Heaven is the original Ark built by Moses and it will be unveiled and shown to the whole world at the appointed time. God Himself will show mankind what He thinks of His two laws of love. This is why I believe the Ark of the Covenant is not on Earth. [Return](#)

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175. Hebrews 8:10 [Return](#)

176. Hebrews 8:10,11 [Return](#)

177. Romans 13:10 [Return](#)

178. Romans 8:7,8 [Return](#)

179. Daniel 5:27-30 [Return](#)

180. Deuteronomy 9:10,11 See also Exodus 31:18. [Return](#)

181. Exodus 40:20,21 [Return](#)

182. Joshua 3:3,4,11-17 [Return](#)

183. Hebrews 8:10 [Return](#)

184. See Leviticus 26:14-43 and Ezekiel 18:20-28 for God's thoughts on defiance. [Return](#)

185. Revelation 22:11 [Return](#)