

A New Look at the Two Witnesses Part 1

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(Part 1)

Let me be right up front. My understanding of Revelation 10 and 11 has changed. After an in-depth review of the story of the Two Witnesses during the past few weeks, I have come to see the related 1260 days in a different light. I still believe the Two Witnesses are the Bible and the Holy Spirit and I still believe they will speak through the 144,000 and "prophecy" for 1,260 literal days.

So, what has changed? The matter of timing has changed and this change has produced some important results. For example, I now understand the Two Witnesses will begin their work the day the censer in Revelation 8:5 is cast down (the day the global earthquake occurs). I previously believed the Two Witnesses began their work at least a few weeks, or possibly as much as six months prior to the time when the censer is cast down.

After giving this matter further study, I also believe that Jesus will take the 144,000 to Heaven at the time of the *seventh* trumpet which occurs about 70 days before the Second Coming. In the past, I thought the 144,000 were taken to Heaven during the sixth plague (on or about the 1290th day – 45 days before the Second Coming). I have also concluded that the seven last plagues will last 70 days instead of the 215 days I previously concluded.

Finally, I now believe the time-period of the seven trumpets to be 1,264 days, rather than the 1080 day period I previously thought. Please review the charts on pages 12 and 13 and notice the differences in *timing*.

Some Warning

So, what does these changes mean? I believe the appearing and empowerment of the 144,000 occur immediately *before* the global earthquake. Even though they will not be empowered, they will be sealed and they will inform some of the saints that the censer is about to be cast down. Perhaps, they will even know the date. The global earthquake in Revelation 8:5 will not occur without a short notice.

This is proven by the fact that the prayers of the saints are offered along with incense from the altar. **"Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand."** (Revelation 8:3,4)

These verses point to a specific serve that will occur in Heaven just before the censer is cast down and the Great Tribulation begins. Some saints will be aware of the impending doom and they will be praying for strength and courage as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. I do

not write this to scare anyone, but instead, caution you to be watching and waiting with "red alert" expectancy.

The words of Paul are very clear: **"While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief."** (1 Thessalonians 5:3,4)

The parable of the ten virgins further demonstrates this end-time scenario. Look at Matthew 25, there are four things we need to consider:

1. Verse 1 – "At that time [the time of the end] the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
2. Verse 3 – The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.
3. Verse 5 – The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
4. Verse 6 – At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'"

Here is the point: All of the virgins anticipated the appearing of the bridegroom. The foolish virgins took no extra oil. All ten of the virgins fell asleep. Then, the ten virgins were awakened by the cry: "Here's the bridegroom . . ." What is the meaning of this parable?

Watching and waiting is very difficult – even for the saints. Anticipation is very hard to maintain over time and it is all too easy to get distracted with the cares of this life – and rearrange our priorities. Yet, we know that no one can escape the events which are predicted in God's Word. This is how it will be. One day, in the very near future, the world will hear the 144,000 say, "Behold! Jesus Comes!" The worrisome part of this parable is that the foolish people will not be able to get oil and consequently, they will not be able to get through the door and join the banquet. (Matthew 25:12)

May our prayer be, "Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning!"

When the global earthquake occurs, a period of utter chaos will commence. Little time will be left for thinking and studying. Foolish Christians will have frittered away many precious opportunities to know God's Word and on that startling day, to whom will they turn? Their clergy? Sadly, most clergy are also in darkness. They have completely failed to warn their congregations of coming events. So, a study on the timing of the 144,000 and the Two Witnesses is worth investigation.

Not the First or Last Change

About 12 years ago, my study of apocalyptic prophecy caused me to completely change my thinking – I suffered a complete paradigm shift. ("Suffered" is a good word for such an experience.) During the past ten years, I have continued to study and learn as I pursued truth. As I have gained more insight, I have had to experience changes in my thinking. Every change (such as this current one) I have discovered, has been published in *Day Star* and my updated views have been reflected in subsequent books and tapes.

The essential reason for my most recent change is simple: I want my views to accurately reflect what the Bible teaches. It is imperative to me that my views comply with the harmony that comes from the sum of all the parts which the rules of interpretation impose. All prophetic conclusions must be tested against valid rules of interpretation. Just because something appears logical today does not mean it will appear logical tomorrow. Logic can be fuzzy because presuppositions can be erroneous.

In other words, every Christian should continue to test his understanding of Scripture to see if he has overlooked anything.

No doubt a few of my friends will be happy to see this change, since they have also reached a similar conclusion on this issue of timing. (I know some people have marveled at my stubbornness over the past years because I refused to "see it their way.") However, until a person honestly sees something, how can that person honestly change his or her mind? It is also possible that some of you will be frustrated with my changes because they rely too heavily upon me to tell them what to believe, and if I keep changing my mind, they will not know what to think.

It is my hope that every person will be scripturally grounded and convinced in his or her own mind what is right rather than depending upon me. (Romans 14:5) Do not put your faith any man. I, too, could fall into the ditch of unbelief. (1 Corinthians 9:27) The purpose of this ministry is not to tell anyone what to believe. Rather, the Lord's commission is to proclaim the Word and cause everyone to consider the Word of God. Let the Holy Spirit convict you of what you should believe!

Every sincere Bible student seeks greater understanding and how can the Holy Spirit reveal a clearer perspective to us if we are not willing to change our minds?

People perceive a change of thinking in different ways. A lot of people see change (in religious thinking) as a sign of weakness and changes often produce a loss of credibility. However, everyone driven to find truth understands that a change is required if a conclusion is found to be in error.

When a preponderance of evidence is present, a change is imperative if a person *honestly* loves truth. A change of mind should also occur when a student of the bible discovers that a concept does not fit well within a larger body of truth. This is where I find myself. Even though my earlier views on the Two Witnesses conformed to the four rules of apocalyptic interpretation that I follow, my original conclusion on the timing of the Two Witnesses was hard to explain.

Time after time, as I presented this topic, the audience would respond that they could see what I was trying to say, but they admitted that they would never be able to explain it to others. This latter response has concerned me for years. Truth should be straightforward and easy to see after someone explains it. I asked myself, how can I see this so "clearly" and yet, no one else can explain the same thing? Do not misunderstand, just because a majority of people understand a particular view or there is wide agreement on a subject does not make it true.

However, mutually interested people should be able to listen and comprehend a line of reasoning, if a point of truth is presented reasonably. With this in mind, I felt it was necessary to reexamine my understanding of the Two Witnesses and the rest of this article presents the results of my study.

A Look at the Prophecy

Let us investigate the prophecy concerning the Two Witnesses which covers Revelation 10:1-11:19. Compare the story as I have paraphrased the words of John with your Bible and see if it makes sense to you now.

{1} My view of Earth was directed to the days just before the 144,000 were sealed. I saw Jesus tell the angels having the first four trumpets to withhold harm until He accomplished certain matters and His servants were sealed. Jesus came and stood on the Earth, robed in a dark cloud so the world would not see His glory. Both the rainbow above His head and His face were shining like the brilliance of the sun. His legs were glowing like fiery pillars.

{2} Jesus held an open book in His hand. I knew the book was not the Book of Life which was bound with seven seals since this book was on Earth, and the Book of Life remained in Heaven. I wondered what this book represented. As I watched, Jesus firmly planted His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the land. He appeared confident, like a military general ruling over both land and sea. His posture indicated that He was taking a position of authority on Earth.

{3} He gave a loud shout like a lion's roar. The 144,000 servants, who had just been selected, heard Jesus shout. They understood His shout to mean that there would be no more delay. Finally, the time had arrived for the inhabitants of Earth to experience God's wrath. The four angels were about to sound the first four trumpets. Christ told His 144,000 servants to herald the arrival of Christ's Kingdom. When Jesus shouted, seven thunderous voices also spoke.

{4} I heard the seven thunderous voices speak and as I was about to write their words, I heard a voice from Heaven which said, "John, what the seven voices said are sealed up, do not reveal their messages." At first, I thought it was strange that I should not write what the seven thunders said. Then, I understood. God's people will hear and understand the seven voices from Heaven as Jesus speaks to them. At significant moments during the Great Tribulation, these messages from God will greatly encourage them in their struggle, just as the voice of the Father from Heaven greatly encouraged Jesus when He was on Earth.

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

{6} He swore by the Name of the Father, the Maker of everything and said, "There will be no more waiting!¹ The time for God's wrath has come.² Earth has filled its cup of iniquity. God's patience has expired and Earth will now receive seven mercy-judgments (the trumpets) and seven destructive judgments.³ Everyone who repents and calls on the Lord will be saved.

{7} Just before the seventh angel blows his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished." What is this mystery? The mystery of God is His gift of a sin-free nature to everyone who wants victory over sin.⁴ The time has come for the living to be judged, and God will give this new nature to anyone who chooses to obey the testimony of Jesus by showing obedient faith. The servant/prophets, the 144,000, are the first to receive this wedding garment.⁵

{8} Then a voice spoke to me from Heaven. It told me that I must experience the things which the 144,000 would endure. The voice said, "John, take the little open book that is in the hand of Jesus who is standing on the sea and on the land."

{9} So, I approached Jesus and asked Him to give me the little book. He said, "Take it and eat it. It will taste as sweet as honey, but it will turn your stomach sour." ⁶ (A continuing conversation with Jesus that John could have had with Him, based on my understanding of the interpretation of this prophecy is in the remainder of this paragraph - LW.) I asked Jesus what the book represented. He said it represented the prophecies of Daniel which were sealed up until the time of the end. Now that the time of the end had arrived, the sealed book of Daniel is an *open* book. ⁷ He said that the correct understanding of Daniel produces the correct understanding of what you are seeing now. Jesus showed me that a correct understanding of apocalyptic prophecy would bring a wonderful revival to Christ's waiting people — His children will rejoice when they learn that He will appear in a few days. He also emphasized that understanding Bible truth is highly important because many people will be deceived by lies and men will eventually kill each other over a dispute concerning Bible truth. Jesus said, "The sweet taste of my words will soon bring bitter sorrow." The 144,000 will be rejected and they will become the most persecuted people on Earth.

{10} So, I took the open book from Jesus' hand and ate it. The digestion of the prophecies was sweet as honey. It was so sweet to understand how the Word of God fits together, but when I began to tell others about the words of Jesus as written in the book, my experience was very bitter. Other people did not like what I said.

{11} Nevertheless, Jesus told me, "You must prophesy *again* before many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

I considered the meaning of the command and the order of events. The 144,000 will be given Holy Spirit power and they will present a message originating from the books of Daniel and Revelation, which by then will be words written long ago. The devastation caused by the first four trumpets will awaken the world to hear God's servants. The 144,000 will proclaim the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation with great clarity and power and many will be saved! I marveled at Jesus' love for sinners.

{11:1} My first job (as symbolizing one of the 144,000) was a difficult one. An angel gave me a

measuring-stick and said, "Go and determine the actual size of God's church. Many Christians profess to be followers of Jesus, but He who knows the heart and the motives of their actions, knows the shallowness of their claim. Do not be deceived by their words. Go inside the church. There you will find worshipers at the altar of the inner court. The angel used terms I was familiar with, so I would understand what I was asked to do. In Jerusalem there were two courts in the temple.

The Gentiles worshiped in the outer court, but the inner court was reserved for Jews. I understood the inner court to represent the individuals whom God has blessed with an understanding of truth. The outer court represents those whom God loves, but they have not had the same opportunity as the inner court to receive a knowledge of God's truth like the inner court group. So, I went to the body of Christ (inner court group) to present the prophetic messages of Daniel and Revelation.

The message quickly separated the people. Some people accepted the message that Jesus was imminently establishing His kingdom, but most Christians refused to believe me. As instructed, I counted the people who received the testimony of Jesus that I had shared. The number was disappointingly small. God could not use people from the inner court who refused the message from the little book and I was very sad. I had anticipated that many people in the inner court would rejoice to hear the prophetic messages.

It was a bitter experience, because most Christians became very angry. I began to experience a sour stomach, for many of my former friends began to hate me.

{2} Jesus said, "Do not measure the outer court right now, because it contains Gentiles. He said, "I have a numberless multitude among the Gentiles who love me, but their testing time has not come yet. However, when it arrives, I will separate the Gentiles who love me from those who do not. Regrettably, many Gentiles who hated me will persecute My holy people for 42 literal months." 8

These statements made me realize that a large number of people in the inner court and a great number in the outer court would not accept the message presented by the 144,000. When I contemplated the 42 months of persecution God's people will go through, I was thankful the time-period was short – relatively speaking.

{3} Then, Jesus showed me a view of the whole world at the time of the end. As I looked, I realized that many tribes, languages, religions and governments would exist at that time. Then, I realized the magnitude of God's problem! No global authority spoke for God. Every nation worshiped false gods. Every religion had clergy that claimed to speak for the God of Heaven, but there was no global consensus on the identity of the one true God. However, Jesus told me He would give power to His Two Witnesses, and under the most distressing circumstances, they would prophesy with great power and clarity for 1,260 days. These Two Witnesses, He said, would demonstrate who the one true God is – just like they did during the days of Elijah.⁹ Of course, I wanted to know who the Two Witnesses were. I knew that in the days of Moses, two or more witnesses were required to condemn a person to death.¹⁰ This parallel seemed significant, for during the final days of Earth's history, Jesus will give great power to His Two

Witnesses and anyone who refuses their testimony will be condemned to death by these Two Witnesses.

{4} An angel identified the Two Witnesses as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that *stand before* the Lord of the Earth. Even though I was familiar with Zechariah's visions, I did not understand the meaning of his statement. So, I reviewed the writings of Zechariah 4. In Zechariah's time, priests filled the candlestick in the temple with oil every day. But, God revealed to Zechariah that in Heaven's true temple,¹¹ two olive trees perpetually fill the candlestick with oil. I concluded that the two olive trees in Heaven represent the eternal power of the Holy Spirit.¹² The living olive trees in Zechariah 4 were a perpetual *source* of oil for the candlestick that stood before God's throne.¹³ God showed Zechariah that it was by His power, not human power, that the "light of truth" flourished on Earth.¹⁴

As I considered the angel's statement concerning the *two* lampstands, I remembered seeing seven lampstands before the throne of God (written in the first chapter of Revelation). In Zechariah's vision, the angel spoke of only one candlestick. Why the difference? I soon discovered the meaning. The lampstand(s) before God's throne represent the current *agency* through which God illuminates a darkened world with the light of truth. In ancient times, His Holy Word was entrusted to the nation of Israel.

¹⁵ The nation of Israel was represented to Zechariah as the single lampstand before God's throne. Israel, at that time, was the trustee of God's covenant with man and as such, Israel was the light of the world.¹⁶ When Israel failed to accomplish the things God wanted, He removed the privilege from Israel and established seven Christian churches in Israel's place.¹⁷ The seven lampstands represent the seven Christian churches that I was commanded to send copies of this vision.

¹⁸ They became the new trustees of God's covenant which He originally gave to Abraham.¹⁹ Sadly, the seven churches followed the course of ancient Israel and they too, apostatized. I saw that every time people organized to carry out God's work, the devil infiltrated each religious organization and it eventually became corrupt. So, in the last days, God will not use religious organizations to proclaim His offer of salvation. Rather, He will choose 144,000 men and women from all nations that love Him.

²⁰ He will give each of them a message to bear (the open book that I was told to eat) and He will pour His Spirit on the 144,000 and they will speak with great power – like John the Baptist. In the final hours of Earth, the Two Witnesses will not fail as man has failed so often. The Holy Spirit (the two olive trees) and the Bible (the two lampstands) will completely dispel the great darkness that covers the Earth.

A person might ask, how do two olive trees represent the Holy Spirit? In this manner: There are two phases of the Holy Spirit's work. First, there is the rebirth experience giving spiritual life. The first work of the Holy Spirit starts at the time a person receives Christ as his or her Savior.

²¹ The second process is the transformation of character. When a person accepts Christ, he or she receives Holy Spirit power to overcome sin. These two phases of the Holy Spirit's work are

symbolized by two olive trees beside the throne of God. The Holy Spirit's work is to sustain God's work on Earth. The oil from the trees keeps the lampstands (agents) perpetually burning!

Again, a person might also ask, how can two lampstands represent God's Word? In this manner: David said, "**Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.**" (Psalms 119:105) God's work contains two elements: The Old Testament and the New. Without Holy Spirit enabling, the Word of God is merely a book of mystery and words. With Holy Spirit enabling, the Word of God is alive – a double-edged sword, exposing all the issues and elements of life. Thus, two lampstands are two testaments.

How will the Two Witnesses, the Bible and Holy Spirit, testify? God will use His Holy Spirit filled, 144,000 servants to enlighten the world about God's word. Herein lies a very essential truth: God will not condemn any person for rejecting the testimony of one of His 144,000 servants.

God understands that a person may not give due consideration to His servant or prophet for a number of reasons. However, there is only one unpardonable sin for which a person will be condemned. When an individual refuses to accept the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that person commits the unpardonable sin.²² In other words, God does not condemn a person because he or she may be unable to accurately perceive the meaning of Bible truth, but God will not allow anyone who refuses to listen to the Holy Spirit to enter Heaven.

{5} Jesus said, "People will hate my 144,000 spokespersons for my name's sake. The words from the open book will be a difficult message to share.²³ Nevertheless, they will speak for me. The wicked, like Balaam and his donkey,²⁴ will not recognize the 144,000 for whom they are and whom they speak for. When I lived among men, it was no different.²⁵ Whoever resists my Two Witnesses will be destroyed. I am a great King. Many of my messengers will die because of the testimony they bear."²⁶

The 144,000 will have great miracle-working powers to confirm their message of truth.²⁷ However, miracles alone are not proof of truth because Satan's agents will also perform signs and miracles.²⁸ However, there is nothing more powerful than God's message when its time arrives. God's enemies will not be able to obstruct His truth and it will make the wicked people angry. Just like a sword comes from Jesus' mouth at the Second Coming to destroy His enemies, so truth will come from the mouths of the 144,000 and the enemies of God will not be able to withstand their arguments. People who reject the plainest testimony from the Bible and the Holy Spirit's guidance will suffer the Second Death.

{6} Like Elijah, the 144,000 will have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain²⁹ during the time they are prophesying. Like Moses, they will have power to turn lakes and springs of water into blood³⁰ and to strike the Earth with every kind of plague. God will grant these powers to the 144,000 to use as often as needed, so people will listen to what they say and be saved. But remember, the devil will have thousands of false prophets who will also perform counterfeit miracles and many people will use these counterfeit miracles as an excuse to reject truth. Many people will believe the lies of the false prophet and they will be condemned for it.

31 There will be a *distinguishing* difference between the false prophets and God's 144,000 true

prophets. God's Two Witnesses will testify as to what is true. The Bible will confirm the testimony of the 144,000. The Holy Spirit will confirm within every honest heart that the message given by the 144,000 is true. Conversely, false prophets will perform signs and miracles, but they will not be able to support their teaching from the Bible. The angel said to me, "John, warn the people to stand on a plain 'thus saith the Lord.' This will be the only position of safety."

{7} When the Bible and the Holy Spirit have finished their testimony to the world through the ministry of the 144,000, God's offer of salvation will be withdrawn. God will turn the world over to the devil and his followers. Thus, the message of the 144,000 will appear dead.³² Satan will kill the influence of the Two Witnesses. The Bible and Holy Spirit will no longer have a converting power for good. At that point in time, everyone will have made their decision. The devil will have led billions into committing the unpardonable sin.

Then, these wicked people will have no sense of right and wrong because they have completely rejected the Holy Spirit and God's Word. Thus, the work and influence of the Two Witnesses will come to an end. When the door to mercy closes, all people will have made their decision about salvation. One group will have put their faith in the Lamb, the other will have put their faith in the lamb-like beast (the devil).

{8} Remember, during World War III (the sixth trumpet war³³) and prior to the close of probation, many of God's people, including most of the 144,000, are going to be killed. These are the martyrs of the fifth seal.³⁴ Because of contempt, hatred and logistics, Satan's forces will not bury the martyrs. That these individuals would rather die than dishonor God is God's final appeal to the wicked before their probation closes. In other words, God will allow many of His children to be martyred in order, if possible, to influence those who stand in rebellion.

When the value of eternal life is compared to martyrdom, Heaven will be cheap enough! He who can speak worlds into existence does not see death as mortals do. Satan, on the other hand, will use martyrdom to intimidate people who do not have faith in God. He will demonstrate to everyone the fate of all people who refused his authority.³⁵

The members of Satan's one-world religion/government will be citizens of one great corrupt city – figuratively called Sodom and Egypt. This language is used because Sodom represents immoral degenerate behavior that God especially detests. Egypt represents a senseless hardness of heart – just like Pharaoh.

³⁶ Wicked people will have an attitude toward God, His truth and people that was no different from the attitudes found in ancient Sodom and Egypt. In fact, this same frame of mind brought about Jesus' cruel death.

{9} World War III (the sixth trumpet war) ends a few days *before* the seventh trumpet is blown. When the war is concluded, the devil (still claiming to be Jesus) will call a great assembly to "anoint" ten kings to rule over the whole world. The crowning moment of the world congress will be a glorious ceremony to celebrate that finally, the so-called one-world religious-government of God has been established. For three and one half days, world leaders will exult over their

success.

World War III is over – now, "the thousand years of peace." As the devil watches, he chuckles to himself that men have received him as king of kings and lord of lords. He has convinced the world that he is actually God. He has also convinced the world that evil is good and good is evil.

{10} The wicked will gloat over their success and will celebrate by sending gifts to each other. The wicked will also rejoice because finally, the 144,000 servants are no longer tormenting them with the Bible truth they faithfully presented and the wicked do not feel the internal distress caused by the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Of course, by that time, the wicked people's thoughts will be totally depraved and they will devise a final solution to destroy the few refugees who still refuse to worship the devil.

{11} At the end of the three-and-one-half day congress, wicked people will be surprised by an unexpected sequence of events. There will be an enormous earthquake. God will send glory from Heaven illuminate His suffering saints. God's people will be attended by angels of light. The saints who are in dungeons and prisons will walk out as free men and the wicked will not dare to stop them. Angels from God will prevent the wicked from hurting His people any further.

The people of God, who were so powerless a few days earlier, now stand on their feet. They will be illuminated with glory from God like Moses was when he descended from Mount Sinai. Terror will strike the wicked people who see the saints. The great earthquake will open millions of graves and the wicked will see the very people they martyred during the fifth seal. The martyrs will come to life right before their eyes. The martyrs will stand before their executioners in strength and power. This is too much to bear! The wicked will flee from their presence. At this resurrection, another class of people will also be resurrected – Those who pierced the Lord at His crucifixion.³⁸

{12} Then, a loud voice from Heaven spoke to the 144,000 saying, "Come up here." At that very moment, all of the 144,000 went up to Heaven in a cloud as *first fruits* of the soon-to-be-gathered harvest, while their enemies looked on in great amazement.³⁹ As the remaining saints wait on Earth for the Second Coming, they will be thoroughly impressed with the manifestations of God's wrath – the seven last plagues. Before their very eyes, they will see the complete disintegration of Babylon within 75 days.⁴⁰

The seventh trumpet will confirm two matters: First, the door to eternal life is closed. Every decision has been made and the mystery of God is accomplished.⁴¹ Second, the seventh trumpet is an announcement that Jesus has concluded His work as man's High Priest in Heaven's temple. With His mediatorial work finished, Jesus will now exercise His authority and possess His Kingdom. His first action will be to address the crimes that Babylon committed against His saints and prophets.

⁴² Jesus will ensure that Babylon's administrative members receive a double portion of suffering for the pain and misery they brought upon His innocent people.

{13} When the earthquake that opened the graves occurred, the devil's throne and

administrative offices collapsed. The earthquake that brought so many saints to life also killed 7,000 leading officials of Satan's empire. God's people, however, gave glory to God for His wonderful deliverance.

{14} Then an angel said to me, "The second woe has now passed. Now, the third woe – the seven last plagues – will begin. Before you observe the final woe, understand two things:

{15} "First, just before the seventh trumpet blows, the gospel will be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.⁴³ After the last person on Earth makes his or her decision for or against the gospel, Jesus will give the order to sound the seventh trumpet. This seventh trumpet marks the termination of God's mercy.

⁴⁴ Everyone will have heard the gospel and made a decision to either obey the Ten Commandments of Jesus or obey the senseless and oppressive laws of the devil.⁴⁵ Second, at the time of the seventh trumpet, an important transition will occur in Heaven. Jesus will finish His intercessory work as High Priest and begin His reign as King of kings. Mercy will have ended for the rebels on Earth. In fact, King Jesus' first business will be to reveal His fury against the people who have despised His offer of grace and rebelled at His claim of authority.

John, these points will help you understand what Jesus is about to do."

I heard loud voices in Heaven affirming the authority of Jesus and His sovereign right to deal with the people of Earth. The four living creatures and the 24 elders had observed the entire judgment process and were satisfied that Jesus had been fair and faithful with each human case. They said to Jesus: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and He will reign forever and ever."

{16} The 24 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.

One elder explained to me that the transition of Jesus from High Priest to King of kings was directly associated with the third woe. I learned that the third woe only affects the people who received the mark of the beast. Jesus is specifically going to punish the people who rebel against Him. His anger toward them is great because they *willfully and intelligently* rejected His truth, His gracious offer of salvation and extension of mercy.

Further, the people who received the mark of the beast had contempt and hatred for the people who obeyed the gospel of Jesus and kept His commandments. During the fifth seal, wicked people killed many saints – who willingly died for the cause of Christ. So, to demonstrate His fury with the wicked, Jesus avenges the suffering of His children by sending seven final plagues on the wicked.

In God's sight, the guilt for conspiracy is the same as directly participating in the crime. So all rebels will be punished by the seven last plagues because the wicked have worked *together* to

destroy of the saints!⁴⁶ When Jesus assumes the role of King of kings, as Creator of Heaven and Earth, He will stand up put on His Kingly robes.

He will subdue the rebels on Earth as any king would deal with insurrection within his territory.

{18} The elder continued talking to me saying, "At the time of the seventh trumpet, the nations of Earth will be angry and bitter, because the devil has forcibly taken control of the world." The devil, as a conqueror, is a demonic destroyer. He will demand obedience from every person on Earth. Those who refuse to obey will be killed. The devil's wars will leave the Earth in a terrible state. People will suffer conditions far worse than any concentration camp during World War II. Now, to make matters even more unbearable, God's wrath and vengeance will be poured out in full measure.⁴⁷ God will have no mercy on those who *chose* the mark of the beast. This outpouring of God's wrath *without mercy* is the third and final woe. During the time of the seven last plagues, God's wrath will not come near His waiting people.

{19} Then, I looked up into Heaven and saw a marvelous sign. I was not alone, because everyone on Earth also saw this scene! God's temple in Heaven was opened for all to see and no one was there. Jesus, man's intercessor – man's Only Hope – was gone. Within the temple, we could see the ark of the covenant – the ark containing God's covenant with man – God's Ten Commandments. The people of Earth were terrified. The wicked leaders of Babylon looked in awe at God's holy law which they had willfully violated and forced others to reject. They could see the Ten Commandments displayed in great glory. The fourth commandment was especially illuminated. The rulers of Earth had instituted laws forcing all people to disobey the Creator's holy Sabbath rest as. They had levied severe penalties on the people who kept God's Sabbath day holy. Yet, like senseless thugs, they had refused to consider the outcome of their evil deeds – that the Great King of Heaven would hold them in contempt for their rebellion. The die had been cast. They had received the mark. They belonged to the one on Earth who claimed to be God and his indelible tattoo was a testimony to the decision they had made.

The righteous saints also saw the scene in the Heavenly temple. They trembled at the holiness of God's law. At that moment, they momentarily lost all hope of salvation as they analyzed their lives in contrast to God's requirement of holiness. The saints would have been overwhelmed with discouragement, except Jesus assured them that He had granted them His righteousness, full and free.

There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm of burning meteors. Jesus poured down great judgments of fire on particularly evil places and they were completely burned up like Sodom and Gomorrah. The saints heard the voice of Jesus in the peals of thunder. (This was one of the seven thunders.)

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."⁴⁸ The saints knew they were released from the gospel commission. Martyrdom was now over. Salvation's offer had come to an end. Jesus would not allow one more saint to die after this day. As the saints retreated to solitary places on Earth to watch the final seven plagues fall upon Babylon, they knew that it would not be long until Jesus called for them!

Reasons for Changing the Timing

This concludes Part I of this study. During the coming month, evaluate the chart on pages 12 and 13. Next month in Part II of this study, I will present the textual evidence why I believe a change in timing of the Two Witnesses is required.

Bible Study References:

1. Rev 10:7 - 1,335 days begin here
2. Dan 8:17,19; Isa 24:1-6; Romans 2:5; Col 3:6
3. Rev 8:2 - 9:21; Rev 16
4. 1 John 3:2; 2 Cor 1:21,22; Acts 3:19 Heb 8:10-12
5. Matt 22:11; Rev 19:8
6. Ezekiel 2 and 3
7. Dan 12:4,9
8. Rev 13:5-7; Isa 62:12
9. 1 Kings 18
10. Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor 13:1
11. Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:24; Zech 4
12. Zech 4:14; Exodus 40:9; Lev 8; John 16:13; Mark 3:29
13. Exodus 26:35 (Candlestick on south side; Table (throne) on the north)
14. Zech 4:6
15. Matt 5:14
16. Acts 13:47
17. Matt 23:38; Matt 8:12; Matt 28:19,20
18. Rev 1:11
19. Gal 3:28,29; Eph 2; Rom 11
20. Joel 2:29
21. John 3
22. Matt 12:31
23. Ezekiel 3:7; Jeremiah 25:4
24. Numbers 22
25. John 8:19
26. Rev 6:9
27. Acts 14:3
28. 2 Thess 2:9; Matt 7:21,22
29. 1 Kings 17:1
30. Exodus 7:10-21
31. Jeremiah 28:15,16; Rev 9:20,21, Jer 5:31; Rev 19:19-21
32. Matt 12:31,32; 2 Thess 2:9-12; Rom 8:5-10
33. Rev 9:13-21
34. Rev 6:9-11; Rev 20:4; Rev 18:24; Rev 16:4-7
35. Rev 13:15
36. Exodus 8:15
37. Rev 14:11

- 38. **Rev 1:7**
- 39. **Rev 14:4**
- 40. **Dan 12:11,12; Rev 18**
- 41. **Rev 10:7; Col 1:27**
- 42. **Rev 18:6**
- 43. **Matt 24:14**
- 44. **Rev 14:14-16**
- 45. **Rev 13:8; Rev 17:8**
- 46. **Rev 14:17-20**
- 47. **Rev 15:1; 16:1-21; Dan 12:1**
- 48. **Rev 22:11**