

Timing of the Two Witnesses

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In the 11th chapter of the Book of Revelation, there is a prophecy describing the work and death of two witnesses. Some religious authorities believe these individuals will appear just prior to Christ's return. However, God's law pertaining to the responsibility of "witnesses", in capital offenses, precludes this scenario and confirms that this teaching is erroneous.

Although these two witnesses seem to appear a long time before Satan is released from his prison, as described in Revelation 20:7-10, the eleventh chapter of Revelation is not meant to fit into a strict chronological order. Instead, there are "inset" chapters between the eleventh and twentieth chapters of Revelation. And, when God's law pertaining to the responsibility of two or more witnesses is applied to this prophecy, it will confirm that the Book of Revelation is not organized chronologically (cf. Dt. 17:6-7) and that the two witnesses begin their commission around the time of Satan's release, which will occur at the end of Christ's one-thousand-year reign (cf. Rev. 20:4-6).

First, the commission given to these witnesses in the eleventh chapter of Revelation must be understood. To do this correctly, other similar scenarios should be examined. For instance, just as Elijah had permission to stop rain, due to the sinful actions of King Ahab, so the two witnesses will have power to prevent rainfall prior to the release of the most sinful individual of all time, Satan.

*And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to (King) Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, **there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.**"* (1Kgs. 17:1; NKJV used

throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

*These (two witnesses) have power to shut heaven, so that **no rain falls in the days of their prophecy...*** (Rev. 11:6a; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

In both cases, the warnings of Elijah and the two witnesses occur over a three-year period.

*Now it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, **in the third year**, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth."* (1Kgs. 18:1; emphasis added)

*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **one thousand two hundred and sixty days** (3.5 yrs.), clothed in sackcloth* (Rev. 11:3; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Events leading up to the death of the two witnesses are part of "the second woe", and "the third woe" follows quickly, as described in Revelation 12:12.

The second woe is past. Behold, **the third woe is coming quickly** (Rev. 11:14; cf. Rev. 9:12; emphasis added).

.... (third) *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For **the devil** has come down to you, having great wrath, because he **knows that he has a short time*** (Rev. 12:12; Ed. note in parenthesis).

According to God's law, "the devil" cannot be punished for his sins unless there is credible testimony against him from at least two witnesses.

Whoever is worthy of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three

witnesses, but **he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness** (Dt. 17:6; emphasis added).

*One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; but **by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established*** (Dt. 19:15; emphasis added).

Also, according to God's law, the witnesses must initiate the punishment, which often meant "throwing the first stones". Therefore, the two witnesses who will be killed by Satan's actions must be resurrected to fulfill this responsibility.

The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil person from among you (Dt. 17:7; emphasis added).

Now after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them (the two witnesses), and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹²And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them (Rev. 11:11-12; Ed. note in parenthesis).

So following their resurrection, which will occur after Satan's release from prison (cf. Rev. 11:7-10), these two witnesses will be the first to mete out punishment to *the originator of sin* (cf. Jn. 8:44). This is summarized in the following section, which occurs at the end of Christ's millennial rule on earth.

*.... And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them (Satan and his quickly mustered army). ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived **them (majority of mankind, and those referred to as demons)**, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where*

the beast and the false prophet (were cast) ... (Rev. 20:9b-10a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

A similar scenario occurred during Abraham's time in association with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Two angels (described as men) were tasked with acting as witnesses to confirm whether the inhabitants were guilty of grievous sins. Without a reliable testimony from these two witnesses, fire and brimstone would not have come down from heaven and destroyed these cities.

And the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is grievous, ²¹I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."²²Then the (two) men (angels) turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord (Gen. 18:20-22; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed his face toward the ground (Gen. 19:1; emphasis added).

Following this, all the people from Sodom attempted to attack and rape these two angels, who appeared like average men.

*Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, **all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.** ⁵And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? **Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.**"* (Gen. 19:4-5; emphasis added).

Following this violent and sinful action, the two angelic witnesses declared they would participate in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

"For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." (Gen. 19:13; emphasis added)

Therefore, these two angelic witnesses would be the first to "throw fiery stones" at this city complex, followed by others within God's realm.

Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens (Gen. 19:24).

In like manner, the two witnesses mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Revelation will testify that Satan has sinned since the beginning of man's history. They can only do this if they have been around that long. Not only have they been around that long but, as scripture confirms, one thousand years to a human being is like a single day to an angel.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years (for a human being) as one day (for the Lord) (2Pet. 3:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Therefore, if Satan has been committing sin and influencing mankind to commit sin, which is defined as breaking God's law and commandments (cf. 1Jn. 3:4), and if mankind has been around for 10,000 years, that is like 10 days to these angelic witnesses who have been observing Satan's behavior all along. So not only will they be witnesses to their own death at his hands, as recorded in the eleventh chapter of Revelation, they will also affirm Satan's many sins, including the murder of Jesus Christ

because they were present during Christ's death and resurrection.

*And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill him (Christ), for they feared the people. ³Then **Satan entered Judas**, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve (disciples of Christ). ⁴**So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him (Christ) to them.** ⁵And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶Then he promised and sought opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the multitude* (Lk. 22:2-6; Ed. notes in parentheses).

*But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹²And **she saw two angels in white sitting**, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." (Jn. 20:11-13; emphasis added).*

So just as two witnesses were required by God's law to testify against the grievous sins of Sodom and Gomorrah before these cities were destroyed, so two witnesses will be required to provide credible testimony against Satan for his many heinous sins before he and his followers are destroyed. And this "witness against Satan" will begin just prior to his release at the end of Christ's millennial rule on earth (cf. Rev. 20:9-10). After this, these same witnesses must be the first to throw "fiery stones" at him, which they can only do if they are resurrected. Therefore, these two witnesses will not appear prior to Christ's return (see study: *The Prophecy of Two Witnesses*), and anyone who teaches that they will appear beforehand is a false prophet because they are not using God's law as the standard for making this claim.

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20; emphasis added).

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak... that prophet shall die (Dt. 18:20).

In essence, making false prophecies is the same as using God's name in vain which, according to His word, is also a sin and therefore punishable by death (Ex. 20:7; cf. Eze. 18:4; cf. Rom. 6:23a).

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