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## THE TWO WITNESSES IN REVELATION 11

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**R**evelation 11:3-13, with its reference to two witnesses, is in a parenthetical section (10:1-14:22) that gives information on the Great Tribulation. This section reveals that during that future tribulation Jerusalem and its temple court will be trampled by Gentile nations for forty-two months (11:1-2). At that time God will raise up two witnesses for 1,260 days (v. 3). They will prophesy and will be given supernatural power to kill their enemies, withhold rain, turn water to blood, and bring plagues on the earth (vv. 4-6). At the end of 1,260 days, the beast from the abyss will wage war with the witnesses, overcome them, and kill them (v. 7). Their deaths will cause the whole earth to rejoice, but God will raise them up and they will ascend into heaven (vv. 8-12).

Who are these two witnesses, and who is their adversary?

### THE IDENTITY OF THE TWO WITNESSES

Expositors differ widely in their identification of these future witnesses. The three kinds of interpretations are the symbolic, the corporate, and the literal.

#### SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATIONS 象徵性

Expositors within this category agree on one point: The witnesses are not human beings. These scholars vary, however, in their opinion of what the witnesses represent. The main interpretations in this group are these: (1) The two witnesses represent the testimony of the church from the Law and the prophets,<sup>1</sup> (2) The Old and New Testaments,<sup>2</sup> (3) the Word of God and the Spirit of God,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andre Feuillet, "Essai d'interprétation du chapitre XI de L'Apocalypse," *New Testament Studies* 4 (April 1958): 193.

<sup>2</sup> W. A. Spurgeon, *The Conquering Christ* (Muncie, IN: Scott, 1938), 134-36.

#### The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 345

(4) the church's double testimony of the Word and blood,<sup>4</sup> and (5) two volcanoes.<sup>5</sup>

#### CORPORATE INTERPRETATIONS 團體

Ten views on the witnesses' identity have been suggested in this category: (1) the church in its function of witness-bearing,<sup>6</sup> (2) the church represented in the east by the Paulikians and the west by the Waldenses,<sup>7</sup> (3) believers who suffer martyrdom,<sup>8</sup> (4) a literal group of people (i.e., the number two may be symbolic of a large multitude),<sup>9</sup> (5) the Christian church and the Christian state,<sup>10</sup> (6) the line of witnesses in the Eastern and Western church against the papacy, for 1,260 years (taking each day for a year, Rev. 11:3) until the sixteenth century, when it was exterminated,<sup>11</sup> (7) Israel

<sup>3</sup> Howard B. Rand, *Study in Revelation* (Haverhill, MA: Destiny, 1947), 135, 137; and Fred G. Smith, *The Revelation Explained* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet, 1943), 124.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond J. Loenertz, *The Apocalypse of Saint John*, trans. Hilary J. Carpenter (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), 81.

<sup>5</sup> H. S. Bellamy, *The Book of Revelation in History* (London: Faber & Faber, n.d.), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Die Offenbarung des heiligen Johannes* (Berlin: Oehmigke, 1850), 1:398; Jurgen Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Zurich: Theologischer, 1984), 114-15; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation, New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 184; Harry R. Boer, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 82; M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation, Interpretation* (Louisville: Knox, 1989), 145; J. S. Coussino, "The Two Witnesses: Apoc. 11:3-13," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 8 (1946): 392; Lewis Foster, *Revelation* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1989), 152; Martin H. Franzman, *The Revelation to John* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1976), 79; William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1940), 155; Philip E. Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 123-24; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 333-34; Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 70; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 223; John Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM, 1990), 184; and Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 134.

<sup>7</sup> Edward B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticæ* (London: Seeley, Burnside, & Seeley, 1844), 2:632, 638-39, 683; Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and the Revelation: The Chart of Prophecy and Our Place in It* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 130; and James A. Wylie, *The Seventh Vial* (London: Johnstone, 1848), 116-18.

<sup>8</sup> G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 134, 186; and Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 143.

<sup>9</sup> C. Carl Armerding, "Will There Be Another Elijah?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 100 (January-March 1943): 94; and Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Revelation* (New York: Our Hope, 1915), 70.

<sup>10</sup> John P. Lange, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the Holy Scripture*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Scribner, 1874), 12:224.

<sup>11</sup> John Cumming, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, first series (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1854), 166-208. In Cumming's scheme, the three and one-

346 BIBLIOTHECA SACRA / July-September 1997

and the church,<sup>12</sup> (8) the house of Israel and the house of Aaron,<sup>13</sup> (9) the believing Jewish remnant during the tribulation,<sup>14</sup> (10) the two nations descended from Abraham (i.e., the Arabs and the Israelites).<sup>15</sup>

## LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS

Expositors in this category agree that the witnesses are two individuals, but they disagree on who these people are, as exemplified by the following ten interpretations: (1) Elijah and Moses,<sup>16</sup> (2) Elijah and Enoch,<sup>17</sup> (3) Elijah and John the Baptist,<sup>18</sup> (4) Elijah

half days (v. 11) refer to three and one-half years from May 5, 1514, to October 31, 1517. On the first date, the Council of Lateran announced that heresy had been crushed, and on the latter date Luther posted his ninety-five theses on the church doors in Wittenberg. Cumming presents a far-fetched point of fulfillment for each detail.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen A. Huxter, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Printing, 1921), 157.

<sup>13</sup> J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 178.

<sup>14</sup> Arno C. Gaebelain, *The Revelation* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1978), 70; H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Oakland, CA: Western Book & Tract, 1919), 192; Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 213; Justin A. Smith, *Commentary on the Revelation* (Philadelphia: American Baptist, 1884), 158; and Frederick A. Tatford, *Prophecy's Last Word* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1947), 128.

<sup>15</sup> Thonphius W. Moore, *The Book of Revelation* (New York: Revell, 1897), 140.

<sup>16</sup> Donald G. Barnhouse, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 202; Friedrich Blesk, *Vorlesungen über die Apokalypse* (Berlin: George Reimer, 1862), 252; James L. Nevins, *Revelation*, Knox Preaching Guides (Atlanta: Knox, 1984), 63; Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 318-20; Charles Brütisch, *Die Offenbarung Jesu Christi* (Zürich: Zwingli, 1970), 2:23; Friedrich Diesterdieck, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1887), 316; David Hocking, *The Coming World Loser* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1988), 182-83; Herman A. Hoyt, *An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1966), 75; Tim Laffaye, *Revelation, Illustrated and Made Plain* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 151-52; Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: Moyer and Lotter, 1919), 84-86; Hanna Lilje, *Das Letzte Buch der Bibel* (Hamburg: Fische, 1960), 152; E. Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), 91; Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 65; M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Revelation*, Francis Asbury Press Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 204, 204; Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Okumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 210; Jacob B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1961), 168; Louis T. Talbot, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 147; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 88-89; and Alfred Wikmanhauser, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Regensburger Neues Testament (Regensburg: Pustet, 1959), 86.

<sup>17</sup> Clyde C. Cox, *Apocalyptic Commentary* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1959), 127; S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks about the Crowned Christ* (New York: Revell, 1914), 187; W. Lamb, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Sydney: Worker Trustees, 1928), 208;

The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 347

and John the Apostle,<sup>19</sup> (5) Elijah and an unidentified person,<sup>20</sup> (6) Peter and James,<sup>21</sup> (7) Peter and John,<sup>22</sup> (8) Peter and Paul,<sup>23</sup> (9) the two high priests, Ananus and Jesus, who nobly withstood the zealots in Jerusalem, and were massacred by them,<sup>24</sup> and (10) two unknown persons who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future.<sup>25</sup>

## THE PREFERRED INTERPRETATION

This writer prefers the view that the two witnesses are two persons, presently unknown, who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future tribulation period. The following evidence supports this position and shows that the other solutions do not adequately account for the biblical testimony.

First, the word "witness" (v. 3) suggests that these are human beings. The verb *μαρτυρέω*, from which is derived the noun *μαρτυρία*, means "to bear in mind" or "to remember."<sup>26</sup> It therefore means "one who remembers, one who has knowledge of some-

Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1937), 244; David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), 820; and Lehman Strauss, *The Book of Revelation* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1967), 215-16.

<sup>18</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Revealing through Revelation* (Los Angeles: Church of the Open Door, n.d.), 88.

<sup>19</sup> John J. Vangorder, *ABC's of the Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 105.

<sup>20</sup> Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 457. For a similar opinion see David L. Cooper, *Revelation* (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1972), 136.

<sup>21</sup> Israel P. Warren, *The Book of Revelation: An Exposition* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 149, 151.

<sup>22</sup> William L. Roy, *A New and Original Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (New York: Fauschaw, 1848), 137-38.

<sup>23</sup> M. E. Boisnard, "L'Apocalypse, ou 'Les Apocalypses' de S. Jean," *Revue Biblique* 56 (October 1949): 534; and Johannes Munck, *Petrus und Paulus in der Offenbarung Johannis* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1950), 15, 17-19.

<sup>24</sup> Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin Johannis* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1791), 2:59, 61-63, 66-68, 72-74.

<sup>25</sup> Iason T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 595; E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse* (London: Hagster & Sons, 1972), 156; E. Schuyler English, "The Two Witnesses," *Our Hope* 47 (April 1941): 670; William G. Moorehead, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board, 1906), 86; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 305, 308; Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 76; and John P. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 179.

<sup>26</sup> Émile Boissacq, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque*, 2d ed. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1923), 612; and Alois Walde, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Indogermanischen Sprachen*, rev. Julius Pokorny (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927), 2:688.

thing by recollection, and who can thus tell about it."<sup>27</sup> The classical use of *μάρτυς* is "in the sense of human attestation or testimonial."<sup>28</sup> The word thus implies that the "witnesses" (*μάρτυρων*) are human beings. This consideration is further suggested by John's use of the article *τοῖς*, which indicates specific persons.<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere in the New Testament *μάρτυς* is always personal (Matt. 18:16; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28; Rev. 1:5). Therefore symbolic interpretations must be rejected.

Second, Revelation 11:3 states that the two witnesses "shall prophesy" (*προφητεύσουσιν*). They function as prophets for 1,260 days (vv. 3, 6, 10).

To sum up, a prophet is a person, employed by the oracle, who by direct inspiration or by the interpretation of sounds and omens declares the will of the gods to a person who asks for advice. Accordingly, *propheteuo* means to proclaim the counsel and will of the gods concerning a historical, concrete, personal situation, in response to a definite question put by the client.<sup>30</sup>

The activity of prophesying, then, is personal and involves personal beings. This too suggests that symbolic interpretations are inadequate.

Third, the overall context in which the activity of the two witnesses is described (11:3-12) supports the preferred view. In these verses witnesses, depicted as individuals, speak (vv. 3, 6); are given power to kill their enemies (v. 5); are heard, handled, and hated (vv. 3, 7, 10); have mouths, ears, and feet (vv. 5, 11-12); wear "sackcloth," and after their martyrdom John saw their "dead bodies" (*τὰ πτώματα αὐτῶν*, vv. 8-9). By no stretch of the imagination, then, can an interpreter regard these witnesses as other than real persons.<sup>31</sup>

Fourth, not only are these real persons, but also there is no reason to believe that there are more than two or fewer than two. Why? (1) In Jewish law two witnesses were sufficient to establish a fact (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; cf. Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; Heb. 10:28). Since in the Old Testament context the two witnesses are literal persons, not symbolic of a larger group of people, the same is probably the case in Revelation 11. (2) Other numbers in

<sup>27</sup> H. Strathman, "μάρτυς: εἰδ.", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 4:475.

<sup>28</sup> L. Coener, "Witness, Testimony," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 3:1044.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 4:858; and Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 179.

<sup>30</sup> C. H. Feinker, "Prophet," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3:76.

<sup>31</sup> Strauss, *Revelation*, 214.

the immediate context (Rev. 11) are best understood as literal, and so these should be also. References are made to forty-two months (v. 2), 1,260 days (v. 3), two olive trees and two lampstands (v. 4), three and one-half days (vv. 9, 11), one-tenth of the city (v. 13), seven thousand people (v. 13), second and third woes (v. 14), a seventh angel (v. 15), and twenty-four elders (v. 16). (3) In verse 4 the two witnesses are identified as "the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth." In this symbolism, which is seen in Zechariah 4:2-14, the olive trees are said to be "the two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth." Scholars generally have identified these two in Zechariah as Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the builder.<sup>32</sup> The significance from Zechariah regarding the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3, however, is not the identity of the "anointed ones," but that they were two individual human beings. In other words there is scriptural precedent for the two olive trees symbolizing two literal persons. Thus from the context, and from an Old Testament cross reference, there is no reason to believe that the witnesses are other than two literal human beings.

Fifth, nowhere in the near context (or the wider context for that matter) are these individuals named. There is no way, therefore, to determine definitely who the witnesses are.<sup>33</sup> Based on the miracles they are to perform, some have said they are Elijah (commanding fire to devour enemies and shutting up the sky so that it does not rain, Rev. 11:5-6; cf. 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:10-14), and Moses (water turned to blood, the earth smitten with every plague, Rev. 11:6; cf. Exod. 7:20; 9:14; etc.).<sup>34</sup> However, there is nothing in Scripture that limits miracles such as these to Moses and Elijah. Elijah raised a person from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24); but so did Jesus (Mark 5:35-42; Luke 8:49-56; John 11:14-44), Peter (Acts 9:36-41), and Paul (Acts 20:9-12). To argue that Moses and Elijah must be the witnesses because of the miracles mentioned, then, is weak.

Some writers argue that Moses and Elijah must be the two witnesses because their return is prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and Malachi 4:5-6.<sup>35</sup> However, the expression "like me"

<sup>32</sup> Caird, *Revelation*, 134; Mounce, *Revelation*, 224; Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 306; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 819; Strauss, *Revelation*, 214; and Sweet, *Revelation*, 185.

<sup>33</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), 6:378.

<sup>34</sup> Barnhouse, *Revelation*, 199, 202; J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1961), 169; and Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 88-89.

<sup>35</sup> Barnhouse, *Revelation*, 199-200; Talbot, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 147; and Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 88.

in Deuteronomy 18:15 seems to preclude using that verse as a means of identifying the witnesses in Revelation 11:3, for the promised prophet was not Moses, but one "like" Moses. Also, Jesus said, "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come" (Matt. 11:13-14). Christ later said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished" (17:11-12). These statements of Jesus show that John the Baptist was, in a real sense, the anticipated Elijah of Malachi 4, though there may yet be a future fulfillment of that prophecy.<sup>36</sup> The point is that while the prophecy does speak of a literal witness, the person need not be Elijah himself but one who is like Elijah (cf. Luke 1:17). This apparently is the Lord's interpretation of Malachi's prophecy (Matt. 17:11-12). In view of this, it is not necessary to insist that Elijah the Tishbite must be one of the two witnesses.

Despite the evidence just given, some, on the basis of Jewish tradition and the wider context of Scripture, interpret the two witnesses as Elijah and Enoch.<sup>37</sup> One reason is that according to an early rabbinic opinion it is believed that Enoch will rejoin Elijah for a ministry like that of the two witnesses (1 Enoch 90:31; cf. 4 Ezra 6:26). But this is simply an ancient Jewish opinion, not necessarily correct. Also there are many statements in 1 Enoch that

<sup>36</sup> The present writer feels that John the Baptist fulfilled the Elijah descriptions adequately, based on the following evidence: (1) The exegetical connection between Matthew 11:10 and 14. If John fulfilled Malachi 3:1, then it is possible that he is the fulfillment of Elijah in Malachi 4:5. (2) Matthew 11:14 itself. The conditional element does not rule out the possibility of John being Elijah, as some have reasoned. "If you will receive" is a first-class condition: "assuming for the sake of the argument that you do receive." Some argue that the majority did not receive John, so he could not be Elijah (Barnhouse, *Revelation*, 201). But this does not follow. If one says that there is a future Elijah, possibly one of the two "witnesses" in Revelation 11, he still has an "Elijah" who is rejected by the majority, even unto death! Reception by the majority is not an identifying mark of the true Elijah who would fulfill Malachi 4. (3) Matthew 17:10-13. "Elijah has come already." This is a point-blank statement by Jesus, and it is not easy to avoid its force. (4) Luke 1:17. This verse clearly relates John the Baptist with Elijah, so that John would seem to be, in a real sense, another "Elijah." (5) John 1:21. John the Baptist was asked if he were Elijah (meaning the Elijah of Mal. 4:5). He replied, "I am not." His questioners wrongly interpreted Malachi 4:5, expecting Elijah himself to come back as the King's forerunner. John denied that he was Elijah in the sense that they meant. Yet it is true that he was Elijah in a figurative sense. He was not Elijah returned from his heavenly assumption (Elijah in person), but he was Elijah in role, function, or type of ministry. (6) The word "before" in Malachi 4:5 can fit John. He was indeed "before" the day of the Lord--by several centuries as it turned out, just as Isaiah 61:1-2, one compact prophetic statement, includes details that are centuries apart in their fulfillment.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Govett, *The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture* (London: Thynne, 1920), 225; Seiss, *Revelation*, 244; and Strauss, *Revelation*, 215-16.

are bizarre and questionable.<sup>38</sup> Another reason for saying these witnesses will be Elijah and Enoch is that neither of these two men saw death but were translated to heaven (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11). Since Hebrews 9:27 says that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment," God, it is argued, must have reserved Enoch and Elijah as His witnesses for this future time.<sup>39</sup> The merit of this argument is that it helps rule out Moses and others as possible candidates, for they have already died. It should be pointed out, however, that since there will be a whole generation of believers who are raptured and thus will not die physically (1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-17), the idea that Enoch and Elijah must return in order to die once to make Hebrews 9:27 absolutely all-inclusive, is without basis. It should also be noted that Hebrews 11:5 says that Enoch was translated "so that he should not see death." To allow a future return and death, then, would nullify God's promise.

The likelihood that Elijah and Moses appeared in glorified bodies (Luke 9:30-31) on the Mount of Transfiguration is a problem for the return of Elijah as well, for since Elijah has already received a glorified body, he cannot die. An exponent of the Elijah view might respond that Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration was not in a glorified body, for which death could never be a possibility, but "in glory" (i.e., some other state such as the glorious characteristics manifested in Christ's own natural body at that time). It might also be argued that Moses had died and that Scripture never records a special resurrection and glorification for him, so that he may have appeared at the Transfiguration only by some act of God's power to visualize his old body in a "vision" intelligible to the disciples (Matt. 17:9), or as Samuel was made to appear, though still actually in the state of death (1 Sam. 28). By this logic, Elijah, like Moses, was on the Mount of Transfiguration in a vision and not a body at all. However, since Elijah was caught up into heaven in his natural body, it seems more likely that he appeared in that body (presumably glorified) on the mount. If Elijah was glorified, it would then be most appropriate to interpret Moses' body as also glorified (though some may say that this requires the assumption of a resurrection for Moses, which Scripture nowhere records, and that this is too

<sup>38</sup> For example 1 Enoch 6-7 says that two hundred angels bound themselves by oath, lusted after and took human women as wives, producing giants (cf. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1913], 2:191-92). Names are given for the angels' leaders (Semjazar or Samiazar, etc.). In 1 Enoch 7 their offspring, giants, sin against birds, beasts, reptiles, fish, and devour one another's flesh and drink the blood.

<sup>39</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 820.

large an assumption). If Elijah was still in his mortal body preserved for centuries by powers known only to God and enabled to appear on the mount, then, in the interest of consistency, Moses also was there in person in his mortal body. However, the fact that Moses died, and his body was buried (Deut. 34:5-8; Jude 9), makes it less likely that he reappeared in that mortal body. It seems then that both Elijah and Moses probably have already received glorified bodies of some kind and so could not die. This rules them out as candidates for a future return.

Sixth, the two witnesses are most likely future human beings because most of the events recorded in Revelation were future from John's time (Rev. 1:1, 19). Their prophesying is said to be future as the tenses of *δίδωμι* ("I will give") and *προφητεῖσονται* ("they will prophesy") specify. The context demands a literal martyrdom and resurrection of two literal people, not a symbolic, already-past fulfillment. History has no record of two men who witnessed for Christ, performed the miracles mentioned, died, had their bodies exposed in the streets for three and one-half days, and were raised from the dead (11:3, 5-8, 7, 9, 11). The fulfillment of this prophecy, therefore, must yet be future.

Seventh, their future appearance is further substantiated by the identity of the beast from the abyss who will wage war with the witnesses and overcome (*νικῶσι*)<sup>40</sup> and kill them (v. 7). The argument here is that since, as will be shown, the beast from the abyss is most likely the future Antichrist,<sup>41</sup> his two victims are likely individuals who are yet to come.

Eighth, since John wrote of another witness, Antipas, who was literally killed (2:12), it is not surprising that two literal persons will be martyred in the future. Furthermore, since the two

<sup>40</sup> The nature of the beast's overcoming is limited, temporal, and physical. He cannot harm the witnesses before their work is completed. Neither can he lay a hand on them after their resurrection. Though in between these events, the beast is able to overcome the witnesses by killing them physically, this victory is short-lived. Three and one-half days after their martyrdom the breath of God will enter into the witnesses; as a result they will come to life and ascend into heaven (Rev. 11:11-12). This will signal the end of his victory. The beast's overcoming, then, does not contradict the overall Christian overcomer concept (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 15:2; 21:7; etc.). Though the witnesses are put to death temporarily, eternal victory belongs to them (15:2).

<sup>41</sup> Other expositors who hold this view include Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 601; Hoyt, *An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 75; William MacDonald, *Revelation: Visions of Judgment and Glory* (Oak Park, IL: Emmaus Bible School, 1963), 63; Cluick Smith, *Dutiful Earth: Countdown to Eternity* (Old Tappan, NJ: Chosen, 1989), 91; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 821; Thomas, *Revelation 6-22*, 92; and John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary. New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 956.

witnesses can be adequately understood as two individuals and not symbolic of a group of people, 11:12 does not, as some have conjectured,<sup>42</sup> refer to the rapture of the church. The command "come up here" is addressed to two people, not to the church as a whole.

#### THE ADVERSARY OF THE TWO WITNESSES

The opponent of the two witnesses will be the beast from the abyss (Rev. 11:7). But who or what is the "beast"? The Greek word for beast is *θηρίον* ("a wild animal"), which is distinct from *ζῷον* ("living creatures," 4:7). The "beast" most probably refers to the future Antichrist.<sup>43</sup> Five facts support this view.

First, the persecutor of the witnesses is not "a beast" but "the beast" (*τὸ θηρίον*). This use of a definite article *τὸ* indicates that he is a figure well known to the writer.<sup>44</sup> Since teaching on the Antichrist was so familiar to Jews and Christians through Old and New Testament prophecy (Dan. 7:2-25; 9:27; 11:35-45; Matt.

<sup>42</sup> Some midtribulation rapturists see the church's rapture in verse 12 ("come up here") and put it at the seventh trumpet, equating that trumpet with the trumpet for the church in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and "the last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15:52. Cf. Norman B. Harrison, *The End, Rethinking the Revelation* (Minneapolis: Harrison, 1948), 75. Pretribulation rapturists who answer this argument include Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 180-92, esp. 189-92; and Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept from the Hour: A Systematic Study of the Rapture in Bible Prophecy*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1933), 186-98. The "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15 is the last summons with regard to the church. But the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:14-15 (the third woe) is the last of this particular series of seven judgments for which the angels will blow trumpets beginning in 8:2-4. If 3:10 teaches a rapture of the church before the tribulation period of the future, the two trumpets in view can be different. The trumpet blown at the second coming of Christ in Matthew 24:31 (cf. Isa. 27:13) is to regather Israel.

<sup>43</sup> Seven other less likely suggestions about the identity of the beast are these: (1) an oppressor of the end-time: Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 66; (2) the persecuting powers of Rome: David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987), 280; Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, *Revelation, Proclamation Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 78; Hengstenberg, *Die Offenbarung des heiligen Johannes*, 1:402; and Foy E. Wallace Jr., *The Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Wallace, 1966), 220-21; (3) everything opposed to Christ and His church: Luther Poellot, *Revelation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 146; (4) a mystery of evil: James M. Eird, *Revelation for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 83; Larry W. Fogie, *Revelation Explained* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1981), 178; and Charles H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation*, Good News Studies (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 114; (5) Nero: John Tickle, *The Book of Revelation* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 1983), 80; (6) Satan, or demonic power: Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 116; Siegbert W. Becker, *Revelation* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1985), 178; Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1991), 122; Lewis Foster, *Revelation* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1989), 153; and Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 70; and (7) power of darkness: Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 212.

<sup>44</sup> F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 131.

354 BIBLIOTHECA SACRA / July-September 1997

24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 John 4:1-6),<sup>45</sup> it is not impossible that John was thinking of him here.

Second, since the word "beast" (*θηρίον*) in the Apocalypse is always used with reference to the future Antichrist or his system (13:1; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3; 19:20; 20:10),<sup>46</sup> the beast in 11:7 should be seen in the same light.

Third, the beast will come up out of (*ἐκ*) the abyss, that is, it will have a satanic, demonic source and character (cf. Rev. 9:1). This feature corresponds with that of the coming Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10.

Fourth, the description of the beast as "coming up out of the abyss" (*ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου*, Rev. 11:7) corresponds with the beast "about to come from the abyss" (*ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου*) in 17:8 (cf. 13:1). This correspondence is illuminating, for since the beast in 17:8 probably refers to the future Antichrist with his kingdom,<sup>47</sup> the same is probably the case in 11:7.

Fifth, *νικῶν* ("to overcome") is used three times in the Apocalypse with reference to the enemy of God's people (6:2; 11:7; 13:7). Since other occurrences of the term are related directly to the coming Antichrist (6:2; 13:7),<sup>48</sup> the same may be true in 11:7.

#### CONCLUSION

The identity of the two witnesses as well as their adversary becomes clear when Revelation 11:1-14 is properly examined and the Scriptures are correlated. The witnesses are two unknown eschatological figures who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future tribulation period. Their adversary is the coming Antichrist. The many lines of evidence point consistently to these considerations.

<sup>45</sup> Expectation of the Antichrist is also found in Jewish apocalyptic literature in such references as *Psalms of Solomon* 2:29; 17:3; *Apocalypse of Baruch* 40:1-3; *Assumption of Isaiah* 4:2-8; and the *Sibylline Oracles* 3:63-74.

<sup>46</sup> All references to the "beast" in Revelation are singular in number (except 6:8). The usage of *θηρίον τῆς γῆς* in 6:8 is plural and refers to the beasts of earth in general.

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed discussion on the identity of the beast in Revelation 17 see Daniel K. K. Wong, "The Johannine Concept of the Overcomer" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1995), 99-109.

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion on the use of *νικῶν* in Revelation 6:2 see Daniel K. K. Wong, "The First Horseman of Revelation 6," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (April-June 1996): 225-26. For a discussion on the use of *νικῶν* in Revelation 13:7 see idem, "The Johannine Concept of the Overcomer," 64-77.

Just like Moses & Elijah witnessed Christ  
Law Prophet.

Here it is back to Jewish state, the Law and the Prophet  
continues to witness.