

The Two Witnesses (Part 2)

A Reed Like a Rod

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For all of you who made mention of my sermon last time, I got a lot of nice comments—especially about the first part of the sermon, talking about the purpose of prophecy and that we shouldn't get hung up on one specific scenario. Rather, we should know the possibilities. That is, know the prophecies so well that we can recognize what's happening as it is happening as a fulfillment of prophecy, or very soon thereafter. Then we can get in line with God's purpose and begin doing what God wants us to do.

I think before, in certain places and among certain people, prophecy had become too much of their study—too much of their thinking, too much of their hope even—so that they became unbalanced in the way that they approached Christian living (the whole Christian experience, their Christian life). In many cases, it pushed people quite over the edge when they started believing certain things and getting all their hopes in one basket, as it were. When those things didn't happen, they were disappointed. They lost faith. And eventually they left the church; or they got behind somebody who had an idea, and they left the church with him.

Either way is devastating. What are you following? Who are you following? It's the question that has to be asked. Are you following the prophecy? Are you following a particular person, who thinks he's a prophet? Or, are you going to follow God? That's where I think we should really come to understand the purpose of prophecy.

Mr. Armstrong often said it's 30% of the Bible. That's true. But it should only be 30% of our thinking, if that's the case. It shouldn't be all of our Bible study. It's certainly interesting. It's certainly something that God has used to call people into the church. But there is so much more to this Christian life than just knowing the prophecies and having all your charts worked out.

I did want to start the sermon again with that, to give us the understanding that what I am giving here on The Two Witnesses—that is, on Revelation 10 and 11—is speculation. This is what it looks like to me; a scenario that is a possibility using the symbols and other parts of the Bible to help explain what Revelation 10 and 11 say—so that maybe, when it happens, we'll be able to recognize what's going on. I'm not saying that what I have presented here is going to be the way it is. I don't want anybody to get that impression at all.

I'm not a prophet. I don't claim to have any prophetic insight. I just study the Bible and try to give you what I've come up with. So this is *my speculation*. And I want you to understand that, because I certainly don't want to be pinned to the wall on any of these things. God's been known many times to have fulfilled something, and *nobody* saw it coming. This is just how it looks from this perspective, at this particular time, with the knowledge that I have and the understanding that God has given me. So *disclaimer* over, again.

The last time I spoke, I called the sermon The Two Witnesses (Part 1). But I hardly spoke about

the Two Witnesses at all. In fact, I didn't even get into Revelation 11 where the Two Witnesses are in the Bible. The sermon was primarily about the little book (right there at the end of Revelation 10) that was sweet as honey going in; but when it got to his stomach it was very bitter. We compared that with the last part of Ezekiel 1 and chapters 2-3. He ate a scroll of a book. It is hard not to see the similarities between the two accounts. Both of these men, these prophets, had to eat something given to them by God. Then they were given a commission to do.

We saw that eating the book, or the scroll, was enjoyable. It was sweet. It tasted good. It was very fulfilling, let's say, to the senses. It made both John and Ezekiel happy. It made them content. It was satisfying to them. However, once it hit the prophet's stomach, it turned bitter. There was something in that scroll, or in that book, that is heavy. Something in it is not sweet in its realization.

That's the way we have found that God's way is. We enjoy the study. We enjoy learning new things. We enjoy the revelation of God. We enjoy seeing all things that are opened up to us—the vistas of the Kingdom of God, the Millennium, and rule, and all of the things that God promises us. But, once it gets inside of us, there's a great deal of conflict—a great deal of blood, sweat, and tears—that has to be experienced, and overcome (whatever it happens to be), before we reach that point. There's a great deal of calamity that occurs in a person's life. There are trials. There's sin. There's one's human nature. There's Satan. We can go on and on with the things that are difficult to overcome in a Christian life; and those things are bitter.

For a prophet (like Ezekiel) or an apostle/prophet (that John was), there was an even more acute bitterness. Not only did they have to overcome these things in their own lives; but then they had to go to preach about them to people, and to get them to change. And just from my short experience as a minister, I know how wrenching that can be—especially when you preach your head off about something, and you feel it so deep down, and then somebody either doesn't take anything you say with any seriousness, or they don't apply it, or they simply turn around and leave. And you think, "What did I do?" There's a kind of bitterness there. A feeling of not doing your job, of not accomplishing what you've been commissioned to do. So I can understand, in a small way, the feeling that Ezekiel and John went through.

But theirs was so much bigger in scope than what it's been for me. Here we are, just 400 people or so. I guess the things that I say reach a few thousand people, maybe, over the Internet, or through the tapes, or the *Forerunner*, or what have you. But John and Ezekiel had a much wider audience. Maybe not Ezekiel, because he was speaking to the captives there. But his message has certainly gone out to far more people than what he saw there (that is, those he had in front of him there) in Babylon. His commission was to all of Israel, which is literally millions of people. But, yes, I can understand that bitterness in a small way.

But we saw that, once he ate the book or the scroll, both of these [men] were commanded to do something with it. Both of them were commanded to preach, to prophesy. In Ezekiel's case, it was to Israel. In a few minutes, we'll see what John was told to do. And in Ezekiel's case, he was told that God would make him *able* to perform the task. He would make him, if you'll recall, just as stubborn as the Israelites. God kept telling him, over and over and over again, "This is a rebellious house. They are NOT going to listen to you. They have a very hard forehead. These are stiff-necked people. But," He said, "Ezekiel, your face is going to be just as

hard as theirs. You are going to be just as tenacious and stubborn as they are. And even if they don't hear you, you will at least give it to them."

Let's pick this up in Ezekiel 3, because I want to flow a little bit into the next part of Revelation 10 and 11. This is just after God had told him that He would make his face hard against Israel.

Ezekiel 3:10-14 Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse." Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!" I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise. [Remember this is the great portable throne of God.] So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

These are basically the key verses of this entire section. That is, just about everything that you need to explain what is going on happens in these verses (at least in terms of the Two Witnesses). They tell us that the scroll of the book is the message that God gave Ezekiel to speak. That equates to the Word of God. In verse 10, it says, "receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you." So that is, if you will, *the interpretation* of the scroll of the book (back in the last few verses of chapter 2). What I have told you about it being sweet, then bitter, and all the things that has to do with once God's revelation is given to us and we begin to assimilate it—this is what it means. It's God's Word. It's His revelation. It's what He has given, in this case, to Ezekiel to understand and then to preach.

In a way, "receive into your heart" (in verse 10) is kind of a code phrase for "be converted." That's basically what happens when one is converted. The Word of God, the law, or whatever term you choose to use, is engraved on—or put into—our heart. It becomes a part of us. So, once we are converted, then our heart is softened from what it was as just a worldly person; and we can begin applying the intent of God's Word in our lives. Ezekiel here is being commanded to be converted. Of course, we do this throughout our lives. Our lives are just a continual process of conversion. God is telling him to put those words in and use them for his commission.

It was from this well then—the well of his heart (out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks)—that he was to preach. The word was written on his heart, and from that he was to tell the children of Israel the things that they needed to know. Basically, what this was is "Thus says the Lord God." We always want to hear "*Thus says the Lord*." It makes things so much clearer. When you get down to it, that's basically the commission of any minister of God—to explain God's Words in kind of a "*Thus says the Lord*" fashion. And that's what Ezekiel was told to do.

A little bit later (in verses 16 through 21, or so) Ezekiel was [told] to be a watchman. All he had to do, then, was to sound the warning. To preach the gospel, as it were. To let the people know what was going on, and how they could escape. Of course, if he did this, then he was blameless. He had done his job. The blood of these people would not be on his head if they failed to listen, or failed to respond.

In verse 12 and again in verse 14, I want you just to notice here that the Spirit takes him to where he must preach. I just want you to notice this activity of God's Spirit, and keep that in the back of your mind. We probably won't get to it today. Unfortunately, this is going to be more of a series than I ever thought. But please keep in mind this *activity of the Spirit*. The Spirit is always around when works like these must be done. In this case, the Spirit moved him to where he needed to be in almost a kind of physical way. Maybe it was. He was having a vision here. But it is shown lifting him up and taking him to a place, and then putting him down where he was supposed to preach. So the Spirit is very active.

Also in verse 12, it says that he heard a voice behind him—a great thunderous voice. This is one of the links back to Revelation 10, where the seven thunders preach. The word *behind* here is very interesting. The voices were behind Ezekiel at this point. Or, the voice of thunder was *behind* him already. And if you think of this in terms of time, what is behind you has already occurred. It is something that is past. When we get back into Revelation, we'll see that this is the case with the Two Witnesses as well. The thunders have already thundered. They are *behind* John, in this case. They are done.

And the message [in Revelation 10-11] is basically what it says here in Ezekiel 3:12: "Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!" That's the message of all the churches—bringing glory to God, from whatever place they are. They are to preach God's glory, preach the wonderful way of God; and this is thundered out to the world, because the world doesn't know. We are still preaching that, in our own small way; and the other churches of God are, as well. Those are the thunders that will go on, up until the beginning of the great tribulation.

Then, of course, we saw (just for a little bit in the last sermon) this idea that, when Ezekiel was finally put among the captives there, he felt a great bitterness. He called it "*the heat of my spirit*." We didn't go into this very much last time, but it is very important to understand this. My margin has at this point "the anger of my spirit."

This *bitterness* then is kind of interesting. It equates to a kind of *zeal*. God's revelation is actually the basis of it, because that is what has gone down into his stomach and revealed, opened up, a great deal of truth to him. It's given him a perspective that no one else has—on the world, the way things should be, and all the truth of God. And it brings sadness, a kind of mourning, because of the way of humanity.

Remember in another part of Ezekiel that the angel went about looking for those who sighed and cried over the abominations of the earth. That's sadness. That's a kind of grief over what's going on—and powerlessness to change it. So many people going the wrong way and making their lives a total destruction; and being unable to make a change for them.

This zeal also has a kind of *astonishment*, as I showed you in verse 15. He was astonished for an entire seven days—a whole week! Trying to figure out just what was going on, he was kind

of dumbfounded. Probably part of it was that he had been given this commission; and "*Why me, Lord?*" That type of thing. But also from the understanding that he'd been given, just total astonishment at what God was doing!

So we have God's truth (His revelation), sadness, astonishment, and of course (the word here in verse 14) anger. There's a kind of anger that's there. Somebody like Ezekiel would be angry because nothing was being done. It's the other part of this sadness. "Come on, you people. Listen! If you would only do this, things would turn around for you." That is kind of cut by that sadness that nothing is being done. So there's *a zeal* to help people to change, but *a sadness* that they probably won't. A total dumbfoundedness that God is actually going to work all this out.

So it's kind of a weird emotion, and I can understand why it is brought down to the one word: bitterness! It's hard to see a lot of happiness and joy in it. It's kind of a "*Man, this is bad...*" way of looking at things. It's almost pessimistic. But what it does, though, is that this feeling drives the prophet to do his work—because he's the only one, it seems like, that can do it. And he is, because God has chosen him to do it. God probably could have picked somebody else; but this particular one had been prepared for the job, and that bitterness drives him to get the job done.

The work of the Two Witnesses follows this pattern—the giving of the little book, and the things that it produces in the prophet; and then, of course, the message that the prophet is given to preach. He'll preach the same message that God's servants have always preached: warning and repentance. This, in turn, goes to two audiences: *the world* and *the church*. (We'll see this as we go on.) God's message has already been two-part: (1) a warning and (2) a message of repentance, which includes in it what we would call "Christian living." And then this same message goes to two different audiences: (1) the church and (2) the world. And it has two different effects of them, because of what they are.

Now, back to Revelation 10. There was one verse that we didn't get there—verse 11. Verse 10 was John eating the book. It was sweet as honey in his mouth; but, when it got to his stomach, it became bitter.

Revelation 10:11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.

I just want to mention here again that there should be no chapter break between Revelation 10:11 and Revelation 11:1. This is one of those places where the chapter break really destroys the flow of what's going on here. This is the first part of the commission of the Two Witnesses, but He's speaking specifically to John. Well, John is the type of God's servant. So he stands in place of these servants at the end—these witnesses.

Now, think of about this. If this book was indeed written in the early 90s A.D., John the apostle was getting close to 90 himself (if not older than that). For Christ to tell a ninety-year old man that he has to go out and preach to "peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" would be pretty astounding. Probably he'd have a heart attack right there and keel over. I think that John

understood that this wasn't directed at him specifically. He was just the stand in, the proxy, to communicate these ideas to those who would come and actually fulfill these things—as well as to those of us who are studying this and reading it.

We must remember who this is, though. That is, who this proxy is. The proxy is very important, because John represents the qualities that are going to go into these ones at the end. "It is someone like you, John, that must preach again before many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." This is John, the son of Zebedee. Do you remember what Jesus called him? Let's go back to Mark 3. I [also] want you to remember the bitterness and what I described it as, from Ezekiel 3.

Mark 3:13-14 And He [Jesus] went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.

This is the calling of the twelve apostles. Now, what did Jesus say to John? He was going to give him a message to say to nations, and tongues, and people, and all of that. And notice here, in verse 14, that He wanted these twelve so that He might send them out to preach. That's the same sort of thing.

Mark 3:15-17 ...and to have power to heal [Remember that.] sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder."

Interesting, isn't it? The one He told to go preach again (to people, nations, tongues, and kings) He gave the name "son of thunder" to. What had just occurred in Revelation 10? The thunders—the seven thunders. Now what was John to go preach? Thunder! What was he? He was a "son of thunder." What does that mean in his relationship to these other thunders that had gone on?

Well, we might use the expression "he was a child of" these seven thunders. Or, maybe better, we would say, "he's a product of" the seven thunders. He is "a direct descendant of" the seven thunders. The message that John is supposed to preach here is the same thing as the seven thunders applied specifically to a certain situation—the great tribulation. What this does is show the continuity between the seven thunders and *the two witnesses*. That is, that *they are the sons of thunder*.

It's interesting that John had a brother named James, and both of them are called "sons of thunder." Jesus specifically pointed them out as "sons of thunder." It's a very interesting word. If you look up the word Boanerges, it is an Aramaic word. It's really Ben Regaz. And do you know what it means? It means sons of commotion, sons of violent anger. Isn't that interesting? Ezekiel went in the heat of his anger. And then, in the New Testament, God calls these two apostles whom He calls "sons of violent anger" or "sons of commotion." Are you beginning to

see things that kind of overlap a little? I do!

The bitterness that Ezekiel had (anger) was necessary for the preaching that needed to be done. But let's see. Let's go now to Luke 9, because these two [James and John] were a pair of loose cannons. You don't want them on the deck of your ship—not unconverted. And Jesus, even though He called them and knew what they were (He knew what kind of people they were.) He had to keep a tight rein on them because, without being converted, you probably wouldn't want them as your friends (unless you liked rip-roaring good times, or something).

Luke 9:51-56 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples, James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

And they just simply went on to another village, which was the better way to handle the situation. But this was the raw material that Jesus had to work with. These two men who would just as soon cut the heads off of people, or call fire down from heaven, as help them—and probably, sooner. Here they were "Ah, they are just Samaritans. Let's do like Elijah did, and just burn 'em up. They're going to stand in our way. They shouldn't do that."

They had this *fiery zeal*. [It was] well intentioned, maybe—but too full of vengeance. They weren't going to give anybody a second chance. "Boy, if you disrespect our Master, that's it! You're gone." They would have been maybe good Mafia bosses, or Mafia hit men, or something. That was the kind of thing that they seemed to like to do. It was the first thing that popped into their mind. "*Let's kill 'em.*"

Jesus said, "You don't know what kind of spirit you have, boys." Certainly, God had given them that spirit. But they had no self-control over it, at this point. They needed that other Spirit to contain that violent zeal—that anger—that they had; and to turn it into something productive. In a way Jesus is telling them, "Now is not the time, guys. I'll unleash your power at another time. You don't know what spirit is driving this rage of yours. It needs to be harnessed better." As we see in the book of Acts, once they had the Holy Spirit, their "thunder" was much better trained.

I want you just to notice—this is another thing to just stick in the back of your mind—that they mentioned calling down fire from heaven and they also used the name of Elijah. This becomes important later on, when we get into the Two Witnesses. Here they evoked the name of Elijah as cover for what they wanted to do, which was to kill people. In a way, Jesus' reply is full of rebuke; but there is just a hint there of, "*Not now.*"

He didn't say, "Don't ever do this." or "Don't ever think this." He said, "You just don't know what's driving this." Then He adds that their intention was *to destroy*, but His intention was *to save*. And when they would come to understand that, then they would know how to use this power, this attitude, properly. They wouldn't get that for another couple of years (in Acts 2). So it's very interesting that here in the life of Jesus, in the Gospels, we have a situation that comes up that is very similar to what comes up later in Revelation 11. And it's the two "sons of thunder" that are mixed up in it. What we see from all this (as you have probably already guessed) is that the "sons of thunder" become a type of the Two Witnesses.

The seven thunders, as I've mentioned, are the seven messages of the seven churches. These two end time prophets—the Two Witnesses—are "children" of those messages ("products" of those messages). All the force and the energy of the church's effort at this critical time in earth's history are channeled into and through these two people. It is pretty evident that this is basically the only work being done from God, on the earth, at the time. There will be other smaller things, but most of the focus of God is on these two and what they are doing. They are the main ones who are standing *for God* throughout the 3½ years of the tribulation.

So, like James and John, they will be *apostles* and *prophets* of great zeal and power. They'll have to be, to do the job that is put on their shoulders. We don't know very much about James; because he was the first apostle martyred, pretty early. So our understanding of what kind of person he was is pretty vague. But if he was anything like John, which he probably was, then we have a pretty good idea of what he was like—because John is quite well described in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and even through his own writings.

If you look at the book of Acts, in the first few chapters Peter and John take the lead in what's done. Peter is obviously the one in charge; but the two of them go about healing, and preaching, and getting cast into prison together, and speaking then for the rest of the church. They do some wonderful, amazing miracles. We say that Peter's shadow goes over people and heals them, but who was standing right next to him? It was John. So I think John's example is very sufficient to see the kind of people these Two Witnesses will be.

They'll be people of great zeal, great power, and great righteousness. You'd have to say that John was probably one of the most righteous men that ever lived. It comes through in his gospel and in his epistles. But we also know that John is the apostle of godly love. Over his lifetime, he learned to control that zeal, and to apply that zeal, properly. He was the one who talked about love probably more than any other of the apostles. And so that temper on his spirit was firmly fitted and doing its job by the end of his life. So by the time he died, his zeal was in that proper spirit; and it's no wonder that God used him for so long—some seventy years in the first century.

He was quite a man!

Revelation 11:1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

As I mentioned before, there is no chapter break here. This should be thought of immediately on the heels of Revelation 10:11 — "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." And then He says, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there."

It's a dual commission: First, to go to kings, nations, and tongues. That's a very broad and general commission. Then the second one is more specific—focused on the temple, the altar, and the worshippers. This is the two-pronged approach that we've seen all through the Scriptures. There's (1) a message to the world, and then there's (2) a message to the church.

The second part is measuring the temple, the altar, and the worshippers. I would equate this to what we call, in these times, "*feeding the flock*." The other one I would call "*preaching the gospel*." These two focuses of preaching are never sundered from one another. They really can't be done one without the other—because they always overlap in some bit. They are done in tandem.

Sometimes one needs to be done more fully than the other is—or, must be more emphasized—as God directs; but God always wants them to be done simultaneously, if possible. There's a great deal that needs to be done. There must be a witness made. Then, the ones that God calls to do the work, and to support the work, and to grow and overcome to be part of His kingdom must be fed; and they must grow, and they must be helped to overcome and to come to perfection. So the two things have to be done. If you start preaching the gospel to the world, pretty soon you are going to have people following that message who need to be taught further and brought along.

Like Mr. Armstrong, in the early part of the last century, he would preach the gospel and raise up churches; and they would melt back into the woodwork because there were no ministers to train them further. That's why Ambassador College was started. What I am getting out here is that you can *preach the gospel* all you want; but nothing is going to be done with the fruit of the gospel unless you are also *feeding the flock*. They must be done in tandem. They don't necessarily have to be done 50% each; but they will be done, because God's message requires it.

It could be (This is a "perhaps," a "maybe," or a "who knows?") that the Two Witnesses represent this division of labor between *going to the world* and *feeding the flock*. One of the two witnesses (the leader, probably) would be the one that had the specific commission to preach to the world; and the other had a better ability, let's say, to feed the flock. But they work together to do the one job. I don't know. That's why I'm saying that it's a possibility—that these two represent, in themselves, one doing a work to the world and the other one feeding the flock. I don't know. Maybe this was the way John and James were? Maybe John was better going to the world, and James was better one-on-one with people (teaching them). I don't know. But it is certainly worth thinking about and just keeping in the back of your mind.

Let's go through some of the words and phrases here in this verse. The first word that pops out is reed. "I was given a *reed*." This simply means a stick, like a piece of cane. Sugar cane, papyrus, or whatever kind of cane usually grows in kind of swampy waters, or along the edge of a river, or a pond, or a stream, a lake, or what have you. By the way, our word "cane" derives

from a Hebrew word *qanah*; and it simply means reed. Let's quickly go back to Ezekiel 29, where we'll see this word. This is in a prophecy about Egypt, and God says:

Ezekiel 29:6-7 Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; when they leaned on you [Remember it's this staff of reed that He's talking about here.], you broke and made all their backs quiver.

Qanah here is a staff—a staff of reed. In this case, it was a staff of reed that wasn't very strong. It broke on their shoulders; and it buckled under their hand, when they tried to lean on it. It wasn't very stiff.

Another word also derives from this same root, and that's the word canon. (Not the ka-boom kind.) This kind of *canon* is like the canon of Scripture because usually what you do with laws, or codes, is that you write them in a book. A book was made of cane, papyrus. And so the laws themselves, over time, took the word of the book. Rather than just being the laws, they became the canon. So, in our own day, a canon of faith is a rule, or the authority, of what our faith is. So the canon of Scripture are the authoritative books that we use to base our way of life upon.

So, we can see that this *reed* has a couple of interesting ramifications to it. It could be a staff of some sort, or a reed to measure things by; but it could also represent a book of law—a canon to measure something by. Let's go to Matthew 27. This is the same word in the New Testament, in the Greek. This is when Jesus was being beaten and mocked.

Matthew 27:27-30 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.

Notice how they used the word reed here. The reed was a symbol of authority, like a scepter. It's something that a king would use to show that he had the authority to rule. It could also be given to a judge, let's say—somebody who has this law that he is going to enforce.

The next word that comes up is rod. I want to mention too that the word "measuring" in the New King James is not in the original text. It should be "Then I was given a reed like a rod." (Not "like a measuring rod.") They get the word "measuring" there from the word "measure" that comes a little bit later in the verse, when he is told to rise and measure the temple. I think it would be much clearer if it was just left like it was. That is, "given a reed like a rod"—because *rod* changes this idea of *the reed*.

If you had a flimsy little reed just to measure by, like we have a measuring tape, those aren't real stiff normally. It bends and has very little substance to it. It's used just for measuring.

But rod adds something to this. It says that the reed that he was given was a bit *more substantial* than just a simple measuring stick.

Now, rod has the sense of a cudgel, or a baton of some sort. That is, something that would be used to beat people or to move them along. It has a sense of strength and authority with it. This puts backbone into the reed. So this measuring devise is not a reed shaken by the wind. Remember that Jesus said something to the effect of, "Did you come out to see a reed shaken by the wind, or a smoking flax, or something?" And He was certainly NOT what they expected. He was made of stern stuff! He had the strength of a rod.

Revelation 2:27 "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels."

Revelation 12:5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Revelation 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Every occurrence of the word rod in the book of Revelation means *strength*. So this "reed like a rod" was not just used for measuring; but it could double as a very hefty stick—a scepter, something by which one could rule or enforce things. Remember that we have to keep this in mind with the Two Witnesses. The reed that they are given is NOT just a measuring devise; but by this time in the purpose of God He has given His prophet

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men's power, in a sense.

Remember the time of the church has ended, basically. The seven thunders have ceased their pealing; and a new type of prophet is raised—sons of thunder, these ones with a bit of anger (an edge to them). They are given power to *measure* and power to *enforce*. We'll see that in the next few verses. But the power that these two have is awesome! It's substantial. And, from what I take out of what is given here, they are not afraid to use it—because they've been conditioned by God to use it properly. And they will use it when necessary.

Now we get to the word measure, because "measure" is in here. This idea of "measuring" is there, certainly. This is *judging against the standard*. That's what you do when you measure. You take something that has a fixed proportion—like a length, or a weight, or something that is known; and you stick it next to whatever it is that you are trying to qualify, or quantify, or measure; and you see if it measures up. How long it is, how wide it is, how tall it is. You see if it fits the pattern. See if it fits the template that is necessary for, let's say (in our case), to be fit for the Kingdom of God.

I Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.

We are being measured against the standard. And the "house of God" is another way of saying

"the temple of God;" and that's the phrase that is used here in this very verse [in Revelation 11]. Judgment begins at the house of God, and the Two Witnesses are given the responsibility of measuring the temple of God. It's basically saying the same thing. They are NOT actually doing the judging. Christ is doing the judging. But the Two Witnesses' job is actually to make the measurements. It is their earthly job to show what *the standard* is. That is, to let people know what it is they should be measuring up to.

This is very similar to Amos using the plumb line, in Amos 7:7. The plumb line is slightly different because it is used to measure verticality—to see whether something is standing up straight. Or, to be a little bit more "religious," to see if it is upright. So you put a plumb line up. The weight on a string holds the string taut. When it stops swaying like a pendulum, it's going to show you what is perfectly vertical. Then you put something next to it, or put it next to something that should be vertical; and you can tell whether something is out of plumb or not.

That's the idea here. How close do you come to the standard? How upright are you? How fit are you for the Kingdom of God? This is part of their job. Remember (I've said this before.) that the work of the church is done by this time. This was something that the ministry of the church has been given to do in every time, but maybe not to this extent. But this is part of the Two Witnesses' ministry. And they are basically the only ones around to do it any more—at least, in a big way.

It's possible that this part of their ministry actually begins, however, before the thunders stop. I'd probably say that's a pretty good bet. That they'll already be doing a ministry before the tribulation begins. Then God will say, "Okay, now it's time for you to do your real job." Then they will begin their tribulation ministry, which will be quite intense.

The next phrase that we need to look at here is the temple of God. This is very simply a common symbol of *the church*. But it's very interesting that it's not the temple in its general sense. It's a very interesting word that Christ uses. It is *naon*. This is not the whole temple. This is *the holy place, the sanctuary*. It's where the priests were allowed to go and offer incense on the incense altar, where they brought the shewbread into the table, where the menorah was that was lit before God. I can't remember if there was anything else there in the holy place. But this is the specific place that Jesus points out there to measure—the temple, the sanctuary. It excludes the courts that are outside. We get a little bit of that in verse 2, where it says to leave them out.

So, what this is, this is the very inner sanctuary. Not *the* most holy place, where God's throne is; but the one right outside the veil—where the priests are allowed to come in and do their work. What we would call this is *the true church*, the wheat, the elect. This has nothing to do with any hangers-on, any mixed multitudes, the tares, or any of those that would just have been among the church. This is the inner core—those who are truly called and converted. But it's general. It's NOT individual. It's more general, as in "the body of Christ."

Ephesians 2:19-22 [Paul writes:] Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief

cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord [This is the whole church.], in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul uses this same term. He calls it "the holy temple in the Lord"—rather than "the temple of God"—but it is basically the same thing.

11 Corinthians 6:16 [Paul writes to these people:] And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

They are told here in Revelation 11 to measure the church (the called, the elect) but in general—the church, the body of Christ. Let's go on to the altar. Commentators say that this could either be *the altar of sacrifice* or *the altar of incense*. But I say, "It can only be one thing. It must be the altar of incense. It can't be the altar of sacrifice." The reason that I say this is because we are talking about the temple. This is what he is told to measure. Well, I guess it probably could be the altar of sacrifice; but I think the odds are on the altar of incense. It was the altar of incense that was within the holy place.

The altar of sacrifice was outside, in what is called "the court of the priests." They didn't do their sacrificing inside the curtains or anything, where nobody could see. It was done outside, in public. But the altar of incense is what the priests came in and put the incense on and burned it before the veil. The smoke, then, symbolized the prayers of the saints going up before God. You'll find that in Revelation 5:8, which says outright that incense is the prayers of the saints.

What we see here (this is my interpretation) is that this altar symbolizes *acts of worship*, or our *method of worship*, or, let's say, our worship in general—*how we worship*. That was one of the main works that went on there inside the holy place. One of the priest's main functions was to put this incense and burn it before God. That is one of our main functions as well, in its specific application towards prayer. But, in its wider sense (as we've seen in the recent series on The New Covenant Priesthood), our worship is very important! It's very important in our own relationship with God. And it has its wider meaning both now and in the future—in terms of what we are being prepared for, and what we do amongst one another.

So, in a way, what Jesus is telling these two men is that not only do you have to evaluate the church, you have to evaluate your worship; and correct your worship, if it is not up to snuff. You have to make sure that it fits the standard, because God's not going to take any slipshod old worship.

Remember what one of the main themes of Malachi is. He says, "You're giving me shoddy worship. You are putting on My altar things that your governor wouldn't accept." And what does that book end with? "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant." And "before the Day of the Lord comes, Elijah is going to come; and, if he doesn't, then this whole earth is cursed." Stick that in the back of your mind, because we'll be getting to that as well. Malachi is a message for the end time church, about this very thing—measuring the altar, and measuring the priests, and

measuring the church. But Malachi specifically gets to the priests and the worship, more than just the church in general. It's a very interesting way of looking at it.

This part of the message includes instruction in what constitutes proper worship of God. So the messenger must evaluate how the church is fulfilling its duty to worship. It's very interesting. I'm going to bring this in. Luke 1 is another one of these things to stick in the back of your mind. The back of your mind is going to be full, but there are little hints all over this Book about this particular time. It's a very important time to God. So He didn't leave us without things to think about. This is Zacharias and Elizabeth—particularly Zacharias; and they are being told that they are going to have a son.

Luke 1:5-13 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest [Notice that.] named Zacharias [Notice that—his name.], of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron [Notice that.], and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as a priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. [Are we getting any clues here?] And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John."

Luke 1:15-17 "He will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit [Remember I told you to remember about the work of the Holy Spirit.], even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. [Remember Malachi 4: 6.] He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Luke 1:76-79 [This is Zacharias' prophecy, when he finally got his tongue working again.] And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring [It actually should be "the Branch."] from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

It's very interesting that this man, named John, came in the spirit and power of Elijah. His work was to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus Christ. And this was announced beside the altar of incense, by an angel, to a priest—among other things. There are many things that can be taken out of there; but they all have to do with this message of the two witnesses, and specifically here the altar and preparing the people for proper worship of God.

I just thought that was interesting and thought I'd throw it in—just for the added value, let's say, and what it could mean—because this person at the end (one of these witnesses) is going to come in this same spirit. At least one of them, if not both of them, will be in the same spirit of Elijah; and that will be their job. Prepare a people, preach repentance, get people's worship back in line, and be ready for the things that Christ is going to be doing when He returns—in bringing peace, then, to Israel and to the rest of the world.

Before we stop, I want to finish with verse 1 [of Revelation 11]. He says, "*also measure those who worship there.*" This almost seems to repeat the temple symbolism (meaning the church), but it doesn't. This specifically targets the individual Christian. This is not just the whole church that is supposed to be measured. It's the individual Christian—*the individual worshipper*—that needs to be measured. We aren't going to get in on anybody else's coat tails. So everybody has to be measured by this preaching, by this message. I know some people don't like this word, but each one of us individually, then, has to qualify for our place.

So, the temple symbolizes the whole body of Christ. The worshippers are the individual Christians. Under the Old Covenant, remember that only the priests could enter the sanctuary—not the common Israelite. So what God is saying here is that He's concerned not just for the church as a whole but for the individual. Now we can enter into not only "the holy place" but "the most holy place." But we'd better make sure, just like the people in the Old Testament did—those who were allowed to enter had to be perfectly cleaned to do so. So they had to be measured, in a way, before they could come there and do their worship, do their duty.

So we can't just clean the whole church. We can't just clean up the worship. We have to clean up the individual too. We have to make sure that everything is perfectly pure before God. So God has His overall purpose, and He has His individual purpose. Both of them will be measured properly, and applied properly, and made to work properly.

To summarize: This part of their work is to evaluate the state of (1) the whole church, (2) the individual Christian, and (3) how the church and the individual fulfill its responsibilities in properly worshipping God. The Two Witnesses also have the power of the *rod* to make corrections where necessary—not just to measure. It's also *to enforce* in a way. This is a work of *purification unto holiness* in preparation for the Kingdom of God, as we saw a hint of there in Luke 1.