

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

consider . . . Jesus

Heb. 3:1

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The Time of the End

Part XIX

The Two Witnesses

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth (Rev. 11:1-3).

Revelation chapter eleven opens with introductory remarks concerning the temple which will be constructed by the Jewish people during the first year of the Tribulation. Daniel 8:11-14 reveals that sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple will commence seven months and ten days (220 days) following the beginning of the Tribulation, following the man of sin ratifying a seven-year covenant with "many" in Israel. Then, sacrifices in accord with the Mosaic economy will continue for two years ten months and twenty days (1,040 days) before the man of sin breaks his covenant and stops the sacrifices through a desecration and subsequent destruction of the Temple (*cf.* Dan. 9:26, 27; 11:31; Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2:3, 4).

(To arrive at the preceding figures, subtract the 2,300 days in Dan. 8:14 from 2,520 days [the total number of days in the seven-year Tribulation, using 30-day months]. This will leave 220 days, or seven months and ten days, the time which it will take to rebuild the Temple,

establish the priesthood, and begin offering sacrifices. The 2,300 subsequent days, the days in Dan. 8:14, form the total time from that point to the end of the Tribulation, which is divided into two parts referred to by "the daily sacrifice" and "the transgression of desolation" in the previous verse [v. 13].

"The daily sacrifice" has to do with that part of the 2,300 days during which sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple will be offered [from the time they begin until the middle of the Tribulation, for two years ten months and twenty days, or 1,040 days]. Then "the transgression of desolation" has to do with the time following the man of sin breaking his covenant, causing the sacrifices to cease, and not only desecrating but destroying the rebuilt Temple. This will occur in the exact middle of the Tribulation [after three and one-half years, after 1,260 days, with three and one-half years left, with 1,260 days left].

Thus, the 1,040 days, during which sacrifices will be offered, comprise the first part of the 2,300 days; and the 1,260 days [or, as in the text, "forty and two months"], during which there will no longer be sacrifices, for the Temple will have been destroyed and the Jewish people dispersed, comprise the last part of this period.

And the cleansing of the sanctuary [v. 14] will occur at the full end of the 2,300 days, which is synonymous with the time Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy in the next chapter ends [vv. 24-27]. This cleansing of the sanctuary will occur at the same time and be inseparably related to the things enumerated in v. 24 of this subsequent Seventy-Week prophecy.)

Following introductory remarks concerning the rebuilt Temple, Revelation chapter eleven leads into events during each of the three-and-one-half-year

parts of the Tribulation. That which occurs during *the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation is mentioned first* (v. 2). This is then immediately followed by a number of verses detailing that which occurs during *the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation* (vv. 3-14). Thus, though this part of the chapter begins by briefly mentioning that which occurs during *the last half* of the Tribulation, the chapter is centrally about that which occurs during *the first half*.

Mentioning or dealing with *the last first, and the first last* (*cf.* Matt. 20:16) is seen different ways, at different times, in Scripture. One way is through God rejecting the first and establishing the second (*e.g.*, rejecting the earth's first ruler and establishing the second, rejecting the first man and establishing the Second, rejecting the first birth and establishing the second, etc). But the text concerns itself more with the manner in which things are listed, which can be seen in the manner in which individuals and undoubtedly other things are listed at the beginning of Scripture (*e.g.*, the order in which the birth of sons listed in Gen. 5:32; 11:26 occurred, or the order in which cities listed in Gen. 10:10 were apparently built).

Note that the three sons of Noah in Gen. 5:32; 6:10 and the three sons of Terah in Gen. 11:26, 27 are listed in the reverse order of their birth. *The first (oldest son) is listed last and the last (youngest son) is listed first.* This can easily be shown through that stated in other verses about one or more of these sons (*cf.* Gen. 5:32; 7:6; 10:21; 11:10 for Noah and Gen. 11:26, 32; 12:4 for Terah).

And this same reverse order would apparently hold true as well for such things as the order in which the four cities listed in Gen. 10:10 were built. All four cities are said to form the beginning of Nimrod's

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kingdom, with the last city listed (Calneh) probably being the first of the four built and the first city listed (Babel) probably being the last of the four built.

(To illustrate how knowing the preceding can sometimes help in Biblical interpretation, note that this reverse order would exist as well for the order of the birth of the four sons of Ham listed in Gen. 10:6. "Canaan" is mentioned last. Thus, Canaan would be Ham's *oldest son, his firstborn*. And this fact is quite evident from Noah's curse concerning "a servant of servants [*i.e.*, 'the lowest of servants']" pronounced upon Canaan, resulting from an act committed by Ham, Canaan's father [Gen. 9:20-25].

Noah didn't look down a line of four sons [the way they are listed in Gen. 10:6] and curse the youngest son. No! It appears evident that Canaan was the only son which Ham had at this time, which would apparently have been no more than several years following the Flood [giving Noah time to plant a vineyard and grow grapes, and giving Ham time to begat one son]. And knowing that Canaan was Ham's firstborn and apparently the only son Ham had at this time is vital to a correct, contextual, understanding of the passage.

Why didn't Noah curse Ham since he was the one who had committed the act? The reason is given in the context. God had previously blessed Noah and his three sons [Gen. 9:1], and Noah couldn't curse the one whom God had blessed. Thus, Noah did the only thing which he could do. Noah cursed Ham's son, Canaan. And it is evident from the context that this was a curse upon Ham's entire seed, not just upon his firstborn.

Three prophecies are seen in that which Noah stated about each of his sons in Gen. 9:25-27. These prophecies, as evident from their contextual setting and content — dealing with a new beginning in the human race, necessitating all-inclusiveness — have to do with *federal headship and the prophetic destinies of races comprising nations, with the prophecies in this respect not limited to the three individuals in the prophecies but to their descendants as well*.

And to understand how God has worked out the preceding in these prophecies, note the prophecies in vv. 26, 27 concerning both Shem and Japheth. Shem is seen as *the only son with a God* [v.

26], and Japheth is to be *enlarged* [v. 27]. This is seen today through a nation descending from Shem [the Jewish people] being the only nation with a God [Ex. 3:6; Ps. 72:18; 96:5; Eph. 2:11, 12], and through Japheth's descendants populating a large part of the globe.

For more information on the preceding, refer to the editor's two pamphlets, "The Sons of Noah."

Forty-Two Months Twelve Hundred Sixty Days

As previously seen, the expression "forty and two months" is used *first in chapter eleven relative to events during the last half of the Tribulation (v. 2)*. Then the expression "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" is used *last relative to events during the first half of the Tribulation (v. 3)*. These are just two ways of expressing the same length of time, and they should not necessarily be thought of as ways which the Spirit used to show that events having to do with one belongs in a different half of the Tribulation than events having to do with the other. This is determined and made plain by the events themselves, not by two different ways of saying the same thing.

Remaining within the order seen in verses two and three (the last first, and the first last), Jerusalem is to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles for forty-two months, 1,260 days. At the beginning of this period (beginning in the middle of the Tribulation), following the man of sin breaking his covenant with "many" in Israel and desecrating the Temple, both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed (Dan. 9:26; *ref. Part XI of this series*).

Matthew's and Mark's Olivet Discourse accounts surrounding events during this time center on *the Temple and the people in Judaea* (Matt. 24:15ff; Mark 13:14ff). Luke's account though is different. Luke's Olivet Discourse account centers on *the city of Jerusalem, the people of Judaea, and provides information surrounding Jerusalem being trodden under foot by the Gentiles in Rev. 11:2*. Note the way Luke's account reads:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in

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the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-24).

The preceding verses *are not* dealing with events in 70 A.D. (the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his Roman legions), as advanced by many commentators. These verses in Luke's Olivet Discourse account parallel the referenced verses in Matthew's and Mark's Olivet Discourse accounts, which have to do with events during *the future Tribulation*.

Aside from the preceding, these verses in Luke have to do with a time when "all things which are written may be fulfilled," something which *didn't* occur through the events of 70 A.D.

And, beyond that, these verses have to do with a time when Jerusalem is going to be "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This perfectly parallels Rev. 11:2, which has to do with the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation, with the Times of the Gentiles ending with the end of the Tribulation and the corresponding end of Man's Day.

One need only look at conditions in Jerusalem today to know that Luke 21:20-24 cannot have to do with events of 70 A.D. From the beginning to the end of events depicted in these verses, Jerusalem is to be trodden down by the

Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles is brought to an end.

Man is still living during the Times of the Gentiles today, and Jerusalem is not presently being trodden down of the Gentiles. Thus, the whole of that stated in these verses has to be placed at a future time, in line with that seen in corresponding Scripture.

On the other hand, the ministry of the two witnesses can't occur during the last half of the Tribulation. There would be no Jews in Jerusalem or the surrounding area to which they could minister during this time. Their ministry can only occur during the first half of the Tribulation, for their ministry will be to the Jewish people, and it will be centered in the capital of Jewry, in Jerusalem.

This is evident, if for no other reason, through how they are first described in the chapter:

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (v. 4).

This is a reference drawn from the fifth of eight visions recorded in the opening part of the Book of Zechariah (Zech. 4:1-14). These are visions revealed to and recorded by Zechariah following the return of a remnant from the Babylonian captivity. And the subject matter of the eight visions (Zech. 1:7-6:8) is governed by the manner in which they are introduced (vv. 1-6), which, in turn, governs the subject matter of the book itself.

These eight visions are introduced by the Lord's statement surrounding *Israel's past disobedience, the result of this disobedience, the call for repentance, and that which will occur following Israel's repentance.*

Disobedience resulted in the Times of the Gentiles, and *repentance* would ultimately be effected through Gentile persecution during this period.

Then, the visions begin immediately following this and continue uninterrupted until all eight visions have been completed.

These visions have to be understood *in the light of the manner in which they are introduced.* They have to be understood in the light of Israel's past disobedience, which has resulted in the Times of the Gentiles; and they have to be understood in the light of the reason for

the Times of the Gentiles — Israel not only reaping the consequences of her actions, but the nation ultimately being brought to the place of repentance — and that which will occur once God's purpose for this period is realized. The visions, understood contextually, *must* be looked upon as having to do with *Israel and the nations during and at the end of the Times of the Gentiles.*

Though God drove His people out among the nations, to effect *repentance*, the principles set forth in Gen. 12:3 remain. God will use *Gentile persecution* to bring about *repentance*, but He will also subsequently *judge the Gentiles* because of this persecution.

Summarily, these visions bridge the centuries of time between the first and last kings of Babylon during the Times of the Gentiles. They have to do with different facets of Israeli persecution at the hands of the Gentiles, with the principles set forth in Gen. 12:3 ultimately being worked out and realized. They have to do with Israel ultimately being brought to the place of repentance, the Times of the Gentiles being brought to an end, and Gentile persecution of Israel being fully dealt with.

Only then will Israel occupy her proper place at the head of the nations in a restored theocracy, with the nations being blessed through Israel.

That, in short, is how the eight visions in Zechariah must be understood. *Each* presents a different facet of the matter, and *all of the visions together* form a composite picture of that which God revealed concerning Israel and the nations through Zechariah.

Then, immediately after the last vision (6:1-8, dealing with the destruction of Gentile world power), Zechariah calls attention to the crowning of *Joshua, the high priest*, with reference then made to “the man whose name is The BRANCH,” which is followed by a reference to the building of the temple (6:11-13).

(The name “Joshua” [Heb., *Jehoshua*] is an Anglicized form of the Hebrew name for “Jesus” [Gk., *Iesous*]. The Septuagint [Gk. translation of the O.T.] uses *Iesous* in Zech. 6:11, and this is the reason that the KJV translators erroneously translated *Iesous* as “Jesus” instead of “Joshua” in Heb. 4:8. They are the same name, whether *Jehoshua* in Hebrew or *Iesous* in

Greek. And the name, “The BRANCH,” in Zech. 6:12 is a Messianic title applied to Christ elsewhere in the Old Testament [Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8].)

Thus, note that which is in view immediately following the visions in Zechariah, immediately following the Times of the Gentiles, when Israel occupies her proper place at the head of the nations, in a restored theocracy. Events surrounding the crowning of Joshua, the high priest during Zechariah's day (a crowning occurring at the termination of the visions), foreshadow future events surrounding the crowning of Jesus (a crowning which will occur at the termination of that set forth in the visions), Who will then be the great King-Priest in Jerusalem. And the building of the temple following the restoration of a remnant during Zechariah's day foreshadows the building of the Millennial Temple by Messiah Himself, following Israel's restoration, in that future day.

Knowing that the ministry of the two witnesses will be the fulfillment of Zechariah's fifth vision, and understanding the subject matter of these visions, one can know that their ministry will have to do with the same people and subject matter as seen in all eight visions. It will have to do with *the Jewish people, their past disobedience and the result, a call to repentance, and that which awaits both Israel and the nations following Israel's repentance.*

Further, the two witnesses appear textually to be the ones directly responsible for the conversion of the 144,000 Jews who will minister worldwide to the Gentiles during the last half of the Tribulation. And bringing about the conversion of this remnant might very well be the central focus of their ministry. Note that there is a point when the two witnesses will have finished their testimony (v. 7), which may very well have to do with the last of the 144,000 being saved and sealed (Rev. 7:1-8).

(Two subsequent studies in this series, dealing with material in Revelation chapters twelve and fourteen, will center on the ministry of the 144,000 and show an inseparable connection with chapter eleven. In one sense of the

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word, chapter eleven provides introductory material for that seen in these two following chapters.)

Ministry of the Two Witnesses

The two witnesses seen in chapter eleven will appear in the streets of Jerusalem or the surrounding countryside at the very beginning of the Tribulation. Because of the nature of their ministry, these two witnesses will have to be individuals sent from heaven to earth. Not only will *they be knowledgeable individuals who carry a specific message for a particular people in a particular place* (a message for the Jewish people, centered in Jerusalem) but *they will possess supernatural protection and will exhibit supernatural powers* (vv. 5, 6).

Further, their ministry will be for a *particular length of time* — exactly 1,260 days, three and one-half years, the first three and one-half years of the seven-year Tribulation (v. 3). Their appearance and ministry will *parallel* the time extending from the man of sin making his covenant with “many” in Israel to that time when he breaks this covenant (Dan. 9:27; cf. Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5). They will appear and begin their ministry at or about the time that this man makes his covenant with “many” in Israel, and their ministry will end exactly three and one-half years later at or about the time that this man breaks his covenant. *Both times run concurrently, for 1,260 days.*

The identity of these two witnesses is not given in Scripture. *The supernatural powers* associated with their ministry, which will be *supernatural signs* (cf. Rev. 13:13, 14; 16:14; 19:20), are reminiscent of those exhibited at two different times in Israeli history by Moses and Elijah (v. 6; cf. Ex. 7:19, 20; I Kings 17:1; James 5:17, 18). Also, of interest is the fact that *the only two times* in Israeli history throughout the Old Testament when individuals were

empowered to perform supernatural signs (as these two witnesses will be empowered to do) was 1) during the days of Moses and his successor Joshua, and 2) during the days of Elijah and his successor Elisha. And this same supernatural manifestation of signs is seen in the New Testament *only two times* as well — 1) during time covered by the Gospels and the Book of Acts when, God was dealing with the Jewish people; and 2) during the future Tribulation, after God resumes His national dealings with the Jewish people.

The Jewish people are the ones requiring *signs* (I Cor. 1:22). And supernatural signs exhibited for two periods of time in the Old Testament and for one past period of time in the New Testament were exhibited *among a particular people for a particular reason*. They were exhibited *among the Jewish people, with the theocracy in view*. And exactly the same two things will have to be seen in this future manifestation of signs in Revelation chapter eleven as well. Of necessity, for it can be no other way, signs manifested by the two witnesses will have to be exhibited *among the Jewish people, with the theocracy in view*.

But, after understanding the ministry of the two witnesses after the preceding fashion, and knowing that Moses and Elijah appeared together on the mount when Jesus was transfigured in the presence of three of His disciples (Matt. 17:3), and also knowing that God will send Elijah back to the Jewish people on earth sometime during the Tribulation (Mal. 4:5, 6), it would probably still be best to leave attempted identities of the two witnesses alone. Scripture refers to them only as “two witnesses.” God has deemed that sufficient, and so should we.

When the two witnesses finish their testimony, at or about the time that the man of sin breaks his covenant with “many” in Israel, their supernatural protection will be removed, and the man of sin, the Beast from Revelation chapter thirteen, will be allowed to kill

them (v. 7). Their dead bodies will then lie unburied in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one-half days (a day for a year of their ministry), while people throughout the nations *view their dead bodies, rejoice, make merry, and send gifts to one another because of that which will have occurred* (vv. 8-10).

Victory over two individuals who had heretofore been supernaturally protected will seemingly have occurred. The Beast will have broken his covenant with the Jewish people, entered into the Temple, and declared himself to be God; and the Beast will, at this same time, be attempting the destruction of the Jewish people (Matt. 24:15ff; Mark 13:14ff; Luke 21:20ff; II Thess. 2:3, 4; Rev. 13:1, 2).

It is at this time that the Beast will be allowed to slay the two witnesses. He will be allowed to slay the ones who could not heretofore be slain. He will be allowed to slay the two individuals who, for three and one-half years, had wrought all types of plagues on the earth, apparently particularly upon Israel’s enemies (Rev. 11:6).

Is it any wonder that the entire world will begin to follow after and worship the Beast when all these things come together at the same time (Rev. 13:4-8)?

But, after three and one-half days, matters will suddenly change. Breath will reenter the bodies of these two witnesses, they will stand upon their feet, and a *terrified world* will behold the scene. But the ministry of these two witnesses *will have been finished*, and they will simply ascend into heaven as a great voice from heaven commands them, “Come up hither.” And those on the earth will behold them ascending into “a cloud” in the heavens (vv. 11, 12), undoubtedly the same Cloud which received Christ into the heavens in Acts 1:9, which could only be *the Glory of God* (I Tim. 3:16; cf. Ezek. 10:4, 18; 11:22, 23; 43:1-5).

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