

## The Rapture and the Timing of the Two Witnesses

Proof that the Rapture is Pre-Tribulation is hidden in the timing of the Two Witnesses. The evidence for this becomes clear as we investigate the question of when the Two Witnesses' ministry begins - during the first half of the Tribulation, or during the second half. Students of Bible prophecy from the dispensational viewpoint understand there is a Tribulation period of 7 years prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. During this time, God and Satan vie for the souls of men. Satan introduces his infamous 666 mark that all men must accept to worship him, or die by beheading. God, on the other hand, extends a last-minute opportunity for men to receive forgiveness for their sins through faith in Jesus Christ and in the Holy blood which He shed at the cross (Hebrews 9:22).

One of the things taught in the book of Revelation is that God uses Two Witnesses to preach salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The question before us is: When will the time of the Two Witnesses' ministry occur within the Tribulation period's 7 years? The answer to this question also helps demonstrate why the Rapture is Pre-Tribulation. The 7-year Tribulation period comes from the prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel chapter 9, where each "week" is a time period of 7 years, with each day being one year. The Tribulation period is the last or 70<sup>th</sup> "Week" of that prophecy. The 69<sup>th</sup> week ending on the day the Messiah, or Jesus, was cut off, or killed, but not for himself (Daniel 9:26). This 70<sup>th</sup> week is also known as the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). This prophetic week is divided into two halves, each 3 ½ years long, (Daniel 9:27). It needs further to be said that those years are not our familiar calendar years of 365 ¼ days each, but are actual Jewish lunar years of 360 days each, where each month is exactly 30 days. That being said, each half of the Tribulation period is 1,260 days long, the same number of days as the ministry of the Two Witnesses: "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy for a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth." (Revelation 11:3). We are further taught just who these Two Witnesses are: "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." (Revelation 11:4). This corresponds to an Old Testament prophecy given to Israel through an angel of the Lord in Zechariah chapter 4. First the prophet sees a vision in verses 3 - 4 and some verses later asks the angel to explain what he was seeing: "And I answered again and said unto him, 'What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil out of themselves?' So he answered me, saying, 'Do you not know what these are?' And I said, 'No, my lord.' Then he said, 'These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.'" (Zechariah 4:12-14). The verse in Revelation 11:4 ties the two Scripture passages together, so that when the Tribulation period is underway, the descendants of Israel who see the Two Witnesses will understand from the book of Revelation that the Two Witnesses are the anointed ones Zechariah foretold would be coming.

Now concerning the number of 1,260 days, I do not believe the time-span of half the Tribulation period and the ministry time-span of the Two Witnesses is a coincidence. Some students of Bible prophecy think the Two Witness' 1,260 days of ministry is aligned with the first half of the Tribulation period, while others believe it aligns with the second half. However, some careful thought will show that the 1,260 days of the Two Witnesses' ministry cannot be located, time wise, in the second half of the Tribulation period. First, consider the nature of exactitude with God's numbers. When He says 1,260 days, He doesn't mean 1,261 days or 1,259 days. When dealing with these Tribulation time figures, we find them expressed differently in Scripture, but all are exactly equivalent. There's "a time, times and half a time" (Daniel 7:25), which is repeated in Revelation 12:14 and also defined for us in Revelation 12:6; "Then the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days" (Revelation 12:6). "But two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." (Revelation 12:14). From this we know "a time, times and half a time" = 1,260 days. Likewise, the time of the reign of the Antichrist is given in Daniel 7:25 as "a time, times and half a time," and is repeated in Revelation 13:5 as "42 months." "And he will speak great words against the Most High and wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time, times and the dividing of time." (or 3 ½ years) (Daniel 7:25). "There was

given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given unto him to continue for forty-two months.” (Revelation 13:5). By this we know that the Antichrist’s reign in Revelation 13:5 (i.e., 42 months) is exactly 1,260 days, not a day more nor a day less. In Daniel 9:27, from which (as we have already seen) we derive the 7-year length of the Tribulation period, and we find the Antichrist committing the Abomination of Desolation in the midst of it. The Abomination of Desolation is an act of sacrilege in which he enters the temple of God and puts a stop to Jewish worship sacrifices, and demands to be worshipped as God himself: “Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called god or that is worshiped, so that he as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God,” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). We know from Daniel that this event occurs in the exact middle of the Tribulation period’s 7 years: “...but in the midst of the week [i.e., 1 prophetic week = 7 Jewish lunar years] he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate...” (Daniel 9:27b). The Abomination of Desolation makes the temple of God “desolate.” Please carefully note that the Antichrist will continue his reign until he is destroyed: “...even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (Daniel 9:27c). This can only mean that the Antichrist, whom we have seen, reigns for 42 months, and then is destroyed according to God’s decree at the 1,260<sup>th</sup> day of his reign, not one day more or less. This destruction of the Antichrist is revealed in Revelation chapter 19 at the Second Coming. There, the Antichrist and his associate in evil, the False Prophet, are dealt with in finality: “...these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire...” (Revelation 19:20b).

Now, you might say, “Okay, so the Antichrist is destroyed after reigning exactly 1,260 days. So what’s that got to do with the timing of the ministry of the Two Witnesses?” I’m glad you asked. In Revelation 11, after revealing the effects and nature of the Two Witnesses’ ministry, it records for us: “When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.” (Revelation 11:7). We are further told the Two Witnesses’ bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for “three and a half days.” (Revelation 11:9b). Revelation goes on to say: “But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them,” (Revelation 11:11). Ever wonder why they lie dead for 3 ½ days? It’s because they preached for 1,260 days, or 42 months, or 3 ½ years. One day for each year they preached. (Numbers 14:33-34, Ezekiel 4:6). It is no coincidence that Jesus preached for three years, was killed, and then lay dead in the tomb for 3 days. Again, a day for every year he preached.

For arguments sake, let’s assume the ministry of the Two Witnesses really is aligned with the second half of the Tribulation. Follow with me this time sequence based on that assumption: At the Tribulation period’s midpoint, the Antichrist commits the Abomination of Desolation. (Daniel 9:27). That same day, the ministry of the Two Witnesses begins, and they minister for the ordained 1,260 days, which is also the length of the Antichrist’s reign. Then, on the final day of the Antichrist’s reign, he kills the Two Witnesses. But, Jesus comes back right then also and has the Antichrist and False Prophet thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20). Despite this world-shaking event of the Second Coming, the world nonetheless watches the bodies of the Two Witnesses for 3 ½ more days, even while Jesus is judging the nations (Matthew 25:31-46) and setting up His kingdom. Still following that time sequence, after those 3 ½ extra days, the bodies rise to life again and they ascend up into Heaven, only to come right back down again to the earth to be with the Lord (Revelation 11: 12) and all His saints. Wouldn’t that be ridiculous?

Previously in Revelation 8:13, John heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven saying with a loud voice, woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound. The first woe occurs in Chapter 9:1-12. The second woe occurs in Chapter 9:13-19. Then finally, the third woe occurs (Revelation 11:14), meaning the next angel, the one with the seventh trumpet, blows his horn (Revelation 11:15-19), but only AFTER the introduction of the two Witnesses and their subsequent murder at the hands of the antichrist (Revelation 11:3-13). And that’s not even counting the seven Bowls of Wrath that additionally follow AFTER the Seventh Trumpet. All this happening 3 ½ days AFTER the Second Coming? Does anyone besides me see a problem with this? It is simply a fact that the seven Seals, seven Trumpets and seven Bowls all are completed BEFORE the Second

Coming. The time of the Two Witnesses' ministry CANNOT be in the second half of the Tribulation period. The world is rejoicing and gloating over the death of these two men of God and giving gifts to one another in a satanic celebration during those 3 ½ days (Revelation 11:9-10), something that would have to be happening while Jesus has already returned to Earth. Does anyone seriously expect that Jesus, after returning to Earth in His power and glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, would ALLOW that? I don't think so!

May I suggest a simpler explanation? In Revelation 11:1-2, John is describing the temple of God. This HAS to be in existence in the first half of the Tribulation period in order for the Antichrist to enter the temple to commit his Abomination of Desolation at the midpoint of the Tribulation. This is proof that the time sequence of Revelation Chapter 11 is in the first half, meaning both the temple and the Two Witnesses are present when the Tribulation starts. To me this also implies that the temple has to be already fully built when the Tribulation period starts, for the instruction in Revelation 11:1 says, "Then there was given me a reed like unto a measuring rod; and the angel said, 'Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship therein.'" You can't hand a measuring rod to someone to measure something that isn't built yet. The instruction implies that he is being ordered to measure a completed item, not something under construction. When the first day of the 7-year Tribulation period (Daniel 9:27) begins with the signing of a covenant between Israel and many other nations, it is then that the Two Witnesses appear and their ministry begins, and then ends on day 1,260, when the Antichrist commits the Abomination of Desolation and then kills them. Now, when you see the impossibility of the timing of the Two Witnesses' ministry being in the second half, it is clear that it must be in the first half, you can see the evidence for the Rapture showing clearly as Pre-Tribulation. Think about it for a moment. The Church of Jesus Christ is commanded to be Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8). Why would God put into operation these two spectacular witnesses to bear witness of Jesus Christ, if the Church were still on Earth to do that job as it has for the last 2,000 years? However, with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture happening, billions of people will suddenly have no one to tell them about Jesus. All the true Born Again Christians will be gone. However, with the timing of the Two Witnesses' ministry beginning on Day 1 of the Tribulation, people will be hearing about Jesus despite the disappearance of all the true Born Again Christians in the Rapture. It is the ministry of the Two Witnesses and the 144,000 male Jews of Revelation 7:1-8 to now pick up where the Church left off. These Jewish men finally believe in Jesus, and realize that the time is short, and while the Two Witnesses minister to Israel, the 144,000 spread out all over the world to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is like 144,000 apostle Paul's let loose on the world at once! This, too, is an evidence that the Rapture is Pre-Tribulation. As said earlier, Jesus gave to His Church the job of being witnesses to Him (Acts 1:8). Why would God now use two Jewish witnesses (Moses and Elijah), and 144,000 Jewish men to share the gospel, unless it were necessary because the Church is no longer on the Earth to do the Job? The result of the ministry of the 144,000 is a great number of saved souls "...which no one can count, from every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues..." (Revelation 7:9b). They cry out, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:10b).

The understanding that makes the best sense is that the ministry of the Two Witnesses and the 144,000 male Jews begins on Day 1 of the Tribulation period. They win uncountable numbers of souls all over the world. The Two Witnesses continue their own ministry in Israel, performing the same miracles as they did in the past (i.e., turning water to blood, having power to shut heaven that it rain not for 3 ½ years, Revelation 11:6). It is important to note that by the sending of Moses and Elijah, the Two Witnesses represent the testimony of the two authorities acknowledged by the people of Israel, the Law and the Prophets. When giving "The Golden Rule," Jesus referenced that same authority that the people knew when He said, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

When Jesus had taken Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration, they met Moses and Elijah, who epitomize the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). (Malachi 4:4-5). When Jesus rebuked the scoffing Pharisees, He again spoke of the Law and the Prophets, (Luke 16:16). Also, after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and taught them about Himself out of the Law and the Prophets (Luke 24:25-27). During the Tribulation, the people of Israel will be seeing, with their own eyes, the

Two Witnesses Moses and Elijah, performing the same miracles as they did in the past and will be hearing, with their own ears, the testimony of those two authorities, representing the Law and the Prophets, preaching Jesus Christ. At the end of their ministry, on Day 1,260, the antichrist goes into the Temple of God and commits the Abomination of Desolation. Then the words of Jesus become terribly clear: "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." (Matthew 24:15-16). The antichrist slays the Two Witnesses, and the Tribulation period now begins its second half. The antichrist then goes after God's people in a massive persecution that will permit no worship except to him. It says in Scripture of this time (i.e. the second half of the Tribulation): I beheld, and that same horn [i.e., antichrist] made war with the saints and prevailed against them." (Daniel 7:21) ...and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times and the dividing of time." (or 3 1/2 years) (Daniel 7:25b). There was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given to him to continue forty-two months (Revelation 13:5). "It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them and power was given him over all kindreds, tongues, and nations (Revelation 13:7). His reign is supreme during the second half of the Tribulation Period. With the committing of the Abomination of Desolation, he proceeds forth to force people to submit to him, via the infamous 666 mark, or be beheaded. (Revelation 13:15; Revelation 20:4).

As a last thought, it is also this supreme reign of his during the second half of the Tribulation period that shows why most of the evangelism must take place in the first half, both that of the Two Witnesses and that of the 144,000 Israelites. Once they're gone, the Lord still does not leave the world without a witness, as He sends an angel having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. (Revelation 14:6-13). No one on that day will be able to say that they didn't hear the gospel before Jesus comes back to judge the earth. (Matthew 25:32-46). Therefore, the timing of the Two Witnesses can only be during the first half of the Tribulation period, with the Rapture preceding it. And finally, Malachi 4:5 states, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet BEFORE the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Just in case there is any doubt as to who the other witness will be, look at Malachi 4:4a, the verse right up above it. Whose name is mentioned? "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant. "The Law and the Prophets" – sound familiar? They appear BEFORE the Tribulation begins, not in the middle.

The Great Tribulation is rapidly approaching! Jesus said, "a time never seen before, or will ever be seen again." (Matthew 24:21). This means the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), the evacuation of all the true Born Again Christians from off the earth is imminent. You don't want to miss the Rapture. If you do, you will know what fear is all about. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Repent to God now with your whole heart, give your life to Jesus, and accept Him as your Lord and Saviour while there is still time. There is only one way to heaven, and that way is through Jesus. (John 14:6)

AMEN!