

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 126

THE TWO WITNESSES

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

The passage now under consideration introduces the famous two witnesses. Immediately we must battle against the false images of the carnal mind. This is no more and no less than a spiritual dynamic released in a dramatic fashion as a poetic drama. There has been much speculation about the identity of these witnesses. Some try to make them literal, two individual men, even going so far as to name them, declaring they will be Moses and Elijah, or Enoch and Elijah, or some other combination. But the whole language is figurative! There is no literal temple of God in the earthly Jerusalem, nor are there two individual men speaking as God's witnesses there, either! Subsequent verses tell us who they are, what they must do, who rises against them, and what the end of their ministry is.

Before discussing *who* the two witnesses are, I would draw your reverent attention to *whose* the two witnesses are! The symbolic angel who commanded John to measure the temple now declares, "And **I** will give power to **MY** two witnesses, and they shall prophesy..." There is no doubt in my mind that the voice here is the voice of none other than our Lord Jesus Christ! We have shown in a previous study that the "angel" here is a figure for our Lord. The fact that the voice speaks not merely of two witnesses, but specifically of "**my** two witnesses" unto whom "**I** will give **power**" reveals clearly that the Christ is speaking! We find a very similar expression from Jesus when He tells His disciples, "But ye shall receive *power*, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses *unto me* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

It would be profitable here to mention again the great truths found in the opening verses of chapter eleven of the Revelation. The city of Jerusalem stands for Christendom in the broadest sense of the word, inclusive of every person, church, denomination, organization, and movement which calls itself "Christian." Lying outside of both the "court" and the "temple" the "city" symbolizes the false church, that part of what is called the church, but which at the same time does not truly know the Lord by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The outer court, on the other hand, represents a segment of the church composed of those who are born again of the Spirit and enjoy a true relationship with the Lord, yet at a great distance from His full truth, wisdom, presence, power, and glory. The temple proper signifies the true body of Christ, the called and chosen elect of the Lord, who are following on to know the Lord in all His glorious and eternal reality! These stand in the most holy place and have entered into intimacy of fellowship and vital union with Christ! These are God's *temple people*. It is in this setting that the two witnesses appear and a testimony arises from the midst of God's elect!

God says that nothing can be established without the **two**. Two in scripture is the number of witness. It is laid down in the Old Testament that everything must be established by two or three witnesses. "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin...at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15). When the Pharisees sought to discredit the testimony of

Jesus by charging that His was but one testimony, therefore He was merely bearing witness of Himself, and His single witness was invalid, He countered with the observation that He was, in fact, two witnesses because of the oneness between Him and His Father — as evidenced in the works that He did. Jesus said to them, “It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me” (Jn. 8:17-18). So there is a concept here. These two witnesses are God’s WITNESS PEOPLE! The witness they bear is by the Spirit and the Word! Let it be known that not only does man have impact upon God, but man will have impact upon man. Truly the Lord is telling us, “The sign of a witness shall be established and my witness shall be established and shall testify of me. And they shall stand and withstand and I do give them power.” God has never left Himself without witnesses among mankind. Among other things, God is actively in the witnessing business! Just think for a moment — what could God do that would be more important than to be in the witnessing business? He is in dead earnest about it; He means business; and He spares no time, energy, or effort to bring forth His witness in the earth! Here in the book of Revelation God has two particular witnesses. These two witnesses are powerful, they are great, they are important, and they are wonderful!

In order to better understand this prophetic witness-ministry let us go back to Revelation 10:11 for a moment. “And he said unto me, *thou must prophesy* again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” “And he said unto *me*...” Who is this “me”? There is no doubt about the fact that it is John. The question follows — who does John represent? All through the book of Revelation John is the one experiencing all the events that transpired! Can we doubt that John represents the true elect of God who must also experience within themselves every dealing of the Father revealed in the visions given to him? John stands for you, my precious brother, my dear sister, as the Christ upon the earth today! “And he said unto me, *thou must prophesy again* before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” The word “prophesy” literally means to speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. This is someone speaking the living word of the Lord! Immediately we step into chapter eleven where the two witnesses are said to “prophesy” and their testimony likewise goes out to “the peoples and kindreds and tongues and nations” (Rev. 11:9). Can you not see the mystery? Both the two witnesses and John represent the very same thing — they portray to us a realm of PROPHETIC MINISTRY!

Have you ever been called to testify as a witness to an accident? A witness is simply one who reports what he has seen, heard, and experienced. He shares personal knowledge and firsthand experience. The testimony of an eyewitness can be weighty and convincing. Many a juror has been swayed by the testimony of a credible witness. The early believers were “eyewitnesses” of the majesty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! With great power they bore witness to what they had seen, heard, and experienced! And their witness shook kingdoms and turned the world up-side down! For some people, witnessing means marketing God — as if God were the latest digital camera or houseware item you shouldn’t be without. They view witnessing in a way like doing door-to-door sales, and some methods of witnessing even involve going door-to-door trying to convince strangers that they need God. But such witnesses have no power! They are not a prophetic voice! They are the messengers of religion! But the apostle John prophesies of that which he has seen in the Spirit and of what he knows by the Spirit! A prophet, we are told, was originally known as a *seer*. The prophets in the Old Testament days were all of a long line of men of God who were called “seers” (I Sam. 9:9). “Seers” — men who *see* into the realm of spirit — became known as “prophets,” men who speak and articulate the message from God according as they have *seen it in the Spirit and by the Spirit!*

Our text assumes our familiarity with the fourth chapter of Zechariah. Many people say they cannot make sense out of any of these prophecies. I do not wonder! Zechariah himself, asked by the angel, “Don’t you know what these things are?” replied, “No, my lord, I do not!” Neither Zechariah nor John is describing literal historical events but truth depicted by symbols. In the Revelation the two witnesses have a strange and tragic career. They are called “*my two witnesses*” and, to add to the difficulty of interpretation, they are said to be “the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth” (Rev. 11:4). Two mysterious figures, spoken of as “witnesses,” to make confusion more confounding are explained as “olive trees” and “lampstands”! But John, who knew the Hebrew scriptures well, and who thought in terms of them, is being used by the Spirit to bring the ancient prophecy of Zechariah up-to-date. John understood, and he expected those to whom he wrote,

who knew both the letter and the spirit of the word, to understand the reference to two olive trees and two lampstands.

Zechariah was a young man, a young man with a vision. In fact, he had ten visions! God called and chose him, and raised him up in a day of discouragement and defeat. A small remnant of Israel had returned to the desolated land following the Babylonian captivity, less than 50,000 returned. Jerusalem lay in rubble and ruin. The enemies in the land were pressing in upon them. And they were disillusioned by failure. To get a picture of that day, we can go back to Nehemiah who was a contemporary of Zechariah. Nehemiah gives us a bird's-eye view. When he came to Jerusalem he made a survey of the city. He saw the tremendous work required to clear the debris of the city and rebuild it. The almost insurmountable difficulties that these people had to overcome were incredible. But Nehemiah gave the people his report and encouraged the people to believe God and go to work.

So God raised up, among others, this young man Zechariah. He, too, encouraged the people to rebuild. He gave them a vision, showed them there was divine purpose behind all this, and that what they were doing was fitting in with God's overall purpose for His people. It was at this time that Zechariah received the vision we referred to earlier. Zechariah records it in these words: *"And the angel which talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked and, behold a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps on it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof"* (Zech. 4:1-3).

The vision is very simple, as you can see. It is identified with the lampstand in the holy place of the tabernacle. In this vision the prophetic ministry is represented as a golden lampstand (called a candlestick in the King James Bible) having seven branches, each bearing a light for God's priesthood. Those seven branches receive their oil from a single bowl, and the oil for this bowl is supplied by two olive trees, one on either side. The purity of the oil they burn is represented by the fact that it flows into the bowl directly out of the living, growing trees! Here we are in the region of the Spirit — there is no intermediate process of gathering the olives and pressing out the oil. This reveals the great truth that the fuel of prophetic ministry flows direct from the tree to the flame. The witness is fed by perpetual streams of that heavenly oil, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which is represented by the olive tree. The word is thus a *living word*, the *living word of God*! This oil is the oil of God's anointing and the light it produces is the illumination of the present-truth word of the Lord! The unity of the seven lampstands is typified by the common bowl from which each gains its supply of oil. How beautiful a picture of the work of God's present truth shining forth through the power of the indwelling spirit of life and light!

To these things the word of the Lord bears faithful witness. Two is the number of witness. Thus, the *two* lampstands and the *two* olive trees simply reveal the great truth that these are the representations of God's *witness of Himself* in the midst of all who are called His people. It is not because two individuals are meant! The lampstand in the tabernacle and temple was symbolic of the priesthood of God shining, with their knowledge of God and their testimony. Light, in its spiritual meaning, signifies understanding, truth, and reality. Light is illumination, the revelation of the living word of God! *"Through Thy precepts I get understanding...Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Ps. 119:104-105). *"It is the spirit that quickeneth...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (Jn. 6:63). Of this great truth the apostle Paul testified, *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them"* (II Cor. 4:4). The light of the two lampstands is thus the *revelation of the living word, the present truth of God*!

When Zechariah saw in vision the two olive trees he had no inhibitions about asking questions. There was no reluctance on his part, if he didn't understand something, to say so. *"So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord"* (Zech. 4:4). Now exactly what is he asking? He says, *"What are these?"* Yet he was familiar with the lampstand and the olive tree! He knew what they were and he understood the meaning of them. His question is, *"What does this vision mean for me and God's people right now — this lampstand flanked by the two olive trees — what is the purpose behind it?"* Now the angel draws him out. *"Then the angel who talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not*

what these are? And I said, No my lord” (Zech. 4:5). In other words, the angel said, “You mean to tell me you don’t know what this means?” This man Zechariah is as honest as the day is long, and he says, “Well, I don’t know, and I’d like for you to tell me.” And I am of the opinion that a great many of us, if we didn’t have an explanation, would still be in the dark as Zechariah was until the explanation was given to him. Here is the explanation, the *divine meaning* of the lampstands and the olive trees! “*Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, this is the WORD of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts!*” (Zech. 4:6).

Notice that this is God’s message to Zerubbabel through Zechariah. Now who is Zerubbabel? He was the head of the tribe of Judah at the time of their return to Jerusalem after the seventy-year Babylonian captivity. He is the one who led the first group of his people back to their homeland, as described in the book of Ezra. Zerubbabel’s great work was that of rebuilding the temple, but the work was dogged by danger from the outside and discouragement from within. God is giving this vision of present-truth to strengthen the faith of Zerubbabel and there are *two* elements in the meaning of the vision, and may our Father make this powerfully real in the hearts of all who read these lines: *This is the WORD of the Lord, saying, the temple will not be built by might nor by power (an army), but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord!* That is what the two items in the vision are! They are the WORD of the Lord saying that the temple of God can be built only by the SPIRIT of God! Can we not see by this that the lampstands signify the *Word* of the Lord and the olive trees signify the *Spirit* of the Lord! The *two witnesses* are the SPIRIT and the WORD! That is the mystery.

In the vision of Zechariah the two olive trees are called the “two anointed ones” standing before the Lord of the whole earth. In the vision of John both the two lampstands and the two olive trees are said to “stand before the Lord of the earth.” The meaning is, that they stood, as it were, in the very presence of God — as in the tabernacle and temple, the golden candlestick stood “before” the ark upon which radiated the glorious presence and power of Yahweh. The truth that the Holy Spirit is making known to the Lord’s elect is that the ministry of the two witnesses is in the holy place, standing before the most holy place, preparing the way for entrance beyond the veil! The oil that was in the Old Testament used for anointing represents the Holy Spirit. The oil of the olive trees represents the *anointing*! The lampstands represent the *anointed Word*! “And I will give *power (unction)* unto my two witnesses, and they shall *prophesy!*” “This is the *Word* of the Lord, saying...it is by my *Spirit!*” This is beautiful indeed!

But the olive trees and the lampstands are not the Spirit and the Word *apart from a people* — it is indeed a people, a two witness company, an anointed body of people bearing the present truth of God, just as all the prophets of old were anointed by the Spirit to speak the present truth of the Lord. The two witness company is called prophets and they are commissioned to prophesy. This further identifies them as an ANOINTED PROPHETIC MINISTRY! This does not mean merely that they must speak concerning the future. I have met men who believed they personally were God’s “anointed end-time prophet” and they were always prophesying judgments upon cities and nations — famines, pestilence, storms, earthquakes, revolution, terrorism, rise and fall of governments, etc. They thought that made them “end-time prophets.” Alas, many of their prophecies failed to come to pass and some were proven wrong almost before the ink was dry on the paper! A prophet is simply a person who speaks for someone else. Just as Aaron is called Moses’ prophet in scripture, so the prophets in general are persons who speak for someone else. These two witnesses are uniquely the LORD’S PROPHETS, they speak for Christ the Head and they are a people who speak His living word! “I will give power unto *my* two witnesses, and they shall *prophesy!*” Like the two olive trees, they stand feeding the lamp of truth. Like Elijah, the type of all true witnesses in times of spiritual decline, they have power to shut the heavens. Like Moses, they have power to turn water into blood and to smite the earth with plagues. Their words, like Jeremiah’s, are consuming fire burning up the dross and revealing the gold. These are just vivid ways of saying that this is a prophetic ministry in the power of the Spirit and the Word!

The vision of sonship is not fulfilled through self-promotion or self-effort. In my more than sixty years of ministry, I have met many who claim to be *mentioned in the Bible!* There have been those who have claimed to be Moses, one of the prophets, John the Revelator, Elijah, or even Zerubbabel or the two witnesses! Two or three times I even had people tell me that they were the Lord Jesus Christ! It is heady wine, indeed, for those claiming religious credentials to “discover themselves” in the *Bible!* When a religious leader claims before his

followers that he is mentioned, *personally* — mentioned in the same way great prophets and patriarchs are mentioned — then he can lay claim to *divine credentials*, and this aura of mystical spiritual credentials gives him unique *control* over his followers. Many years ago the Chicago preacher, healer, and founder of Zion, Illinois, John Alexander Dowie, because of the phenomenal ministry and great miracles the Lord poured through him, came to believe that he personally was Elijah the prophet who was to come and restore all things, preparing the way for the second coming of Christ. With his beard, ceremonial robes, powerful preaching, and world-wide following, he could well fit the part in the eyes of undiscerning men. But he suffered a serious stroke, his kingdom fell into discord, Zion city revolted against him, his cousin-wife divorced him and accused him of polygamy, and he died a painful death. Many thousands of people believed that the prophet and healer, William Branham, was Elijah, the seventh angel of the book of Revelation with the final message for the church, to prepare the bride of Christ for the rapture, and that he was the forerunner of Christ's return. But he was killed in a tragic car accident more than forty years ago now!

The "two witnesses" have manifested on more than one occasion, I met them, a man and his wife, in Las Cruces, New Mexico, in 1972. They shook the dust off their feet against the city of Las Cruces when they packed up their tent and left town. I met another of the two witnesses in St. Petersburg, Florida, in the spring of 1974. That set of witnesses later split up, the elder witness excommunicated the younger witness from his church, and the dismissed witness came to Texas and founded his own organization, which I have heard later dismissed him from the movement on the grounds of sexual immorality. Incidentally, neither of these two witnesses were clothed with sackcloth, they both wore the finest clothes, ate the finest food, and flew around the country in their own jet airplanes!

PROPHETIC MINISTRY — THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

Clearly, the two witnesses are not a man and his wife, nor two contemporary preachers, nor yet two Old Testament prophets returned to earth in physical bodies! It is my deep conviction that the answer regarding just who these two witnesses are lies in the words of the angel to Zechariah when Zechariah posed the question, "What are these, my lord?" He then says, "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, *This is the WORD of the Lord* unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by *my SPIRIT*, saith the Lord of hosts." Can we not see the secret truth revealed in these words? The lampstand and the two olive trees were THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WORD that was sent to empower Zerubbabel to raise up the temple of God! The Word empowered by the Holy Spirit is God's *prophetic witness* which flows out for all the ages!

The greatest and most powerful thing on earth is *witness* — the witness of the Spirit and the Word which God has raised up in the earth to testify of Himself and to accomplish His plan and purpose! In I John 5:8 we read, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." The Spirit then is one of the witnesses, even as the writer to the Hebrews states, "The Holy Ghost also is a *witness* to us" (Heb. 10:15), and "The Spirit itself beareth *witness*," (Rom. 8:6), and "It is the Spirit that beareth *witness*" (I Jn. 5:6). In the apostle John's first epistle we find that Jesus Christ came by "water and blood" (I Jn. 5:6). So the water and blood both witness *through Him who is the living Word*, the divine Logos. Therefore the two witnesses become the Spirit and the Word! "*This gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a *witness* unto all nations" (Mat. 24:14). Of course men are the human agents through whom this witness becomes effectual, "*YE shall be my witnesses*," and in this connection we remember how our Lord sent His disciples two by two (Mk. 6:7). After the day of Pentecost the apostles often traveled in twos, Paul and Silas, Paul and John Mark, etc. Two, as we have shown, is the number of witness required by law and approved by the gospel. It was and is and ever has been the purpose of God to bring forth a PROPHETIC ARMY, in whom the spirit of prophecy moves to unfold in the written word and in the spirit realm the living Word of God. This is that "Elijah which is to come" and who is to "restore all things" — a *company* of prophets, a *many-membered* prophet!

There is not a man or woman on earth who is qualified to teach or speak God's word until that word has been quickened to him by the *Spirit*. And no word uttered by man will ever be effectual in the lives of the hearers until that word is energized to go forth as a *Living Word*. There is a tremendous value in words even in the natural realm. All words are either creative or destructive. All that happens every day in the world is accomplished through the power invested in words. All the business transactions of men and nations are carried

on by the power of words. All the political and economic ideologies that have shaped movements and determined the course of history and the destiny of billions of people and races and empires have first issued as words which form their consciousness within the minds and wills of men, who then actively create out of them the external form and substance of them. The whole Communist empire, for instance, with all its legislative, judicial, and military institutions and powers was inspired and produced out of the energy of *words* spoken or penned by a man by the name of Karl Marx. Words written on paper are powerful enough to imprison or put to death a man, or to release him. Words on paper are powerful enough to join a man and woman in marriage, or separate them by divorce. Many words on paper are sufficient to make one exceedingly wealthy or to make one penniless, to start a war or to bring peace, to establish a kingdom or to dissolve an empire. Everything works and moves by and through the power of words. All words spoken form some level of consciousness within man which in turn forms the world we live in. But none of these words produces *life* unless they are energized by the *spirit of life* from God! Many words gender death.

The mystery of God is not far-off in heaven somewhere. GOD IS THE WORD AND THE WORD IS GOD. Furthermore, THE WORD IS THE SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT IS THE WORD. “The *words* that I speak unto you, *they are spirit*, and they are life” (Jn. 6:63). Words are the most powerful thing in creation! All things, visible and invisible, were created by God’s Word with the moving of His Spirit. “And God *said*, Let there be...” (Gen. 1:3). “And the *Spirit* of God moved...” (Gen. 1:2). We are not born again by the spoken word, we are born again by the Word which is energized by the Spirit, the Spirit and the Word in union — the LIVING WORD! “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the *word of God*, which *liveth* and abideth for ever” (I Pet. 1:23). The *spoken word is not Christ*, and the *scriptures are not the Living Word*.

Of the seven churches of Asia in the opening chapters of the Revelation, only two of them received no indictment from the Lord, nor were they told to repent. It is my conviction that these two churches, the church in Smyrna and the church in Philadelphia, represent the Lord’s elect and chosen remnant in the earth throughout the church age. They also correspond to the two witnesses in chapter eleven! We know that a *candlestick* signifies a *church*. There are *two churches* out of the seven that received no condemnation or reproof from the Lord, and were given only great and precious promises. Of the two witnesses it is testified, “And I will give power unto my *two witnesses*, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the *two olive trees*, and the *two candlesticks standing* before the God of the earth.” **Two candlesticks! Two churches!** Two given a special *standing before God!* Ah, Smyrna and Philadelphia, what a calling you have!

On the personal and individual level the two witnesses are the *Spirit* and the *Word*. The two witnesses speak of the awesome power and word of authority given to the Lord’s elect on the pathway to sonship! The two witness company is not the manifest sons of God, for the manchild of chapter twelve of the Revelation represents the manifest sons of God who are “caught up unto God, *and to His throne*” (Rev. 12:5). Upon the throne of the Father the manchild, the manifest sons of God, “rules all nations with a rod of iron” (Rev. 12:5). Furthermore, the manchild, the manifest sons of God, receives his authority and dominion under the *seventh trumpet*, where the mystery of God, which is the mystery of Christ in you the hope of glory, is finished. The two witnesses, however, receive their ministry of power and authority under the *sixth trumpet* and they “ascend up to heaven in a cloud.” They are caught up to a heavenly place of glory, but *not* to the omnipotence and dominion of the *throne!* When they are caught up nothing is said about a throne. In addition, the two witnesses are overcome by the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit, and they are killed. But the manchild is never overcome, for he rules over all things!

There is a glorious *prophetic realm*, prefigured by the two witnesses, that God’s called and chosen elect enter prior to the manifestation of the sons. Since the great move of God that came in 1948 and the years following, I have been, with many who read these lines, and thousands of others besides, a glad partaker of the glory of that *prophetic realm* of ministry. It was indeed a heavenly realm of signs, wonders, and miracles! It was also a blessed realm of enlightenment and revelation from God! I have tasted of the power and glory of that realm by the prophetic anointing of the Spirit! From it has come the revelation of manifest sonship and many other marvelous truths of the kingdom purposes of God! Through it we received the call to sonship! But that

prophetic and revival realm ends, and it has for the most part already ended! And after the two witnesses, or the two candlesticks realm, the very next thing on God's prophetic agenda is THE BIRTHING OF THE MANCHILD! That's where we *really are* in God's great program of the ages. Isn't it wonderful!

Elijah is an Old Testament type of one of the two witnesses. If you look at the ministry of these two witnesses you will find that one of them has a ministry like unto Moses, and the other has a ministry like unto Elijah. The ministry of Moses was to bring God's people out of Egypt, that is, out of the world, out from under the taskmasters and cruelty of slavery to the world system, the flesh, and the devil. Moses delivered the people of Israel from their bondages, from the tyrannies that ruled over their lives. The ministry of Moses was a *deliverance ministry*! The other ministry is prefigured by Elijah, where the prophet said, "The God who answers by fire, let Him be God!" Elijah was a ministry to the people of God who were already in the land of promise, but they were idolaters, they were worshipping Baal. Elijah was a ministry that brought people into right relationship with God and dealt with their idols, that is, the false religious images in their minds and hearts, false ideas about God. Moses delivered the people from the ungodly oppressors over them, and Elijah delivered the people from the idols within them and brought them to righteousness, purity, and perfection.

In the great move of the Spirit that came in 1948, what kind of ministry did we have? There were *two streams* of ministry in that visitation, one stream was a *deliverance ministry*, while the other stream was a *prophetic flow*. There were mighty deliverance ministries that arose in the land, great crusades attended by tens of thousands of people in every major city of the nation and around the world. Powerful deliverances were wrought, thousands of people were healed of every manner of sickness and disease, delivered from habits and addictions of every kind, saved out of sin and the world and worldly ways, great signs, wonders, and miracles were performed in the name of Jesus Christ, demons were cast out, and untold thousands of people were baptized in the Holy Spirit. This was a Moses ministry, and multitudes of people were led forth out of the house of bondage, out of the spiritual Egypt of this world! But where are the great deliverance ministries today? Where is William Branham, Jack Coe, A. A. Allen, Oral Roberts, Tommy Hicks, Thomas Wyatt, the Voice of Healing evangelists, and many others? They are all gone! They have passed from the scene, either by death or by apostasy. Their great tents are folded. The lights have been turned out. The glory has departed. The few who remain are on the decline. They still have the *name* that they are alive, but the power is gone, and some, in an effort to keep their momentum going even after the Spirit has fled have become deceivers and charlatans.

The second stream, which first began to flow in the outpouring of Latter Rain in Canada and quickly spread around the world, was a *prophetic flow*. This was truly an Elijah ministry! It was more than deliverance, it was divine quickening, it was days of heaven on earth, it was the voice of God speaking to His people, it was the song of the Lord, heavenly choirs of praise and glory which, as George Hawtin described it, echoed down the corridors of the soul and re-echoed among the battlements of heaven! It was revelation, it was the edifying of the body of Christ, the Lord establishing a people unto Himself, bringing the call to sonship, "let us go on to perfection," till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! The ministry of this stream is an Elijah ministry that says God is going to answer by fire! God will burn everything that will burn, shake everything that can be shaken, remove everything that is shaken, and *then* we will receive a kingdom that cannot be moved! God is dealing with our idols, all our false religious images and false Babylonian doctrines and ways. He is dealing with those things we have given life to — the image of the beast — all the religious idols made by our hands. We have given life to a whole religious realm, by our emphasis on things other than Christ we have given life to demons, devils, carnal methods, fleshly techniques, man-made systems, external religious observances, and a thousand other things done in the name of the Lord that have not been born of His Spirit. The Elijah ministry is designed to break the religious bondage in His very own people. These are the most subtle of all bondages. So God has caused His called and chosen elect to turn away from *all* their idols, for the Lord has come in the power of His Spirit and He *has answered by fire*!

Both of these ministries are *corporate ministries*, not just individuals. It's not a one man show, it's a many-membered company! They are *witnesses*. Two witnesses. Two *streams of revelation, glory, and power*. In the mouth of two witnesses a thing is established! And what is the thing He establishes? He establishes that "holy thing" that is to be formed and birthed in us, even the Son of God! That's the *holy thing* God is establishing in the earth through the ministry of His two witnesses! Each ministry in the body of Christ, on

whatever level it is, will fulfill that calling for which they are chosen, but in the spirit I see a ministry of the manifest sons of God that surpasses that of the two witnesses. The two witnesses are the “two anointed ones that stand before the Lord of the earth,” they are also called the “sons of oil,” and these empty themselves, as we will see later on, into a greater ministry to follow — as Elijah prepared the way for the greater Elisha, as Moses prepared the way for Joshua, as David prepared the way for Solomon, and as John the Baptist prepared the way for the firstborn Son of God, so does the two-witness ministry prepare the way for the woman to bring forth the manchild! (Rev. 12:1-5).

The very fact of what the Lord has been doing among His elect through the past sixty-five years reveals to our wondering hearts that we are about to enter a new and glorious unfolding of His purpose in the earth. There has been the sending forth of a chosen few to prepare the way for Christ. These have announced the coming of the King, the many-membered Christ body, the sons of God. The revealing of God’s sons comes after this time of announcement. The process of announcing has been a time of killing and pulling down, as well as a time of planting and building. God’s pre-elected and pre-ordained witnesses have been for many years now preparing the way for the glorious Christ who will bring the kingdom of God to pass in all the earth and will rule in mercy, truth, and great power! This time of witness has evoked great anger in some and great expectancy in others. Many who are bound within the walls of religious Babylon have rejected, opposed, and withstood God’s witnesses, but multitudes have accepted gladly the testimony of the witnesses with singing and great rejoicing!

The following words of confirmation by brother Carl Schwing are so very precious. “The voice of Elijah is being heard among the sons. His words defy all the teachings of the prophets of doom. He is here to silence the blind leaders that minister for hire, to tear down every human idol, and to overturn the altars of Babylon. He brings to us the consuming fire of God, to purify and to make holy the sons of his God. All *mixture* is to be removed. He calls to our inner son to come forth from the tomb of flesh and to ascend unto the realms of the pure and the free; to gather in the presence of our Father and to receive from His mind the life-giving words of truth and freedom. He sends us to a fallen and moaning creation...to set the captives free and to give light to all who grope in darkness, and to declare to all creation the power and glory of the Father’s everlasting kingdom. This is the hour when Elijah passes the mantle to the sons of God, covering them with the divine unity of the Father, and placing upon them the garment that was removed from our father Adam in the long ago. Be still, my beloved, glorious things are transpiring in the heavenlies...be still, I say, for most glorious things are transpiring in the kingdom of God. Hallelujah!”

THE POWER OF THE WITNESSES

“And if any man will hurt them, *fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies:* and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be *killed*. They have power to *shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy:* and have power over *waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues*, as often as they will” (Rev. 11:5-6).

The reference to shutting heaven that it rain not, is associated with the work of Elijah, when he closed the heavens in the days of Ahab, the king of Israel. The reference to inducing various plagues is a reminder of the ministry of Moses who brought the ten plagues upon Egypt in order to secure the release of the people of Israel from the house of bondage. In view of the fact that these prophecies are couched in highly symbolical and figurative language, and in view of the fact that John deals with *spiritual events and manifestations*, while describing them in symbols and pictures, we must allow these metaphors and phrases to typify the *spiritual significance* intended by the Lord!

For example, if we insist upon the literal return to earth of Moses and Elijah to fulfill the vision, we miss the point altogether! John is not referring to the actual prophets but to the qualities which they express. It was Moses and Elijah which stood with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah had the ability to challenge the established order of their day and lead God’s people forward into the purposes of God, so the witnesses are also credited with that ability. Just as John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” but was not by any means the physical man Elijah, so we see here a spiritual “prophet company” or a spiritual “prophetic ministry” typified by the Old Testament ministries of Moses and Elijah. Furthermore, we should not

expect the “devouring of their enemies with fire out of their mouths,” “shutting the heavens that it rain not,” “turning waters to blood,” and “smiting the earth with plagues,” to be done in the literal, outward way of Moses and Elijah, but in a deeper, more meaningful *spiritual fulfillment*. The witness of their work will be seen through the visible body of Christ on earth as a testimony to the Lord’s people still dwelling in the “earth-realm” of Babylonian bondage. In this light, “smiting the *earth* with plagues” speaks of smiting the “earthiness” and “carnality” that grips and controls so many of the Lord’s people! Thank God for the “plagues”!

The destruction wrought by the two witnesses against their foes, does not consist in literal fire proceeding from their mouths or in some cosmic calamities brought down on the heads of their enemies, for such a carnal, childish interpretation of such majestic symbol is a dry and barren thing compared to the deep spiritual truth and light the Spirit brings. Fire out of their mouths. Do you believe that is really, literally going to happen? Do you think the day is coming when we will open our mouths and flames of fire will literally leap out of our throats? There are some, I’m sure, who relish the thought of having such a ministry! But notice, dear friend, that these witnesses are clothed upon with *sackcloth* — which is a type of humility, repentance, and brokenness. In the Revelation, we have much about white robes; here is something about black robes! We read about the sun becoming as black as sackcloth of hair (Rev. 6:12). Sackcloth was made from the hair of goats and camels and for that reason, it was very dark and coarse in texture. Sackcloth was generally the garb of the poor, and was also used for mourning. As long as the witnesses remain clothed in their sackcloth, as long as an humble, broken, and meek spirit accompanies their witness, they retain their power!

The “fire” of God is a glorious *spiritual reality*! Our God *is a consuming fire*! Daniel says that a *fiery stream* issued and came forth from before Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is compared to fire: He is like a *refiner’s fire*. The Holy Ghost is also a fire into which the Lord’s people are *baptized*! And the ministering servants of the Lord are likewise represented as *a flame of fire* (Heb. 1:7). Now hear the prophet Jeremiah when he declares, “Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will *make my words in thy mouth fire*, and this people wood, and it (his fiery words) shall *devour them*” (Jer. 5:14). And again, “Is not *my word like as a fire*? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29). It seems obvious to me that the imagery of fire proceeding out of the witnesses mouths and devouring their enemies is drawn directly by the Holy Spirit from these words in the prophecy of Jeremiah! The fire that comes out of their mouths is a burning word of authority, it is their prophesying the word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit which burns and consumes all the opposition of those who fight against it. That’s the *fire*! Aren’t you glad!

You know, if someone were to take a blow torch and touch the flame to your body, you wouldn’t like it. As your flesh began to melt you would scream in excruciating pain! That’s the exact image the Holy Spirit would impress upon us. These two witnesses — with a ministry like this — would you receive them? They speak with such power that if you try to resist, their word will burn you up! Is this an imagination, or is that what is really written by the prophet of God? It is written there, and it is surely God’s way of dealing spiritually with the obstinacy of man! The phrase, “devoureth their enemies,” in the Greek says, “it eats up or consumes the adversaries.” Multitudes of believers get confused about the meaning of these things because of literal, carnal thinking. They suppose the two witnesses are two physical men, as Moses and Elijah, that send literal flames of fire out of their mouths and instantly cremate other living people. But the symbols of the Revelation never mean what they appear to be in a literal way. They point to something else. The “enemies” that are “devoured” are not flesh and blood people, but the *true enemies* within each of us — that old man of sin, the carnal mind, the flesh nature which always resists both the Spirit and the Word! It is not the wicked physical men God is out to destroy in this day of the New Covenant of grace and salvation, but the “wicked” nature of “old Adam” that dwells in mankind!

Have you ever heard anyone say, “That preacher just burns me up!” I have. That’s how the word of God seems to us when it comes in power and it is also how it works in us! As fire warms, illuminates, purifies, beautifies, and destroys, so the living, burning, authoritative word of the Lord warms, illuminates, purifies, beautifies, and destroys. The power to cause fire to proceed from the mouth, is the power to speak in the might of the Spirit and change things, change men! What revealing light of revelation is contained in the gracious words that issued from the lips of the Lord Jesus when He said, “For God sent *not* His Son into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved*.” “The Son of man is not come to *destroy men’s*

lives, but to save.” Our wonderful, all-powerful Redeemer and Saviour is not in the business of “devouring” the wicked people of earth, either now or during some supposed future “tribulation period.” Oh, no! God is not out to destroy wicked men in a physical way — but He will certainly consume the “man of sin,” that “wicked” one which sits in the temple of God which *we are*, whom He shall *consume with the spirit of His mouth*, and shall *destroy with the brightness of His appearing* (II Thes. 2:3-10). Every saint of God should dissuade himself of the notion that there are wicked people whom God shall destroy, and sweet Christian people who are going to make it. God is destroying the wicked nature of the Adamic man in those who oppose His Christ! God has a wonderful plan and purpose! The carnal minds of unspiritual men twist and distort the deep spiritual revelation of the Lord into all kinds of wild and weird imaginations — but that’s not where the truth and reality lie!

Let us digress for a moment. Those who are “devoured” by the fire from the mouth of the two witnesses are those who try to hurt them. “If any man will *hurt* them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies.” This may sound strange at first! We have already seen that the witnesses do not “kill” their adversaries in the literal sense of the word. The question follows — what does it mean to “hurt” the two witnesses? Can they be hurt by persecution or by tribulation? Do you hurt them by inflicting physical pain, by casting them into prison, torturing them on the rack, or slandering them? If the “killing” were literal and physical, then we could assume that the hurting is also literal and physical. But such cannot be the case! They are not hurt by persecution or torments afflicted upon them physically. They have learned of their Lord that they need not fear those who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. And therefore these two witnesses can never be hurt in the physical sense of the word!

To hurt them you must get at their spiritual existence. You must fight with them *spiritually*. You must make them waver, stagger, vacillate, or apostatize from their pure walk in the Spirit of God. You must lead them to renounce their vision, to be silent about the word God has entrusted to them, to compromise with the religious systems of man for some advantage. Then indeed you hurt them! Oh, how the religious unceasingly seek to hurt the elect of God! They attempt to gainsay their words and make them of none effect, or lure them into some form of Babylonian religious system. But if that is attempted, the fiery word of the Lord proceeds out of their mouth and in this manner the mouths of the adversaries are stopped and they are put to nought! The fire is not their own word, but the living word of God that is in their mouth. The opposition and cunning cannot be successful, nor can it stand. In this manner they fight the battle. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:3-5). It shall not hurt them! Aren’t you glad!

In closing this message I am impressed to share the following quote from one of Stephen Jones’ writings. “In 2001 I received a prophecy from a friend about ‘the power of the flame.’ It was from Isaiah 47:14. I did not understand what this was about until recently. This verse is in the context of the fall of Babylon. *Behold they have become like stubble, **fire burns them**; they cannot deliver themselves from **the power of the flame**; there will be no coal to warm by, nor a fire to sit before!*” The word ‘power’ is from the Hebrew word *yad*, which is also from the Hebrew letter, *yod*. It means an open hand, a work or deed. The word ‘flame’ is *lehabah*, feminine for *lehab*. Strong’s Concordance says it means ‘to *gleam*, a *flash*; figuratively a sharply polished *blade* or *point* of a weapon.’

“This is where the New Testament gets the idea of the sharp, two-edged sword **coming out of Jesus’ mouth**. Revelation 1:16 says, ‘*out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.*’ Revelation 19:15 says, ‘*And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations.*’ It is a **flaming sword**, as we see in Revelation 11:5, for this same sword is in the mouth of the two witnesses: ‘*And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies.*’ James 3:6 also refers to the tongue as a fire. So this was well-known symbolic language in biblical times. Thus, Revelation 18:8 says of the great harlot of Babylon, ‘*For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord who judges her is strong.*’ The fire or flame comes from the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). Paul listed it with the armor of God for anyone involved in *spiritual warfare*.

“A final word about the word *lebabah* and *lebab* (flame, or point of the sword): It is the Hebrew word *leb* (heart) with the letter *hey* in the middle of it. Recall how God put the *hey* in the middle of Abram’s name to make it Abraham. When the *hey* comes in the middle of a word, it indicates revelation or inspiration of the Spirit. It is the breath of God! *Leb* means ‘heart.’ *Lehab* literally conveys the idea of the Holy Spirit in the heart, as well as the revelation of the heart. This is the root idea behind the power of the flame. It manifests the heart of God! The intent of His heart is brought into the world through God’s hand (*yad*) working by the sword of the Spirit to consume all that is not of God!” — end quote.

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY