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Revelation 11:3-4

And I will grant this to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, having chosen to be clothed in sackcloth. These now are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that before the Lord of the earth have been standing.

In our last podcast we ended discussing these two witnesses and the image of the two olive trees and two lampstands. We are going to repeat the very end of the last podcast, so we have our context, and then continue with this analysis of the images of the two witnesses.

The Olive Tree – From the Old Testament

This image of the 2 olive trees is taken directly from a vision found in the book of **Zechariah**. The only real difference is that in Zechariah's vision, there was only one lampstand; however, in John's image there are two. This makes sense since during the time of Zechariah, the only witness to the world, the only light, came from the Jews. But at this point in the **Revelation** narrative, there are 2 witnesses with light emanating from both the Gentiles and the Jews.

This image makes it clear that from before the beginning of time, **Plan-A** was that God would bring to Himself a collective of both Jews and Gentiles (remember, both trees were set before **Yahweh** sometime in the past and still hold their position before Him), but the timing of their **1,260 days** of witness to the world (their light) would not be unified until sometime during the first 3.5-year period of the tribulation.¹

Zechariah 4:1-7 and 11-14

And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a **lampstand all of gold**, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are **two olive trees** by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said to me, "This is the word of **Yahweh** to Zerubbabel: '*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,*' says **Yahweh Sabaoth** (the Lord of hosts).

...Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these **two branches** of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?" He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said, "**These are the two anointed ones who**

¹ In **Revelation 11:4**, "standing" is rendered in the *perfect active participle*. See also **Ephesians 1:3-6**

stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

Illustration



What is described in this vision are two olive trees on either side of a lampstand (7-reeds) with the branches of these two olive trees dripping oil through two golden pipes into a bowl that would fill up the seven bowls or seven lamps of the lampstand. Let us sort through this.

- The oil is **Code** for the Spirit of the Lord, and of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord.²
- The olive trees are the two anointed ones which have oil flowing in-and-through them. The word "anointed" literally means "oiled." This reaches back to the image of the prophets, priests, and kings who were all anointed with oil, all symbolic of being covered by the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed me..."³
- Each tree is a picture of Jesus, the source, and the branches are the means through which Jesus transports the oil of the Spirit (the wild branches being the Gentiles and natural branches being the Jews).
- The golden pipes speak of the "reed" and the flow of oil being transported via divine means to the bowl, as according to the **Code**, gold is a symbol of divinity.
- The bowl is just a collecting point from which the oil is distributed to the 7 lamps.
- The seven lamps are a picture of the seven lamps of fire now and continually burning before God.⁴ This is the image of Jesus who is the light of the world, set on fire by the Holy Spirit who is always illuminating and providing complete insight into everything, as nothing is hidden from

² See *Isaiah 11:2-3*

³ *Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; I John 2:20, 27*

⁴ *Revelation 4:5*. Note: "burning" is rendered in the *present passive participle*

the view of the one who sits on the throne.⁵

- Being Lampstands, this picture of seven lamps is also a picture of the complete collective of the church of Jesus Christ as He (Jesus) is expressed in-and-through those who are **now** worshipping Him.
- We saw a similar image in the letter to Sardis where it mentions the “*seven spirits*” represented by “*seven torches of fire*.”⁶ We discovered that it was all a picture which captures the full and complete manifestation of the Spirit of God (completion represented in the number 7). And this manifestation was shown to the world through 7-lampstands, 7 churches as Jesus, the light of the world (the torch of fire), was made manifest through each of them.

Once again, the image of the olive tree speaks of **IDENTITY** whereas the image of the Lampstand speaks of **PURPOSE**.

Lampstand

The Lampstand signifies purpose, or the witness which bears forth the light of the glory of God for others to see. Of course, we were given a definitive view of this witness in **Revelation 1:20** where seven golden lampstands were identified as seven churches, or the complete witness to this world.

Thus, the lampstand, as an image, is the church of Jesus Christ in its visible form, as it brings witness of the light of life to those living under the moon—to those living in darkness.

With this image being connected to the golden lampstand with seven lamps (comprised entirely of *reeds*) measured off in the Sanctuary of God, the image of the two lampstands in their **unified witness** fulfill or complete that perpetual statute in Israel that the lampstand be continually burning as a perpetual witness of the presence of God.⁷ Once the lampstands are removed from the earth, so is the witness of God, leaving only the judgment of God to be completed.

By the way, God has always had a witness in this world, even when His chosen lamp (for instance the Jews) refused to shine His light. He says:

Malachi 1:11

For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the gentiles, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the gentiles," says **Yahweh Sabaoth** (the Lord of hosts).

It is interesting to note that there have always been two olive trees, the faithful of Israel (in the likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and so on) and the faithful of the Gentiles (in the likes of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job, Melchizedek, and those from other Gentile (non-Jewish) nations

⁵ See **Revelation 3:1**. See also **John 8:12, 9:5**

⁶ **Revelation 3:1**

⁷ **Leviticus 24:1-2**

who honor the name of **Yahweh** from morning till night. But in the days of Zechariah, even though there were Jews and Gentiles who believed and trusted **Yahweh**, there was **one** distinct witness to the world, and that was the nation of Israel. They were purposed to be God's priests and His witnesses.⁸ King Solomon understood this role and when he was dedicating the temple he prayed:

1 Kings 8:41-43

Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, **in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You**, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name.

There have long been 2 anointed ones (olive trees) standing before **Yahweh**: believing Jews (natural olive branches) and gentiles (wild olive branches). But this first lampstand in effect failed in its purpose, and necessarily so, in order that the promise of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles who believed through the tribes of **Ephraim, Joseph and Levi**.⁹ Yet it was not until *after* Pentecost, when the oil of the Holy Spirit begun to be poured out freely on the Gentiles, that we received a second witness to the world, the second **candlestick**, the gentile believers, as the Lampstand of the Jews became not much more than a smoldering wick—a small remnant according to grace.¹⁰

As you can imagine, Jesus reaching out to Gentiles was quite the shock to the Jews, even to His own disciples. First the Samaritans, then an Ethiopian, then those in Damascus, then an Italian, and so on. Peter finally understood what God was doing and proclaimed, *"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him... While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message."*¹¹ And after that, the spread of the light of Jesus to the Gentile nations was unstoppable, even to our present day-and-age.

As we near the **End Times**, however, God will once again restore any natural olive branch (the Jews) that do not continue in their unbelief. But make no mistake and do not be deceived, this collective of natural olive branches will be saved **by grace through faith**, and not because of their works. In so doing, God will restore their witness to the world. He will relight their lamp, so-to-speak.

*"Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!"*¹² Remember, *"a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish."* In that light, the few Jews who have to date believed by grace through faith, like the apostles, are that wick that is

⁸ **Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 43:10**

⁹ **See Romans 11**

¹⁰ **See Romans 11:1-6**

¹¹ **Acts 10:34-35, 44**

¹² **Romans 11:1-6, 11-12**

barely burning.¹³

With that said, during the **1,260 days** of prophecy, there will be **two lampstands** shining forth the light of the burning oil, which comes from two different branches (a natural and a wild branch). There will be a light that comes distinctly from the Jews and a light that comes distinctly from the Gentiles, however, both move in accordance with one **purpose** in unity.

Accordingly, the two lampstands are an image communicating the purpose of these two anointed ones. It speaks of their public and visible redemptive work. They are to shine the light of Jesus to a dark and desperate world. As witnesses, they will stand before governors, kings, and rulers of this world and tell them the truth about Jesus. This will be their time to shine, and the good news is that the Holy Spirit will speak through them so they do not have to worry what they are to say; they can just rest in **Yahweh** and let the Holy Spirit burn as an unquenchable lamp.¹⁴

The Purpose: A Witness to the Nations

The second time that Zechariah inquires of the angel he asks: "*What are these two branches of the olive tree?*" He specifically inquires not about the two olive trees, but the two branches extending from each tree, respectively.¹⁵ The Hebrew word for "branch" (in this instance) is the word "*Shibboleth*," which literally means a stream. It comes from a root word which means to flow. Thus, in context of a tree, the idea is that the olive trees will branch out and flow out filling the Lampstands providing a witness to all the nations so the light of Jesus will shine in every part of the world. Wherever the Sanctuary is, wherever there are the "**Chosen of the Chosen**," the light will shine.

Once again, the impact of their witness will be global and not regional. Therefore, this is not a picture of two people in one city, but two groups of people that are a distinct in identify but unified in purpose: to bring forth a prophetic witness to the nations.

By the way, you might find it interesting that the words for "Messiah" and "Christ" in the Hebrew also mean "anointed one" or "oiled one." The point is that just like the lampstand in the Sanctuary, these two olive trees are imagers of Jesus the anointed one. The two witnesses have been filled with the Spirit of God which perpetually flows forth from them.

Another way to look at this image is through the lens of the *Design Point*. Because of their suffering, persecution, and patient endurance (like those in Smyrna and Philadelphia), these two witnesses can honestly declare: "*I have been caused to be crucified with Christ. I now live; yet it is no longer I who now live, but Christ in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who has been loving me and giving himself for me.*"¹⁶

Going back to **Zechariah**: "*These are the two anointed ones who **stand** by the Lord (the Adon—the sovereign) of the whole earth.*" The word which is translated "stand" is the Hebrew word "*amad*," and it is one of the words that can be translated as "abide," "endure" or "remain." The word itself is suggestive of stability and dependability and the fruitfulness that occurs as the branch remains in the vine. As Jesus

¹³ **Isaiah 42:3**

¹⁴ **Mark 13:11**

¹⁵ **Zechariah 4:11**

¹⁶ **Galatians 2:20**

said:

John 15:1-11

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **Abide in Me**, and I in you. **As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.** I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, **for apart from Me you can do nothing.** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.** Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Thus, these two olive trees have been **abiding** with **Adonai**, the Lord of the whole earth. The verb is also a *participle* which speaks of continual, uninterrupted action that dynamically unfolds. To say that more simply, these two witnesses live **by grace through faith** and therefore they continue to faithfully abide in **Yahweh** and bet their lives upon His name. They are always active in this regard, no matter what foe they encounter. This is another way of saying what has already been said about the 144,000, *they follow the Lamb wherever He goes*, for those who are with Him are the **Called and Chosen and Faithful**.¹⁷

They are **Yahweh's** personal representatives on the earth—those who have been marked and measured out to bring His light to the nations. The olive trees and the lampstands are therefore representative of the complete gathering of Jewish and Gentile believers into Christ.

The branches are unique in identity (one cultivated and one wild) but their representation, or their witness to the world, will be identical in the form of the lampstands. They will have a unified purpose—to be the light to the nations. They will be the ones who bring their prophetic message to those who are deemed to be the “**Righteous**,” and the message of judgment to the four corners of the earth (to all those who were not measured off as now worshipping in the Sanctuary, the “**Called**,” and to the “**Accursed**”).¹⁸

For those who are listening and not reading the transcript, I have footnoted references to the **Righteous**, the **Called**, and the **Accursed**.

¹⁷ **Revelation 14:4; 17:14**

¹⁸ See the judgment of the **Called** (**Matthew 8:12, 22:1-14, 25:11-13, 26-30; Luke 13:23-28**); the “**Righteous**” are those who cared for and loved on the sons of God and refused to take the mark of the Beast (**Matthew 10:40, 25:34-40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48, 10:16; John 13:20; Revelation 14:9-12**)—the “**Accursed**” are the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction—for the Beast (**Matthew 25:41-46; Romans 9:19-24**)

Adonai of the Earth

Revelation 11:4

These now are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that before the **Lord** of the earth have been standing.

This last phrase in our passage is not just a peripheral add-on. It is intended for us to know and be absolutely assured that all things happen according to **Plan-A** – according to the will of the one who is the supreme sovereign—**Yahweh Adonai**—the despot of the earth.

This is so important for us to understand, because despite what will happen next, He always has our backs. And even though it will seem as if the Beast exercises great power and authority over the peoples and nations of the world, Jesus is the **Adonai**, the Lord or absolute despot of the earth, not the Beast, not Satan, nor his demonic minions. They are just tools in His hands. In fact, unbeknownst to most, they work for **Yahweh**, and He simply uses them to accomplish His purposes.

Sometimes it is easy to forget this since, from a practical perspective, Satan and his demonic minions often seem to be winning this war. But that is simply not the case. The enemy (collectively) has always only been able to do what their master, **Yahweh Sabaoth** (the Lord of Hosts) allows them to do, nothing more and nothing less.¹⁹

THE FORCES OF DARKNESS ARE JUST TOOLS TO ACCOMPLISH YAHWEH'S PURPOSES ON BEHALF OF HIS CHOSEN ONES.

The irony of it all is that the enemy must literally go before **Yahweh Sabaoth** and get permission from Him before they can do anything that will impact those who belong to His household.²⁰ Can you imagine how much that must chap their hides?

Although Satan is referred to as the “*prince*” of this world,²¹ Jesus is **Adonai**, the Lord, the absolute sovereign despot. The prince merely works on behalf of the King, he is an agent to the ultimate principal.

For instance, we will find out that with the blowing of the 7th Trumpet that Satan’s permitted and temporary rule as “*prince*” of this world will be taken away from him and the whole world will become, in a very tangible way, “*the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever*”.²² Just like that, with one toot of the horn, Satan is in effect fired as an agent of **Yahweh**. Oh, He will still have a very important role to play in Jesus’ plan, but he will be diminished in stature, power, and authority.

¹⁹ *Isaiah 47:11; 1 Chronicles 21 & 2 Samuel 24; 2 Chronicles 18:18-22; 1 Kings 22:17-23*

²⁰ *Job 1 and 2*

²¹ *Ephesians 2:2, 6:12; John 12:31*

²² *Revelation 11:15*

Those who dwell in the Sanctuary and comprise the *holy city*, should take great comfort for they are on the right side of this battle. The victory goes to Christ which, by default, means that it goes to those He has measured off for Himself and sealed as belonging exclusively to Him—His personal possessions.

In the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever. *“The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.”*²³

This is just as Jesus promised the church at Thyatira, *“He who is now overcoming, and now keeping My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the peoples, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are now caused to be broken to pieces, as I also have received from my Father.”*²⁴

The two olive trees will bring forth their prophetic witness as the two Lampstands, and they will shine the truth into the court room of those who temporarily rule this earth. As a result, these witnesses will be hated, betrayed, persecuted, and ultimately killed for speaking the truth. But in the end, the two witnesses will win because they belong to **Yahweh Adonai**, the Lord of all the earth.

THE 2 WITNESSES WIN, A LOT OF THEM DIE, AND THEN THEY WIN AGAIN (FOREVER)!

And with that we will stop right here and pick up in our next podcast with **Revelation 11:5** and address the fire breathing nature of these two witnesses—the means by which their enemies are killed.

²³ **Daniel 7:18, 27**

²⁴ **Revelation 2:26-27**