

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Two Witnesses and the Beast

Revelation 11:1-14

1. Who are the witnesses? (vs.3-4)

A. Enoch and Elijah.

These two names are suggested together primarily on the basis that neither of them experienced physical death in the past (Gen 5:18-24; 2 Ki. 2:9-12; Heb. 11:5). Death is the normative fate of all men, and so these two men still must experience that (cf. Heb 9:27), and so they will both die in the tribulation.

B. Elijah and Moses.

These two men are put forward for a few reasons. They are described as representing two important times in the history of Israel as well as different parts of the Scriptures: Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets. Both men were also present and recognizable at the transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:1-8). The miraculous works that are done by the witnesses are described as things which were uniquely present in the ministries of Moses and Elijah (compare Rev. 11:5 with 2 Kings 1:8ff; Rev. 11:6a with 1 Kings 17:1; Rev. 11:6b with Ex. 7:14ff).

C. Two Unknown People whose future ministries are in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah but are not the men themselves (cf. Luke 1:17; Matt 17:9-13).

2. Who or What is the Beast? (v.7)

The beast introduced, his origin and one of his actions are highlighted.

A. The Origin of the Beast

The abyss is associated demons in the gospel (Luke 8:31) and with the demonic plagues during the tribulation (Rev. 9:1, 11). The sea is sometimes used to refer to the final place of death and destruction (Mark 9:42; Rev. 18:21; cf. Deut 30:12-13; Rom 10:6-7).

B. The Identity of the Beast

There is a different beast from this one which comes from the land (Rev. 13:11ff) whose actions seem to identify him as the false prophet (cf. Rev. 19:20). The beast is not the devil, as he is later described as a dragon (Rev. 12:3, 9) and as the one who gives power to the beast of the sea (Rev. 13:2). I believe that the beast introduced in Rev. 11:7 is the same as the beast which comes out of the sea (Rev. 13:1); he is sometimes referred to as the antichrist, but the Scriptures describe him as the man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:3-4), the prince who is to come (Dan. 9:26), and a little horn (Dan. 7:8).