

# The Teacher's Notes–The Two Witnesses, Lesson 6 Adult Bible Study Guide, 2024 2Q, "The Great Controversy"

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The Teacher's Notes



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Sabbath School Lesson for May 4-10, 2024

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## Overview of Lesson 6, The Two Witnesses

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**Memory Text:** *"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."* Isaiah 40:8 NKJV

The Reformers, during times of extreme persecution, were witnesses, sharing the love and power of God. But as the Bible, another witness, points out repeatedly, God's word that they believed and uplifted could not be extinguished, as the lives of the Reformers often were. We are told that His word stands forever, as a testament or witness of God's character.

This concept was symbolized beautifully in Revelation, chapter 11, where it talks about two witnesses of God that will always be with us. Many Bible scholars see these two witnesses as the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Both of these witnesses are needed to fully understand who God is.

Just as the two angelic figures that stood above the ark of the covenant that housed God's commandments in the earthly sanctuary, these "two witnesses", mentioned as the prophetic symbols of olive trees and lampstands, reveal who the God of heaven is. God has always protected His holy Bible, as we'll see through our study this week.

Read chapters 12-17 of *The Great Controversy*, for more information about these two witnesses.

Our lesson covers:

- **Sunday: Two Witnesses**—establishing their identity
- **Monday: Prophetic Time Periods**—determining how they were "clothed in sackcloth" during the Middle Ages
- **Tuesday: The Two Witnesses Are Killed**—seeing the time when the French Revolution caused their death
- **Wednesday: The Two Witnesses Resurrected**—discovering how they came back to life
- **Thursday: Truth Triumphant**—knowing that God triumphs in the end

## Sunday: Two Witnesses

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Revelation 11:4 mentions **two olive trees and two lampstands, symbolic of the two witnesses found in Revelation 11:3**. Oil typically stands for the Holy Spirit, which is why it is used for anointing. These two **olive trees are apparently there to provide oil to light the lampstands**, God's word that sheds light on our path (Psalm 119:105).

**Zechariah 4, using the same symbols of olive trees and lampstands, indicates that they represent "two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord" (Zechariah 4:14).**

Back in Revelation 11:6, we are provided with some further identification of the two witnesses. It mentions the "power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls" (perhaps referring to the story of Elijah), and "power over waters to turn them to blood" (the story of Moses).

**Jesus tells us that the Scriptures (which was the Old Testament) testified (or was a witness) of Him (John 5:39). Moreover, Christ once again tells us in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel He preached (found in the New Testament) would be "preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations".**

Thus many believe the **two witnesses refer to the Old and New Testaments. Both testify, or are witnesses, of Christ the Messiah.**

### Bible Verses:

Revelation 11:3-6

Why are the Holy Spirit (the olive tree symbol) and the Bible (the lampstand symbol) both needed to testify about God?

What parts do they play in revealing the truth of God's character and the plan of salvation?

Zechariah 4:2, 5, 6, and 14

How does Zechariah's vision sound similar to the one given to John in Revelation?

John 5:39 and Matthew 24:14

What did Jesus say about the identity of His two witnesses?

Why are both the Old and New Testaments needed for us to fully understand who God is?

## Monday: Prophetic Time Periods

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**One prophetic time of intense persecution grabs our attention, because it is mentioned several times in Revelation and even Daniel. It is expressed three different ways**—as 1,260 days, forty-two months, and “a time, times, and half a time” (Revelation 11:2, 3, 12:14, 15, and Daniel 7:25). Using Hebrew time reckoning where a month is 30 days and a year is 360 days, we are convinced that they are the same time period that caused the two witnesses to be “clothed in sackcloth”, a symbol of mourning and grief.

The Bible indicates that **a day usually represents a year in prophecy** (Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6). Many times, the words “day” and “year” are used interchangeably. Therefore, it's reasonable to believe that this period is a lengthy 1,260 years, rather than days.

This assumption perfectly matches the significant historic time **when papal Rome ruled a vast empire for 1,260 years from 538 through 1798 A.D. The Roman Church had united with civil governing powers and ruled all of Europe, persecuting many of God's faithful servants.**

The corrupt, church hierarchy in medieval times **caused the Scriptures to be neglected, replacing them with erroneous teachings and traditions** that led to the **persecution of many who dared defy their harsh authority.** Faithful ones like the Waldenses, John Huss, Jerome, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Wesley were **mercilessly dealt with as heretics of the state-sanctioned religion of papal Rome.**

### Bible Verses:

Revelation 11:2,3, 12:13-15, and Daniel 7:25

Why does God warn us of persecution?

Matthew 24:21, 22

Why would His predictions of persecution especially be helpful to those living in the last days?

## Tuesday: The Two Witnesses Are Killed

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**The two witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) had been “clothed in sackcloth” during the Middle Ages** (Revelation 11:3). The medieval time period of 1,260 years was definitely a significant time of grief and mourning for God’s people. The fateful years began when the pagan Roman Emperor Justinian was replaced with Pope Vigillis in 538 A.D. Papal Rome’s secular and ecclesiastic rule continued unchecked until Pope Pius VI was taken captive by Napoleon’s general Berthier and brought to France, where he died.

**Revelation 11:7-10 then points to a time when the witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) would be killed.** The extreme measures to **abolish religion and become an atheistic nation during the French Revolution** certainly indicate the death of the Scriptures for a short period of three-and-a-half days/years (Revelation 11:11). These efforts were at their height from November 26, 1793, when Paris issued a decree to abolish religion, to June 17, 1797, when such strict laws against religion were removed.

Revelation 11:8 mentions a great city with the spiritual names of **Sodom and Egypt. This certainly describes the immoral and paganistic/secular nature of Paris, France during the tumultuous years of the French Revolution, when the Bible, His witness, was the victim of Satan’s wrath.**

### Bible Verses:

Revelation 11:7-10

What happens to the two witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) after the 1,260 years of being clothed in sackcloth?

How was Paris like immoral Sodom and paganistic Egypt during the French Revolution?

## Wednesday: The Two Witnesses Resurrected

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Satan may have “killed” God’s two witnesses (just as Christ was killed on a cruel cross). But, **like our Lord, we are told in Revelation 11:11 that there was a resurrection of His two witnesses.** They, too, are brought back to life **after three-and-a-half days, or prophetic years.**

Satan may attack God’s word, suppressing the knowledge of its truths for a time. But **the Bible always prevails, just as it did after the French Revolution, when a mighty revival of religious fervor propelled missionaries to expand their efforts all over the world, beginning at the end of the eighteenth century.**

Christians may still question parts of the Bible, undermine its divine origin, and neglect its study, but **the Bible continues to be a best seller and the most widely-read book worldwide**. What a powerful resurrection it has had!

### **Bible Verses:**

Revelation 11:11 and Psalm 119:89, 111:7, 8

In what way do the Scriptures remain alive and how have they brought you life?

How should we, as individuals, respond to the truths in the Bible?

## **Thursday: Truth Triumphant**

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Satan was temporarily successful when the two witnesses, representing the Old and New Testaments, were killed during the French Revolution. **The gospel record was resurrected, however, and once again flourished after that brief period of atheism** (Revelation 11:11). After that, global **missionaries began preaching the word of God in foreign countries like never before**.

The rest of Revelation 11 describes how Christ, who was also killed and resurrected, would have final victory over those who tried to destroy Him. There will be more persecution and strife for God's followers in the last days, but, **in the end, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ** (Revelation 11:15). And His Kingdom will last forever!

Obedience to God's law, called the law of liberty (James 2:12), will reveal whether we are genuine in our worship of God. **The standards used in the judgment have remained intact and protected, just as the tables containing God's Ten Commandments remain protected in the ark of the covenant in God's heavenly temple** (Revelation 11:19).

### **Bible Verses:**

Revelation 11:11-18

What is the reaction of those experiencing this glorious triumph in heaven?

Revelation 11:19, Deuteronomy 10:3-5, and James 2:12

What was supposed to be in the ark of the covenant and why does James call it the law of liberty?

## **Friday: Final Thoughts**

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Looking back at Christ's three-and-a-half year-long ministry, His cruel death, and glorious resurrection three-and-a-half days later, we have seen similar events in the history of man.

During the 1,260-year-long persecution of God's people during the Middle Ages, God's word barely survived extinction. It was followed by the French Revolution of the 1700s, when total anarchy resulted from doing away with God's word and even Christianity itself.

Just as the Jewish leaders tried to do away with Jesus, the Messiah, by nailing Him to a cross, their efforts in France were fruitless, and the Bible, God's witness, rose up with renewed strength and power after a short three-and-a-half-year demise.

Understanding these prophecies in the light of historical events such as these encourages God's people in every age to trust that God is ultimately in control and will win this great controversy that is rocking our world. What He has promised will come to pass, especially in these last days of earth's history. He is the Rock of Ages—the Rock of our salvation. In Him, we can trust.

**Next week, our lesson will be based on chapters 18-21 of “*The Great Controversy*” .**

***Next Week: Motivated by Hope***

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**<https://www.sabbath.school/>**