

Chapter 4

The Two Witnesses

Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

For the first time in the history of modern Israel, she was at peace with her sworn enemies. The national excitement of the guaranteed peace was enough to begin moving the tiny country past the post-rapture fears associated with the Russian/Iranian invasion, decimation of the United States and subsequent massacre of her enemies the Arabs. “Shalom, shalom!” was being shouted from the lips of every citizen. Ezek 13:9,10

Then, seemingly on cue, two men showed up out of nowhere on the Mount of Olives creating quite a stir in Jerusalem. One claimed to be Elijah, returning as prophesied in the Old Testament scripture in Malachi, and the other claimed to be John from the New Testament. This immediately raised a red-flag alert within the Ultra-Orthodox Jews.

The Jews had been patiently waiting for Elijah to return to earth after his departure in a fiery chariot over 2800 years earlier. Every year at Passover, Jewish families in each home had set an extra place-setting at the table for Elijah. And every year, just before eating, they sent their children to the door to see if Elijah might be there. (2 Kgs 2:11; Mal 4:5)

So this reported return of Elijah and the appearance of John was incredible news to everyone in Israel, but it was of greatest concern to the Ultra-Orthodox Jews. These highly religious men, exempt from having to join the work force or the military, devoted



their entire lives to studying the Torah.

And they were a force to be reckoned with. They fathered large families, averaging 5 or 6 kids per couple, and although they only comprised about 10% of the total population, they powerfully influenced Israel's political coalitions and therefore elections.

But more importantly, they were also the self-proclaimed watchdogs for false prophets. With their extensive knowledge of scripture, they were quick to spot and expose impostors. Through the years scores of false prophets claiming to be Elijah or the Messiah had fallen under their scrutiny and were properly dismissed.

But Elijah and John sure *looked* like ancient prophets. They were dressed in what could only be described as linen sackcloth, much like what the Old Testament prophets wore as a symbol of the office of Prophet when they preached repentance. *Rev 11:3, Mal 4:5, Mat 3:!*

They appeared to be older men, albeit quite fit, as they took up residence at the southern tip of the Mount of Olives overlooking the over one million tombs on the western side. The view of the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives was mesmerizing.



So when news of the two men claiming to be Elijah and John spread through Jerusalem, the Ultra-Orthodox immediately began making plans to confront them. Always ready to expose impostors, the Ultra-Orthodox decided to pay them a visit to dispel the

rumors that Elijah had indeed returned.

The Ultra-Orthodox leaders, as always, were dressed in their traditional and unique head-to-toe black suits and hats. Arriving at the top of the Mount of Olives, the group of about 50 walked somewhat cautiously to the area the men in question were occupying.



Following at the end of the “Black Hat” procession were two representatives from the Prime Minister’s office, dressed in well-manicured suits, presumably to also figure out who these men actually were. Members of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) were also scattered around the area but appeared not to be interfering with the confrontation.

“*Shalom!*” the head of the Ultras spoke as he approached the two shaggily-dressed men.

“*Shalom!*” the two men responded in unison as they scanned the group, peering deeply into each pair of eyes. “*What do you want from us?*” one of the two men asked.

“*It is said that one of you claims to be Elijah the Prophet,*” the leader of the Ultras responded. “*What are your credentials? What proof do you have of who you are?*”

The slightly smaller of the two men answered first, “*I am Elijah. I come fulfilling the testimony of Malachi that I would return to earth. I am sent by God to proclaim the name of Jesus the Messiah and to call all of Abraham’s offspring back to the Promised Land from around the world.*”

Mal 4:5

As Torah-ingrained men, the Ultras were cut to the core. A man claiming to be Elijah was one thing, but claiming that Jesus was their Jewish Messiah was to them blasphemy in the highest.

Then Eiljah added, *“To prove who I am, tomorrow I will disclose where the Ark of the Covenant is located. Inside the Ark will be two stone tablets with God’s 10 Commandments.”* 2Chron 5:10

Before the astonished group could digest this incredible prediction, the other man added, *“I’m John, beloved by Jesus the Messiah whom you crucified. I am fulfilling Jesus’ words recorded in the Gospel by my name and the Book of Revelation that I would not die but would return to be a witness and speak again to many nations, tongues and kings.”*
John 21:21-24, Rev 10:11-11:3

“My proof...” John continued, *“is that tonight, an angel from heaven will mark God’s anointed men, visibly on their foreheads, with the seal of the living God while they sleep.”* Rev 7:2

False prophets had come and gone through the years in Israel, and often it was difficult for the Ultras to quickly discredit them. But here these two had seemingly sealed their doom with two ridiculous predictions for the next day. Therefore, despite their desire to have them arrested on the spot, it was only necessary to wait overnight to prove they were false prophets.

“We’ll be back tomorrow,” the lead Ultra said, somewhat mockingly, as he turned to walk away, mentally preparing to return with the IDF to arrest them the next day.

News coverage of the verbal exchanges on the Mount of Olives was the lead story that evening in the news... not only in Israel but also in most major markets around the world. Amusing video of the two men dressed

in shaggy linen sackcloth talking to high-ranking Ultras in their head-to-toe black outfits, was a news hit. The bold predictions for the next day were circulated worldwide.

The next morning, as brazenly predicted by John, tens of thousands of Jewish men in Israel woke up with the Hebrew letter “shin” marked above their right eyebrows about the size of a shekel, in one of 12 distinctive colors. *(Rev 7:3,4)*

As daylight dawned in Israel there was a collective panic over the shin mark that couldn't be removed. The letter shin was often used to represent God, taken from the first letter of the Jewish word “Shaddai,” which is one of the Hebrew names for God. Families debated whether or not this had to do with the prediction of two men on the Mount of Olives who claimed to be thousands of years old. And why were there 12 distinctive colors of the shin mark? *Rev. 7 :4-8*

Even more strange, almost every man who had the mark was an Ultra-Orthodox Jew, unmarried, and under the age of 30. *Rev 14:3,4*

The seemingly heavenly marking on so many of the young Jews had certainly gotten the Ultra's attention. By 8 AM the Ultra leaders were headed back to the Mount of Olives to meet with the men claiming to be Elijah and John.

But before they even got to the Kidron Valley at the bottom of the Mount of Olives, they saw a large crowd of people following the two men walking briskly up the short side-road leading to the Lions' Gate.

It was quite the scene as the two



men entered the ancient gate of the Old City wall and then turned left toward the Temple Mount area. It was a circus-like atmosphere as multitudes of people strained to get a glimpse of these two now-famous men.

Once inside the Temple Mount compound, they abruptly stopped in the treed area on the north side. Elijah pulled a wooden stake from his belt and pounded it into the ground with a rock.

“Under this spot,” Elijah calmly announced, *“40 meters down is a cavern carved in the bedrock where the Ark of the Covenant is located. Inside the Ark are the two original tablets containing the 10 Commandments.”*



The Ark of the Covenant hadn't been seen for thousands of years. It was an important piece of the Jewish heritage as it served as the face-to-face meeting place between man and his Creator. It also was the physical representation of the covenant between God and Israel. *1Kings 8:21*

By this time the head of the Ultras had finally caught up with the growing and curious crowd. Hearing what Elijah said, he loudly promised, *“If the Ark of the Covenant is located under this stake, I'll proclaim this man to be Elijah the Prophet.”* To most everyone standing there, this was a moot point. They already believed he was, in fact, Elijah!

Then it was John's turn. He and Elijah left the wooden stake in the ground and walked up on top of the paved Temple Mount area north of the Dome of the Rock.

The Ultras stopped short of the flat, paved area, but the rest of the

crowd followed John onto the pavement. John had picked up a tree limb off the ground that was about three meters long. Then he announced, “*I will outline where to re-build the Temple.*” *Rev 11:1,2*



The large Temple Mount area, about 40 acres total, is dominated by the golden plated Dome of the Rock, situated about the middle on the north/south axis. A Muslim shrine, it had been an icon in Jerusalem’s skyline for some 1400 years.

The Temple Mount area itself was rich in Jewish history. It was on this spot, the crest of Mt. Moriah, that Abraham had tried to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Some 1500 years later, Solomon oversaw the building of the first Jewish Temple there, considered at the time to be one of the majestic wonders of the world—noteworthy because it was a religious temple without statues inside or out.

Solomon’s Temple was eventually destroyed by Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. After the Jews returned to Israel from their 70 years of Babylon captivity, they rebuilt the temple on the same spot. It was referred to as the “Second Jewish Temple.” And after a substantial renovation upgrade by King Herod, this was the Temple that Jesus visited during His life on earth.

After Jesus’ death, the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman Army led by Titus. There was so much gold captured from that Temple that the Romans used it to bankroll and build the infamous *Roman Colosseum*.

In about 600 AD, the Arabs built the Muslim shrine called the *Dome of the Rock*. Even though Jerusalem isn't even mentioned in the Quran, the Muslims claim it's the third holiest spot of their religion, behind Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.



Since returning to the land of Israel as a nation in 1948, the Jews had debated where the Temple could be rebuilt on the Temple Mount—if and when they were able to do so. The location had to be exact because where it was built would dictate where the Holy of Holies would be constructed—a place forbidden for anyone to go except the High Priest.

In the Temple, the Holy of Holies was located at the rear, behind a four-inch-thick floor-to-ceiling curtain. The High Priest was scripturally commanded to enter into the Holy of Holies only once a year in order to offer a blood sacrifice for the nation's sins on the Day of Atonement. Anyone else who entered the Holy of Holies would die. *Ex 26:33; Lev 16*

The Jews had controlled the Temple Mount area, including the two mosques and the Dome of the Rock shrine, since they recaptured the Old City during the Six Day War in 1967. But in a futile attempt to make peace with the Arabs, Israel's military commander Mosha Dyan had returned the administration of the entire Temple Mount's 40 acres back to the Muslims.

With this control, the Muslims had forbidden Israel from digging anywhere on, under or near the Temple Mount, making it impossible for the Jews to pinpoint the exact location of the original Jewish Temple foundations.

So there was great debate as to where the Temple could actually be rebuilt, when the time came. An old adage in Israel says that where

there are two Jews, there are three opinions. And this was true regarding theories on exactly where to rebuild the Temple.

Through the years, the debate over where exactly to build the Temple was so intense that the Ultras would not even set foot on the top of the Temple Mount paved area for fear of accidentally stepping into, and defiling, the Holy of Holies.

Many believed the Muslim Dome of the Rock was simply built over the original Temple foundation. Others argued that the Temple was located just south of the Dome of the Rock. Their belief was based on the excavation and location of the ancient water channels which would have been necessary to bring water freely to the priests' wash basins, without being carried. They argued that only the lower section of the Temple Mount to the south of the Dome of the Rock (four meters lower), would enable the water to flow to the priests without disruption.

Yet a third group of Jewish scholars argued that the Temple was originally located north of the current Dome of the Rock. This theory was based on the excavated location of the original Eastern Gate. Historical writings suggest that the Eastern Gate stood directly in front of the Beautiful Gate, which was the entrance into the enclosed Temple area.



But regardless of WHERE the Temple would be built, the Bible states in no uncertain terms that it would be in place, and blood sacrifices offered, just before the Messiah's return. So after decades of research, theorizing, and debate, all eyes were on John, who was about to settle this great mystery. *Dan 9:26*

Standing directly west of the bricked up Eastern Gate, on the flat paved area, he began measuring a rectangular outline, counting out loud with his newly acquired staff. Excited Jews began bringing rocks and sticks from around the area to visibly see his outline on the ground.

After about an hour John had completed his quite detailed outline on the stone surface. The most interesting part of John's diagram was that the Holy of Holies was to be located exactly where the Dome of the Spirits was located. This was of great interest to the Ultras who were lined around the edge of the paved area, not wanting to set foot anywhere near the Holy of Holies.

The Dome of the Spirits was an outcropping of the natural peak of Mount Moriah, and it was directly west of the Eastern Gate. The location of the Temple mystery was solved. The Jews now knew where the Third Jewish Temple should be built.

Then someone shouted to John asking if they should destroy the Muslim's Dome of the Rock? John answered, "*Leave the courts that are outside my plan to the gentiles.*" Rev 11:2

John then used this quite captive and still growing audience on the Temple Mount to announce that he would begin teaching those with the Mark of God on their foreheads beginning Sunday, at the top of Mount Zion. He explained that the 12 different colors of the shin mark corresponded with the original 12 Jewish tribes.

John continued to explain that he would be teaching a different tribe each day at the top of Mount Zion for six days at time, breaking only for Shabbat. This meant he would teach each tribe once every two weeks. He designated each tribe a color, and which day was their teaching day on Mount Zion. Word spread like wildfire. Those with marks could

hardly wait for their assigned day to hear John's teaching.

As if it couldn't get any more interesting, Elijah raised his hand to quiet the crowd and said, *"Let it be known that every person of Jewish heritage living outside Israel must immediately return to their homeland."* *Ezek 36:24*

That was a stunner. Some 7 million Jews lived in Israel, but there were another 8 million living around the world. Did he really believe they would all come to Israel just because he called them home? Not to mention, where would they all live? *Ezek 37:21*

Elijah and John then retreated out of sight to reside in a home that bordered the north side of the Temple Mount. From there, Elijah oversaw the excavation down to the Ark of the Covenant, and John could walk daily to the top of Mount Zion.

All Israel watched the ark excavation night and day for two straight days. When the cavern was finally reached deep in the bed rock, the Ultras took charge. They were well aware of the specific Biblical restrictions about who could and could not handle the Ark.

Fortunately, because of God's markings on the witnesses foreheads designating who was in what tribe, the Ultras were able to summon true Levites who were Biblically ordained to touch and carry the Ark. *Deut 10:8*

As the Ark was brought to the surface, a monstrous shout thundered across Israel as it and the two ancient stone tablets, written by the finger of God, were shown to the



world via television. *Ex 31:18; Deut 10:2*

For two months Israel had endured more than what was imaginable, but now the Ark of the Covenant was the unifying symbol the nation needed. With the exception of the Ultra-Orthodox, Israel had grown quite secular since becoming a nation again in 1948, but this new discovery had ushered in a new spiritual dimension. *Ezek 37:9*

Now the Jews would no longer be confined to praying at the Wailing Wall. Instead, once their Temple was rebuilt, they could not only pray on the top of Mt. Moriah, they also could make blood sacrifices for the first time in some 2000 years. The blood of animals would once again make atonement for their sins. *Lev 17:11*

The return of Elijah, John and the discovery of the Ark of the Covenant changed everything. The Bible was again being discussed and debated by all Jews, night and day. And not only did they have their long-sought peace, but their beloved Temple was now being rebuilt after some 2000 years. And a steady stream of Jews from around the world began to flow into Israel as the government struggled to find space for them.