

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

### THE TWO WITNESSES OF REVELATION 11:1–13: ARGUMENTS, ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION, AND A WAY FORWARD

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The narrative of Rev 11:1–13 involves two prophet-witnesses. The question of the identity of the two witnesses of Rev 11:1–13 has been answered in a variety of ways. In the history of exegetical investigation, they have been seen as two actual people, a symbol for a larger group, or even a symbol for inanimate objects. Clearly, some proposals seem more plausible than others; however, the debate remains open. Indeed, the possibility exists that a stronger case could be made for a previous proposal or that a new one could be found that is more agreeable to scholars of Revelation. The purpose of my research is to clarify the nature of the problem of identifying the two witnesses and to form a plan for finding a more satisfactory answer. In this way, my research illuminates the path beyond the current state of inconclusiveness. This purpose is accomplished through a survey of arguments that are representative of those used to support the major exegetical identifications of the two witnesses and through an examination of the broad interpretive issues that can be derived from those arguments. In short, my research aims to meet the need for a review of the literature that will more fully expose the state of the question concerning the identity of the witnesses and so offer a basis for a new investigation into that question.

The most popular identifications of the two witnesses can be divided into those that understand the witnesses literally and those that understand the witnesses symbolically. The presentations of argumentation are separated according to this division, with the third chapter concerning literal identifications and the fourth chapter concerning symbolic ones. In each chapter, the presentations begin with an extensive summary of one exposition. These summaries function as the bases for discussing other significant expositions of the witnesses that, although differing in certain ways from the main one, still represent the same broad class of identifications. Descriptions of the broad issues of interpretation that are deducible from the presented arguments are given at various points in the presentations. Issues of interpretation shared by the studied commentators are identified in the conclusions to each chapter.

The central exposition of chapter three is that by Donatus Haugg. The expositions of James Henthorn Todd, Isbon Thaddeus Beckwith, and Christine Joy Tan are also featured. All four commentators identify the witnesses as two individuals who appear in the future after the composition of Revelation. One other exposition in chapter three is that by Johannes Munck. He identifies the

two witnesses with Peter and Paul. His exposition represents those interpreters who identify the witnesses as two people contemporaneous to John. Munck's exposition receives an abbreviated treatment.

The foundational exposition for chapter four is that by Gregory Kimball Beale. The expositions of Hendrik Rijk van de Kamp and Gerhard Maier are also featured. All three commentators see the two witnesses as a symbol of God's people. One other exposition in chapter four is that by Ekkehardt Müller. He argues that the two witnesses symbolize the Bible. His exposition represents those interpreters who see the witnesses as a symbol for sacred writings. Müller's exposition receives an abbreviated treatment.

In the fifth chapter, several of the broad issues of interpretation that are described in the previous two chapters are evaluated. In the evaluation, several of them are identified as main issues in the debate over the identity of the two witnesses, because the majority of the nine representative commentators address them. Those that are less common among the nine commentators are assessed to see whether they should join the main issues in a new investigation of the identity question. Many of these are found to be relevant for further discussion of the identity question.

Small summaries of what the studied commentators have said in addressing the broad issues of interpretation accompany the evaluation. This enables one to see the argumentation from the two preceding chapters together. The argumentation is arranged by issue, rather than by commentator.

The rest of chapter five concerns how the issues that result from the evaluation can be organized into a research plan to aid scholars in treating them. Although not exhaustive, the plan, in theory, includes the issues essential for a more intimate engagement with the debate over the identity of the witnesses. The final chapter summarizes and concludes the study.