

The Two Witnesses

1

Revelation 11:3-14

I would invite you to open up the infallible record of the Word of the living God to the book of Revelation chapter 11. We have now come to verses three through 14 and I will read them to you in a moment then we will look at them closely.

Any student of Bible prophecy will agree that as we compare the constellation of signs and events that are set forth in the prophetic Word with all that is going on in the world around us, there can be no doubt that the stage is being set for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are troubling days. These are difficult days, but, dear friends, these are exciting days.

There are many signs that Jesus promised and the prophets and the apostles made mention of. For example, Jesus said that before he comes the world will be living as in the days of Noah, eating and drinking and marrying, giving in marriage. In other words life is just going to go on as if nothing will ever change. And certainly as you look around the world today there is granted indifference towards the reality that Jesus is coming again and judgment is coming upon the earth. If you don't believe that, just go tell people in your office, your friends, your neighbors. Just tell them, "You know what? Jesus is going to come pretty soon and he is going to judge the world and you had better be ready." And just see what their reaction will be.

Jesus predicted that before he comes the world would be marked by persecution against Christians, apostasy, and unbelief. In fact, in Luke 18:8 Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"¹ And the implied answer is, "No, not much." True faith will be extremely rare when the Lord returns and that is what we are seeing today. There are a lot of religious people, a lot of spirituality, but very few people truly know and love the living Christ. Few enter through the narrow gate of brokenness and repentance, partly because it is so hard to even find these days with the neo Evangelical gospel that is being preached.

We are told that there will be a Laodicean lukewarmness amongst Christians, a condition marked by a superficial love for Christ, by doctrinal indifference and doctrinal ignorance, and certainly a disinterest in anything that is holy. And moral compromise would, therefore, fill the so-called "Church." Much of the Church today, quite frankly, bears no resemblance to the New Testament Church. In many cases, if not most cases, people have so emasculated the gospel in order to be "seeker sensitive" that it is really not the gospel at all. Now people tend to worship a newly invented Jesus, a "smiley face" Jesus that winks at sin. And frankly, dear friends, the accommodation to the spirit of the age today is nothing short of appalling.

We are told that lawlessness will increase. In other words there will be an utter disregard for God's law. And we look around our world today and we see a descent into increased wickedness. A great example of this is the mass idolatry that we witnessed over the last few days at the death of a man that is called the "King of Pop," a freak of a man devoted to obscene dancing and vulgar music.

¹ Luke 18:8.

The Two Witnesses

2

Revelation 11:3-14

The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Timothy three that “in the last days difficult times will come,” referring to perilous or savage times. He went on to say:

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.²

He went on to say that “evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse.” Today all you have to do is look around even in the leadership of our country with our politicians and you will see that narcissism, materialism and hedonism is now at an all time high.

There will also be signs pertaining to Israel, and today we see massive immigration occurring in Israel. The prophet Ezekiel tells us in Ezekiel 20 beginning at verse 33 where we read about God promising to restore Israel to her land. There we read:

"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face."³

And we know as we read the prophetic literature that that is going to happen. Who would have believed that out of the ash heap of the holocaust you would now be able to witness the miracle of an Israeli state that began in 1948? And, again, today they are returning to Israel by the thousands.

Dear friends, keep your eye on Israel. God will never violate his unconditional promises to his people. Even in Leviticus chapter 26 and verse 44 we read:

Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.⁴

Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah reiterates this promise as many others do. In Jeremiah 31 verse 35 we read:

² 2 Timothy 3:2-5.

³ Ezekiel 20:34-35.

⁴ Leviticus 26:44-45.

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.⁵

The implication is he will never forsake them. Again, who would have imagined that the most persecuted people on the planet would now be a world power?

In Daniel chapter seven beginning at verse 23 there is a description of a coming one world government which will eventually splinter into a 10 nation European confederacy that will thrive until the end of the tribulation under the leadership of the antichrist. And today we can look around and we can see the world heading towards that. We look even at our own country and we see the collapse of the United States dollar. We see debt as well as commitments that far exceed our ability to ever pay. We see an utter disregard for our constitution and we see the dismantling, frankly, of capitalism and the freedoms that our country has enjoyed over the years as an oligarchy takes over the government and impose their Marxist ideologies upon all of us. Dear friends, the world is being prepared for a one world ruler.

Dr. David Larsen said, and I quote, "After the Church is removed the lawlessness of the ages will come and the dynamic focus in a tyrannical, political and religious monolith headed up by the antichrist." He went on to say, "George Orwell's big brother incarnate. This deification of man is the sum and substance of the humanism and narcissism that increasingly characterize modern society," end quote.

We also know prophetically that prior to the Lord's return there will be the battle of Gog and Magog that we have studied in the past in Ezekiel 38 and 39. There will be a Russian led coalition of primarily Muslim countries that will come down upon Israel that will include Iran. Certainly an Israeli preemptive strike could set that into motion very, very quickly. We know that according to the prophetic Word they will be utterly defeated on the mountains of Israel. The Jews will finally be able to get rid of the Dome of the Rock and build their temple in Jerusalem. In fact, today the Jews have everything in place to build and to furnish and to even operate the temple to the great consternation of the Muslim world.

In fact, the temple mount, that place where Abraham was provided a substitute for Isaac and where the glorious Shekinah hovered over the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies once upon a time, that place today as you know, if you listen to anything on the news, is the most disputed piece of real estate in all of the world. And I might also add, as I have said before, that is the key to understanding Bible prophecy, because it will be

⁵ Jeremiah 31:35-37.

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-14

on that spot where the Messiah will one day, once again, shine. It will be on that spot that the Jews will be allowed to build another temple during the tribulation under the protection of the antichrist during the first half of Daniel's 70th week. But then infuriated by the witness of the two witnesses that we will look at here this morning, the antichrist will violate this covenant with Israel and demand that the world worship him according to 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and other passages. Then he will erect a robot-like likeness of himself in the place of the holy of holies. That is called "the abomination which causes desolation." The Jews will then refuse to worship him, thus infuriating the antichrist who will then seek to destroy them. And all of this will lead, ultimately, to the battle of Armageddon where demonic spirits—according to Revelation 16:14—"will draw the kings of the whole world together for a battle on the great day of God almighty."

And then the Lord will return in power and great glory according to Matthew 24. The Lord said, "Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west and then the Lord will be king over the whole earth" according to Zechariah 14 verses three through four and verse nine.

And I also thought of what Jude said in verse 14:

Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.⁶

Well, this is a good reminder of where we are now today as we come to our study of the two witnesses in Revelation chapter 11. Let me read these verses to you beginning in verse three.

And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry;

⁶ Jude 14-15.

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-14

and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.⁷

Now you will recall in the first two verses of chapter 11 the Jews were measured off or marked off as belonging to God, those whom he will preserve and protect during the final 42 months while the Gentiles who were rejected will tread under foot the holy city and continue to oppress the Jewish people under the leadership of the antichrist. Then next we see him here raising up two preachers and giving them supernatural powers. These will be able to counter the prophetic—and I should say “counterfeit signs”—of the false prophet that we will learn about when we come to Revelation chapter 13, whose campaign it will be to deify the antichrist that he serves.

Now, since the antichrist is the ruler in “the times of the Gentiles,” who will be ruling therefore over a revived Roman Empire of European nations, this whole scene, therefore recapitulates the vile symbiotic relationship that has... that Satan has had over the centuries with ancient rulers and their puppet priests and prophets who serve with them to accomplish their nefarious purposes. As a footnote, I believe there is compelling evidence that the antichrist will be a Gentile, not a Jew. But the false prophet will be a Jew and not a Gentile. We will study this more later in Revelation 13.

But even as the ancient rulers of Rome, for example, once controlled the masses both politically and religiously, Satan will continue this policy in the rule of the antichrist and his false prophet. So the Lord now raises up these two witnesses, witnesses of his saving grace as well as the wrath that is going to continue to come, and these two powerful preachers will become a thorn in the flesh to the antichrist and the false prophet.

Now we find three primary categories of revelation that I believe emerge from verses three through 14 that can help us understand more about these two witnesses. We will look, first, at *their magnificent ministry*; secondly, *their morbid death*; and finally, *their miraculous resurrection*.

First, notice *their magnificent ministry* beginning in verse three. “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”⁸

⁷ Revelation 11:3-14.

⁸ Revelation 11:3.

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-14

Now it is fitting upon the measuring of the temple and the Jewish worshippers in verse one for God to now offset the false signs of the false prophet and the antichrist, so now God the Father raises up two men. And biblically we know that every testimony has to be validated by at least two witnesses, and the word “witness” or “witnesses” is the plural of *martus* (mar'-toos) in Greek. We get our word “martyr” from that and, indeed, these men will be martyred for their testimony.

And we see here that they will “prophesy” which means “to preach” or “to proclaim,” “to speak forth.” You must understand that New Testament prophecy is primarily “forth telling” more than “foretelling.” So these two witnesses will proclaim the gospel of grace as well as continue to warn about the judgments that are going to come upon the earth and the eternal hell that will be the abode of those who continue to reject Christ. And they will do that, according to the text, for 1260 days which is the final three and a half years of Daniel’s 70th week.

This parallels the apostolic witness, as you recall, in the second temple. You remember in Acts chapter five and verse 20 where the angel of the Lord opened up the gates of the prison and commanded them to, “Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”⁹ And so we see this now occurring here in the time of the tribulation.

Now notice they were “clothed in sackcloth.” Sackcloth was a course cloth made of the hair of a camel or a goat, and it was often accompanied with ashes that they would put on them. It would be worn by men and women in times of great distress. It was worn by the prophets to call attention to some great wickedness in society and call the people to repentance as well as to warn them of imminent judgment that would be coming. We saw this, for example, in the ministry of Elijah as well as John the Baptist and others. And here in this context all of the above will be the intended purpose, plus this was the proper Jewish response to the temple’s desecration. They are now grieving. They are mourning over this as well as over the tyranny of the antichrist and the many Jews that are being massacred even though many will have fled into the wilderness and God will protect them there.

Now, beloved, we must see these things through the eyes of a Jewish world view. And as Gentiles, many times, this is hard for us to do. But understand that once the antichrist enters into the holy of holies, and blasphemously establishes himself as God, the temple complex as well as the whole land of Israel will be thrust into a state of ritual defilement. So something must happen, a cleansing must take place. And there will be, therefore, a restoration and ritual purification that will be accomplished by the Messiah when he physically appears and defeats the desecrator and cleanses the land and finally rebuilds and even consecrates the temple. That is what is going on here.

And in verse four we read, “These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”¹⁰ Now John would have known precisely the

⁹ Acts 5:20.

¹⁰ Revelation 11:4.

The Two Witnesses

7

Revelation 11:3-14

background of this statement, one that Zechariah had prophesied almost 600 years earlier in Zechariah chapter four. If we were to go there we would see that in that text God revealed to Zechariah a prediction concerning the rebuilding of the Jewish temple after their long exile that would be led by two men, the high priest Joshua who was the spiritual leader, and Zerubbabel who was the civil leader.

And in Zechariah four we read of the same symbols that the Lord uses here in Revelation 11, “two olive trees” and “two lampstands.” All of this is symbolic of the oil of the Holy Spirit’s power that perpetually fuels the lamps of divine truth pertaining to saving grace. In fact, in Zechariah four and verse six we read, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”¹¹ And in Zechariah chapter four and verse 14 Joshua and Zerubbabel are described as, “The two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.”¹²

But, like most prophecies, this had both a *near* as well as a *far* fulfillment as we see here in Revelation 11:4 where we read that, “These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”¹³ Almost an exact quote of Zechariah 4:14. So in Zechariah four the near future prophecy was that two witnesses—namely Joshua and Zerubbabel—would be raised up to be the lampstands of God to shine forth the light of saving truth, that they would be empowered by the Spirit of God, and they would bring spiritual revival to Israel as well as rebuild the post-exilic temple.

But the far future prophecy in that text refers to the these two witnesses who, again, will be raised up to be lampstands for God shining forth once again, the light of saving truth, men that will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, not by the demonic powers that are empowering the antichrist and the false prophet. And these men will also bring spiritual revival to Israel resulting in national conversion whereupon the Lord himself will establish his long awaited kingdom and he will build his millennial temple.

Now, who are these men? Well, there is a whole lot of speculation. You read all kinds of things. And, frankly, it is hard to know. You can’t be dogmatic here. But I believe the most compelling evidence points to the fact that they will be the actual Moses and Elijah of the Old Testament. Let me tell you why I would think that.

In Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses prophesied that the, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”¹⁴

And then in verse 18 the Lord said, “I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”¹⁵

¹¹ Zechariah 4:6.

¹² Zechariah 4:14.

¹³ Revelation 11:4.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 18:15.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 18:18.

The Two Witnesses

8

Revelation 11:3-14

And I find it interesting that to this very day the Jews are convinced that this prophet will be Moses himself.

In Malachi chapter four and verse five we are told:

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.¹⁶

Now, we know that John the Baptist came according to Luke 1:17, “in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”¹⁷ But I would submit to you that this does not preclude the fact that Elijah could appear again.

Also both Moses and Elijah were fearless prophets in their day. Who confronted the tyrants of their times and preached the Word of God without compromise. Furthermore, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at the mount of transfiguration. You will recall that time where Jesus peeled back his flesh and he allowed the glorious light of his Shekinah to blaze forth. All of which was a preview of his Second Coming.

It is also fascinating to note that the miracles that are performed here in Revelation 11 by the two witnesses during the final three and a half years are very similar to those performed by God through Moses and Elijah. The two witnesses, we see, are going to destroy their enemies with fire. Well, also, too, did Elijah when he called down fire from heaven.

Also in Revelation 11:6 here we read that these will have the power to shut up the sky in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying. So, too, Elijah pronounced a three and half year drought you will recall in 1 Kings 17, the same period of time as the two witnesses here in Revelation. And also here in verse six we read that, “These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.”¹⁸ What does that remind you of? Moses with Pharaoh and the Egyptians where he turned the waters of the Nile into blood and performed numerous plagues against the Egyptians.

And finally these two witnesses will be supernaturally translated into heaven, and, in similar fashion you will recall that neither Elijah nor Moses died a normal death, but Elijah was taken into heaven in a fiery chariot and God himself buried Moses secretly disposing of his body. So, again, we see that God will supernaturally intervene with the departure of these two witnesses even as he did with Moses and Elijah. But the text does

¹⁶ Malachi 4:5-6.

¹⁷ Luke 1:17.

¹⁸ Revelation 11:6.

Revelation 11:3-14

not specifically identify them so we cannot be dogmatic, but only speculate on who these men might be.

Now, we learn more about their magnificent ministry in verse five. We read that, “And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed.”¹⁹ By implication, many will desire to harm them. Imagine the reception you and would have if we went in to Iran or Saudi Arabia or North Korea or, frankly, some of the places here in the United States and boldly stood up and said, “Thus saith the Lord.” You would be killed within a matter of minutes. Well, this will be much, much worse during the time of the tribulation because, again, by now the people of the earth have experienced devastating plagues. They have already cried out for the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and to hide them from the presence of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb for the great day of their wrath has come,²⁰ Revelation six verses 16 and 17.

So by now the people of the world have rallied behind their new Messiah, the antichrist. They are mindlessly believing his lies. They are worshipping him and they have a violent hatred, more so than ever in the history of the world, against the God of the Bible. In fact, their disdain for anyone who would dare say to them that “you are a sinner in need of saving grace” will be eclipsed only by their utter contempt for the God who offers it.

So these preachers will need to be able to protect themselves. Sometimes I must confess I wish I had that power as many others would like as well, because as these enemies will attack them, we read that fire will come from their mouth and devour them. Literally in the Greek it means consume them. They will be incinerated, and, of course, this will only add fuel to the world’s rage.

As I meditated upon this I thought, my, so much for being “seeker sensitive” and trying to accommodate the culture. Beloved, again, the notion that we as Christians should conform to the culture verses confront it is absolutely ludicrous. It is patently false. It is unbiblical. A preacher must either choose to be faithful or popular. He cannot be both.

Then, being even less seeker sensitive in verse six, “These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying.”²¹ Again, that will be the final three and a half years. “And they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.”²² Now, folks, keep in mind this is so amazing. Remember that the plague of the third trumpet poisoned one third of the earth’s fresh water. And now during this last half of the tribulation there is not going to be any rain. This will be unimaginably catastrophic. Life on the planet will begin to grind to a halt and the world will know that “this is all because

¹⁹ Revelation 11:5.

²⁰ See Revelation 6:16-17.

²¹ Revelation 11:6.

²² Ibid.

Revelation 11:3-14

of these invincible and indefatigable preachers who serve the Creator, triune God of the Bible that we hate.”

How ironic down through history people have scoffed at preachers that preached the Word of God and they have killed them. I think of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:20, “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”²³ And he goes on to say, “God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached...”²⁴

Foolishness is *moria*, we get our word moron from that. They see us as morons. But, “God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”²⁵ “We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”²⁶

So we have seen *their magnificent ministry*. Notice, secondly, *their morbid death* in verse seven. “And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.”²⁷

Now this is the first time that we are introduced to the beast in the apocalypse. The beast *therion* (thay-ree'-on) in Greek. It is a term describing a vicious carnivore. It describes a beast of prey like a lion or a tiger. And it has within it the emphasis of a ravenous carnivore with a ravenous appetite that functions solely on the basis of his instinctively cruel and violent nature. This is a reference, now, to the antichrist who will be called the beast 36 times in the book of Revelation and we will study this in detail in chapters 13 as well as 17.

Now notice that he “comes up out of the abyss.” The term “abyss” is mentioned seven times in Revelation, and, as you will recall, when we studied it before in chapter nine in the context of the fifth trumpet, this refers to a mysterious subterranean cavern on earth that extends into the bowels of the earth through some kind of a shaft that God has sealed shut for the purpose of incarcerating the very worst of the worst of vile demons. Now this is not Satan (Satan is represented by a dragon in Revelation) but rather a man. And we will see more of this as time goes on, a man who is empowered by the demonic forces that come out from this abyss.

So we learn that after the divinely decreed duration of the ministry here for the two witnesses, God allows the antichrist to finally overcome them and kill them to the utter jubilation of the world.

In verse eight we read, “And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”²⁸ Obviously

²³ 1 Corinthians 1:20.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:21.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:23-24.

²⁷ Revelation 11:7.

Revelation 11:3-14

this is a reference to Jerusalem which will be the primary staging area of their ministry, but also we know that this will be the headquarters of the antichrist as we read in 2 Thessalonians chapter two verses three and four. And now this is a city that is so infected with every imaginable form of wickedness that we see it as likened to ancient Sodom as well as the original enemy of Israel, the nation of Egypt. The figurative likeness of these two places underscores the loathsome depths to which the holy city has now fallen. This is such a macabre, ghoulish, fiendish scene.

Notice, “And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city.”²⁹ Dear friends, the greatest indignity that can be perpetrated upon an enemy is to leave his body unburied in a public place and watch it slowly decompose. And think about this. At this time this will be politically correct. This will be morally appropriate. My how civilized we have become over the years, how sophisticated and moral we are. Yes, indeed, the world is getting better.

Then in verses nine and 10, “And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations...”³⁰ which is a technical term for the Gentile world.

... will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.³¹

Beloved, there can be no greater demonstration of rejection than this. And obviously we see that the whole world is going to be watching and we can understand this because of satellite news, television. I can see the news anchors right now as well as all of the political sycophants that are hanging around the antichrist. They are all “high fiving it.” They are rejoicing. “These two scoundrels are finally dead. Let’s watch them rot.”

I found a very interesting piece of information that was written back in 1864 by a man named Robert Gavet and he wanted to make a comment. He was a preacher. He wanted to comment about this phrase, “The people and tribes and tongues and nations are going to be gazing on these bodies.” Here is what he said. “The word *blepw* (blep’-o) which in Greek means to see, I see,” he says, “the word *blepo* (blep’-o), that is to look upon, denotes not merely the nation seeing them, but their directing their eyes to see this great sight and gazing upon them. But how is it conceivable that men all over the earth should be rejoicing in the news when only three and a half days intervene between their death and resurrection?”

²⁸ Revelation 11:8.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Revelation 11:9.

³¹ Revelation 11:9-10.

Revelation 11:3-14

Then he went on to say, “Is it not perfectly conceivable if the electric telegraph shall then have extended itself at the rate it has of late years,” end quote. And, indeed, it has extended itself greatly.

Well, the whole world, then, will be celebrating the death of those who came to give them eternal life. Now this will be a time kind of like Christmas and Mardi Gras all rolled together, unbelievable. And, apparently, there will be great throngs of people that will gather around this barbaric display. This is just unconscionable, isn't it? I might add that within two to three days a decomposing corpse begins to bloat and emit the putrid odors of putrefaction. And all of this is going to occur while a wicked world laughs and gives gifts celebrating the prowess of the antichrist and, frankly, in their minds, the defeat of Christ. But little do they know that within a few days the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return to earth in power and great glory.

Notice what happens finally in *the miraculous resurrection*. Verse 11. “And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.”³² My, that is one of the classic understatements in all of the Bible. “And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up into heaven in the cloud.”³³ This could be a reference to the glorious cloud of God's presence, the Shekinah cloud. And it says, “and their enemies watched them.”³⁴

Now, friends, go with me to this scene. This is absolutely priceless. Finally, the news anchors will be speechless. People will be panic stricken. Suddenly these decomposing corpses miraculously return to their original state. And it says they stand up. It is interesting. There is no record that they said anything or did anything. They simply stand up and then they respond to the divine summons, “Come up here.” And then they are caught up in this cloud. I think how interesting even as we will “be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord,”³⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:17. However, there is going to be a big difference. Their ascension will be gradual. Our at the rapture will be in the twinkling of an eye. In fact, this has often been described as the two man rapture.

Now, you might ask, “I wonder why God did not allow them at that point, now that they have got the undivided attention of the whole world, to give one final sermon.” Well, beloved, you must understand that by now God has judicially sealed them in their unbelief. The time of grace is past. Their hardness of heart has now sealed them by God himself. Judgment has come. I might also add that it is the convicting work of the Spirit of God not signs and wonders that make the gospel believable. Jesus said in Luke 16:31, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.”³⁶

³² Revelation 11:11.

³³ Revelation 11:12.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

³⁶ Luke 16:31.

And notice what else happens in verse 13. “And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake.”³⁷ “Seven thousand people,” it could be translated “persons.” Literally, in the Greek, “names of men,” (*onomata anthropon*). This is a very, very unusual expression in the original language, and many scholars believe that it refers to 7000 prominent men or leaders who served with the antichrist here in his headquarters in Jerusalem.

And then we read, “And the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.”³⁸ This would be a reference primarily to Jews. Certainly to some Gentiles that will be saved at that moment around the world, but especially the Jews that are still inhabiting the eastern part of Jerusalem and the region of the temple. And they will be saved at that moment. I was thinking how that here we discover the fulfillment of God’s promise. Remember in Romans 11 verse one the apostle Paul says, “God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!”³⁹ Later on in verse four and he quotes 1 Kings 19 as God responded to Elijah, “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.”⁴⁰ “In the same way,” Paul goes on to say, “In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice,”⁴¹ referring to Israel and then later in verse 26, “a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved.”⁴²

And here, dear friends, in Revelation we are seeing that “the fulness of the Gentiles” is about to come in and Israel will be saved. This would have been so incredibly encouraging to the converted rabbi, the apostle Paul.

Well, finally this interlude is over; this interlude between the seventh trumpet and the final bowl judgments that will immediately precede Christ’s return. It is now over. In verse 14 we read, “The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”⁴³

So, in summary, dear friends, the desecration of the temple, the murder and the resurrection of the two witnesses in Jerusalem followed by the terror of the Gentiles, the devastating earthquake, all of this points to the coming of Christ to end the Gentile domination, to save his covenant people and pour out the final stage of his vengeance upon the nations of the world and ultimately establish his glorious kingdom.

And I close with this thought.

³⁷ Revelation 11:13.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Romans 11:1.

⁴⁰ Romans 11:4.

⁴¹ Romans 11:5.

⁴² Romans 11:25-26.

⁴³ Revelation 11:14.

The Two Witnesses

14

Revelation 11:3-14

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian that participated in the German resistance movement against Nazism and he was hung for his faith in April 1945 just before the war's end. And here is what he said, quote, "If Jesus returns tomorrow then tomorrow I will rest from my labor. But today I have work to do. I must continue the struggle until it is finished," end quote.

Beloved, I hope that this is your attitude, that each and every one of us as saints are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus who gave himself for us."

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for these eternal truths and we praise you that you have revealed them to us, that we might be blessed as we understand the consummation of redemptive history. Lord, I pray that each of us as believers will take to heart what we have learned today and that we might rejoice in your sovereignty but also be vigilant in our zeal for evangelism that we might be shining lights even as the two witnesses will be, that many will be saved. So, Lord, we thank you. We praise you. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly for it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Olive Tree Resources.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Dr. David Harrell. © Olive Tree Resources. Website: olivetreeresources.org