

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 12.5.2021

## THE TWO WITNESSES - Part 3

### I. INTRODUCTION

**MAIN POINT:** The faithful witnessing Church will share not only in Christ's suffering and death, but also in His resurrection and exaltation.

#### **Revelation 11:7-13**

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, 8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, 10 and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. 11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. 13 And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

- **Two Metaphors — Four Scenes**
- The **First Metaphor** is that of the **Temple of God** and the **Holy City**
- The **Second Metaphor** is that of the **Two Witnesses**.
- **Scene 1** - The **Spiritual Protection** of the Church (1-2)
- **Scene 2** - The **Invincible Proclamation** of the Church (3-6)
- **Scene 3** - The **Satanic Persecution** of the Church (7-10)
- **Scene 4** - The **Inestimable Prize** of the Church (11-13)

### II. THE SATANIC PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

- Jesus is the faithful witness that we emulate. His life and death are the paradigm for us to follow if we are to be faithful witnesses.
- The recurring pattern of witness and suffering in Revelation:
  - Ch 1 - John calls Jesus "the faithful witness" (1:4) and he is exiled on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9).
  - Ch 2 - Antipas is a martyr because he is a faithful witness for Jesus (2:13).
  - Ch 3 - Jesus' greeting to the church in Laodicea, he calls himself "the faithful and true witness (3:14).
  - Ch 6 - The souls of the martyrs in the opening of the 5th seal are those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne (6:9).

- Ch 12 - The dragon makes war on those who hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17).
- Ch 17 - The harlot is said to be drunk with the blood of the saints, the martyrs for Jesus (17:6).
- Ch 20 - John sees the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus. (20:4).
- You can't miss the recurring pattern set forth in this apocalyptic letter, the saints witness, the saints suffer.
- Witness, Greek (μάρτυς) 'martyrs'
- This is where we get our English word 'martyr'.
- It originally meant witness, and as faithful witnesses were killed as a consequence of their witness, the word became synonymous with the ultimate sacrifice one made in their witness for Christ.

## 1. THE CHURCH FINISHES HER MISSION

- *"And when they have finished their testimony..."* (11:7).
- The Church has a commission that lasts for the 1,260 days, the time of tribulation, otherwise called the church age, between the resurrection and ascension of Christ and His second coming (11:3).
- It is the same time in which she is not exempt from persecution as we see in 11:2, where the nations will trample the holy city for 42 months.
- So the length of time that the Church is divinely commissioned to witness is the same length of the time that the Church will live with relentless persecution and martyrdom.
- Despite all of the opposition the Church will face, the mission will be accomplished.
- Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).
- Christ is building his church, his kingdom is advancing. Nothing can stop the forward progress and growth of Christ's church.
- The Great Commission will have a great fulfillment.
- However, when that time is complete, the end is near and it will appear as if the church is overcome, conquered, and killed.
- When does that happen? When the goal of the church has been reached, the beast will rise from the bottomless pit.
- Remember that this assault upon the church is appointed by God.
- The beast that rises is under the sovereign control and rule of Almighty God.
- The witness of the church will not be interrupted by the arrival of the beast, the beast will conquer her only when the work is finished.
- When will that be? At the end of history just prior to the return of the Lord.
- Jesus said, *"this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations and then the end will come"* (Matt. 24:14)
- The way John expresses it in this vision, *"when they have finished their testimony..."*, is exactly what the Lord tells the martyrs in 6:11 in response to their pleas for God to judge and avenge their blood, the Lord tells them to *"rest until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete"*.
- They will be vindicated when that time of consummation has come.

## 2. THE CHURCH'S APPARENT DEFEAT

- We will see more of the beast in ch.13 but this is the first time he is mentioned in Revelation. John assumes his readers understand who the beast is.
- John says this beast will make war on the two witnesses and he will conquer them and kill them.

- We see the parallel of this in 12:17 as the dragon makes war with the offspring of the women, who are those who hold to the testimony of Jesus.
- In 13:7 we see that the beast was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.
- This is an evil attempt to wipe the church off of the face of the earth.
- Now this doesn't mean that the beast only emerges at the end of the age to make war on the saints.
- We have been at war, the powers of darkness are arrayed against the Church even now, to try to destroy her.
- But this will be the culmination of the epic war between the wicked world and the witnessing Church of Jesus Christ.
- It means that his activity of hostility against the saints will intensify to the point where the church will seem obliterated.

### 3. WHO IS THE BEAST?

- The imagery comes from Daniel's vision of the four beasts in Daniel 7.
- The beast in Daniel represents an evil king and kingdom which persecutes the saints of God.
- Daniel 7:21-22 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.
- Daniel 7:25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.
- The beast makes war on the saints, wears out the saints, for a time, times, and half a time (42 mos. / 1260 days).
- He conquers the people of God, until the Ancient of Days comes and and the saints possess the kingdom.
- The beast as we will see, is any and all world powers that oppress and persecute the people of God. Whether it be a king, the head of state, an evil dictator, as G.K. Beale describes in his commentary, the beast is "*the system of spiritual evil standing behind the nations and manifesting itself in successive world empires.*"
- What seems likely then is that John is describing a time at the end of the age of the witnessing church, where the hostility of the world, governed by these demonic forces operating behind the scenes, perhaps the final antichrist, will be given a time to bring about the seeming annihilation of the church on earth.
- The man of lawlessness that will be revealed prior to the return of the Lord (2Thess 2:1-12).
- Rev. 20:7 at the end of the millennium, the church age, where Satan will be loosed for a time to gather the nations for battle against Jesus Christ.
- It's all pointing to the same thing, this time right before Jesus returns and it will appear as if the church has been killed.

### 4. THE GREAT CITY

- The imagery of the slain bodies being left on the street to be gawked at and the refusal to bury the bodies means that the world will be mocking the church, treating her with contempt and indignity. There is no greater shame in the ancient world than to not bury a body after death.
- Their bodies are said to lie on the street of the great city that is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.
- In Revelation, every time that phrase "great city" is used, it is referring to Babylon (Rev. 16:19; 17:18; Ch18).

- Babylon was the wicked empire that took God's people into captivity.
- "*Where there Lord was crucified*", that is Jerusalem which is likened to Babylon in that signifies the rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah.
- Sodom and Egypt as cities representing evil, wickedness, ungodliness, the oppression of God's people, and the worst kinds of depravity.
- One commentator said that Babylon "*is no city and it is every city.*"
- Every great city opposed to God, opposed to the holy city, the church, is Babylon.
- The great city vs the holy city.
- All of humanity belongs to one of these two cities.
- What determines which city you belong to is your relationship to Jesus Christ.

## 5. CELEBRATION OVER THE DEATH OF THE CHURCH

- The corpses of Christ followers littering the streets around the world will fill unbelievers with glee and delight.
- Why will they celebrate?
- V10 they will rejoice because these two witnesses had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.
- The prophetic witness of the Church is seen as torment by the unbelieving world.
- There is no neutrality where the gospel is concerned.
- The preaching of the gospel is life to those who are being saved but it is torment to those who are perishing.
- The world wants the church to suffer the same fate as her Savior—death!

## III. THE INESTIMABLE PRIZE OF THE CHURCH

- The elation over the death of the witnessing church is short-lived and premature.
- It's only for 3 1/2 days—an interrupted 7.
- The church will look as if she was slain, just like the Lamb.
- We see again the paradigm of Christ's suffering and subsequent exaltation and the church emulating that model.
- Just like Christ's death was interrupted, the church's apparent death will be interrupted.
- The church will be raised up just like Jesus and will ascend, just like Jesus.
- The language here comes straight out of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ez. 37).
- Ezekiel 37:5 "*...I will cause breath to enter you...*"
- Ezekiel 37:10 "*...and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet...*"
- The church will receive her inestimable prize—vindication, resurrection, glorification.

## 1. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

- "***Come up here!*** And they **went up to heaven in a cloud...**"
- This seems to indicate that this rapture of the saints will be in **full view of the world!**
- This seems to indicate that it will not be a secret rapture of the church.
- We know that from the response, "*great fear fell on those **who saw them...***"
- The church will be raised to receive her prize, she will be fully vindicated in the sight of those who thought they had permanently destroyed her.

- **1 Thess. 4:16-17** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.
- Do you see the parallels here between the saints and the Savior?
- He ascended in a cloud, we'll be caught up to be with him in the clouds.
- The vindication of the Church will be witnessed by all!

## 2. FINAL JUDGMENT—THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

- V13 says that at the very hour in which the church is vindicated there is the outpouring of judgment. *“A great earthquake, a tenth of the city fell, seven thousand were killed in the earthquake.”*
- V14 says that the second woe has passed so this is the beginning of final judgment.
- A tenth is a tithe; 7,000 is an allusion to Elijah and the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1Kings 19:18).
- Both numbers have to do with a remnant.
- This is a remnant of unbelieving humanity tasting the first fruits of final judgment after the church is vindicated and is raised to receive her reward.
- This judgment results in those who were not killed to be terrified and many to recognize the reality of God and his power.
- The event immediately following the church receiving her inestimable prize is the 7th trumpet sounding.
- What John sees next is the third woe, the 7th trumpet.
- In the first vision in this interlude, the angel declares *“that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled.”* (Rev. 10:7)
- Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”
- With the final trumpet blast the kingdom of Christ is fully made manifest to the world.
- John hears the worship of heaven as the twenty-four elders fall on their faces saying,
- *“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”*(Rev. 11:17-18)
- **Psalms 2:1-2**, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed...”
- This Psalm is the backdrop for the heavenly worship of the twenty-four elders.
- What the psalmist saw far off into the future, John sees now at hand.
- The 7th trumpet blasts and the long awaited and anticipated messianic kingdom prophesied in the OT has finally come.
- This third parallel cycle of symbolic visions closes with the victory of God’s people reflected by how the chapter begins and ends with the temple.
- **Revelation 11:1** Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those

who worship there,

- **Revelation 11:19** Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.
  - **First**, a reminder that we are God's temple. We are secure and spiritually protected.
  - Whatever satanic persecution comes against the church, she cannot be harmed until she finishes her task of witnessing.
  - **Second**, we will receive everything that has been promised to us, we will be vindicated and receive our eternal reward.
  - **Third**, it will be a terrible day for those who have rejected Christ. That symbol of the ark will be a symbol of wrath.
- Brothers and sisters, we have a mission that we have been called to. Preach the gospel!
- Let nothing hinder that—you are spiritually protected.
  - Know that we will face persecution, embrace the loss of some kind that comes with being a faithful witness
  - And be fully convinced that on that day, you will be raised up to receive your reward as a faithful witness of Jesus Christ.