

# REVELATION – SERMON 45

## *THE TWO WITNESSES – PART TWO*

Revelation 11:7-13

### INTRODUCTION

- Ignatius (died 111 AD), who was a disciple of the apostle John, wrote, “As the world hates the Christians, so God loves them.”
- He was condemned to death for his testimony of Christ
- We are fast approaching the time when again the slaughter of Christians will bring jubilation to the world’s people
- The “two witnesses” are two literal men who will minister for the first 3½ years of the tribulation
- They bear all the characteristics of Old Testament prophets such as Moses and Elijah
- They appear to fulfil the prophetic role of Elijah prior to the coming of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6), as did John the Baptist (Luke 1:17)
- There are many similarities between Elijah, John the Baptist, and the two witnesses
- The allusion to Zechariah 4 indicates that they will have a similar role to Zerubbabel and Joshua, in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple

- Their role is preparatory – to prepare “a people for his name”, after which Christ “will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David” (Acts 15:13-17)
- To the ungodly, they manifest a graphic foretaste of the eternal judgment that awaits them, giving them “an evident token of perdition” (Philippians 1:28)

## **I. THE FEROCIOUS RAGE OF THE MURDERING PRINCE** (7-9)

### A. They finish their testimony

1. Those who are God’s witnesses (Acts 1:8) cannot be taken from this world until we finish our testimony
2. The devil cannot attack God’s people without God’s permission (Job 1:8-12; Luke 22:31; 1 Peter 5:8)
3. Their ordained work was not “cut short” by the enemy
4. *“Looking up in unceasing prayer to our dear Lord Jesus, I left all in His hands, and felt immortal till my work was done.”* (John G Paton)

### B. The beast

1. This is the first mention of “the beast” (Greek *therion* – a wild animal) in Revelation – this term is used thirty-six times in Revelation
2. The fact that John does not give any description of the beast indicates that he expected his readers to

already be familiar with him from other Scriptures (Daniel 7:2-25; 9:27 ; 11:35-45 ; Mathew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 4:1-6)

3. He ascends from the bottomless pit (cf. 9:1ff; 17:8)
  - a. Geographically he rises from “the sea” (13:1)
  - b. Spiritually he rises from the pit of hell
  - c. This shows the origin of his character and power (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 17:8)
  - d. It may also have reference to his resurrection from the dead (13:3)
4. He is described in some detail in chapter 13, along with another beast, the False Prophet

#### C. The beast’s war against the witnesses

1. War against God and his people is characteristic of the beast (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 6:2; 12:17; 13:7)
2. He is permitted to overcome them for a time (Revelation 11:7)
  - a. Though the saints may for a time *appear* to be overcome through persecution and martyrdom, they are in reality overcomers (Revelation 2:11; 12:11)
  - b. But the beast will be ultimately be overcome by the Lamb (Revelation 17:14; 19:20)

## D. The great city of Jerusalem

1. In Revelation the term “the great city” is used of Babylon (17:18; 18:10,16,18,19), earthly Jerusalem (16:19), and heavenly Jerusalem (21:10)
2. In this case, it is clearly Jerusalem, as it is where “our Lord was crucified”
3. Spiritually called Sodom and Egypt
  - a. On the one hand, it is “the holy city” (11:2), for it where God chose to put his name, and his house (2 Chronicles 6:6; Psalm 48:1-3)
  - b. Yet it is also the place where much wickedness has, and will, take place
  - c. Ezekiel called Jerusalem “the bloody city” (Ezekiel 22:2; 24:6,9)
  - d. Christ made reference to the many prophets killed in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-34)
  - e. Sodom was known for immorality (cf. Deuteronomy 32:32; Isaiah 1:10; 3:9; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49)
  - f. Egypt was known for idolatry

## E. Their bodies unburied

1. All the people of the world will have an interest in what happens to the witnesses
  - a. Their plagues tormented all of them (v.10)
  - b. For all people on earth to “see” their bodies was an impossibility in John’s day, but is now possible with modern technology
2. Jews generally bury their dead within 24 hours
3. To leave a body unburied is the greatest indignity that could be committed on someone (Psalm 79:2-3)

## **II. THE FOUL REJOICING OF THE MALICIOUS PEOPLE** (10)

- A. All the earth dwellers will rejoice
  1. This is the only recorded instance of rejoicing during the tribulation
  2. They celebrate because they hate the light and think they have removed it from them (John 3:19-20)
  3. They celebrate because, like Ahab, they blame God’s messengers for their trouble, instead of their own sin (1 Kings 18:17-18; 21:20)
  4. They celebrate because in silencing the prophets, they think they nullify the message of judgment
- B. They shall send gifts to one another

1. Gift-giving is a demonstration of heightened joy (Nehemiah 8:10-12; Esther 9:19-22)
2. This is more remarkable considering the poverty that most people will be brought to from the judgments of the seals, trumpets and plagues

### **III. THE FEARFUL RESTORATION OF THE MARTYRED PROPHETS (11-13)**

#### **A. The resurrection of the martyrs**

1. After 3½ days, the world will behold these dead men come to life and stand on their feet
2. It is by the Spirit of God, who is the Author of life, that their bodies are brought back to life (Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Romans 8:11)
3. They are called up to heaven (cf. 4:1) and ascended in a cloud (cf. Acts 1:9)
4. This ascension is similar to Elijah's as well as those who are raptured at the coming of the Lord (2 Kings 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:17)

#### **B. The reaction of the world**

1. Just as all the world saw their death, so too they will see their quickening
2. Their mirth will turn to fear

3. This will be a clear demonstration of the power of God over the beast and Satan

### C. The great earthquake

1. There are numerous earthquakes in Revelation (6:12; 8:5; 11:13,19; 16:18)
2. A tenth of Jerusalem falls, and 7,000 are killed
3. The survivors “were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven”
  - a. This description would indicate a genuine conversion
  - b. To “give glory to God” describes those who belong to him, as opposed to the ungodly who do “not give him glory” (14:7; 16:9)
  - c. These converts seem to be Jews in Jerusalem who have come to faith in the Messiah (Zechariah 12:10-14; Romans 11:25-27)

## CONCLUSION

1. It is astonishing that despite all the wonders performed by the two witnesses, that most people will still reject God
2. Today, man has ample evidence of God all around him, yet chooses to reject him

3. This is a demonstration of man's spiritual blindness (2 Corinthians 4:4), and his wilful rejection of him (Romans 1:21)
4. It is only by God's intervention that we can receive light and see and understand spiritual truth (1 Corinthians 2:14)
5. Because of this blindness, we should not be surprised that the world will hate those who preach the truth (Galatians 4:16)
6. It seems evil often prevails in the world
7. Yet it is only by God's permission and only for a season
8. Though it may appear that Satan wins some battles, we know that in the end, God wins the war, and righteousness will be victorious