

The Two Witnesses (Part 7)

Their Death and Resurrection (Conclusion)

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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In the last sermon, we discussed mainly just one verse—Revelation 11:6. That whole sermon pretty much concentrated on the two plagues that are mentioned there. That is, (1) the lack of rain and (2) the water to blood. We also talked about their very clear connection to the ministries of Elijah and Moses, as only those two are shown doing those particular plagues or curses.

We saw that God often decrees drought or lack of rain as a punishment for idolatry. And that was specifically the sin that Israel was guilty of in the time of Elijah, which was emphasized by the 400 prophets of Baal and of Ashtheroth. We also saw that turning the water to blood was the first plague that struck Egypt. It seems to be a punishment for obstinate rebellion against God. It's a sign of death and defilement.

Any one of us who has blood on his hands feels dirty, feels sick, feels awful. The expression itself—blood on your hands—has to do with murder. You are guilty of a sin. So they all seem to fit together with those plagues. Idolatry and rebellion, of course, will certainly be evident when the Two Witnesses preach. These two particular plagues will point that out very significantly.

Then we briefly discussed the various pairs of prophets that God has used down through history, who could be considered types for these two witnesses. Because the testimony of two or three witnesses is necessary to establish a matter, God has frequently used pairs of men in order to make it clear that this is the truth. This is what is going to happen, and it has God's stamp of approval on it. And, of course, in Israel the necessary amount of proof that was needed to convict was two or three witnesses; and God follows this in His own operations.

So, we saw the pairs of men like Moses and Aaron, and later Moses and Joshua. We saw that Joshua and Eleazar worked together when the conquest of the land was going on. We saw that in the time of Judah's downfall there were actually three prophets; and there were probably one and two others as well, at the same time. But most significantly we have Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. In three different places, they are making very similar prophecies or doing very similar things—to make sure that the plan of God moved on, and that we have a record of it (a prophecy of it) so that we could follow how God is working. And there was also Zerubbabel and Joshua.

In the New Testament we have John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Although they did not work together, John the Baptist's testimony was certainly witnessed also by Jesus Christ. They had very similar ministries and were able to emphasize one another's words. Jesus sent out the disciples two by two. We saw that John and James, the sons of Zebedee, are a pair that is shown in the Bible. Peter and John, in the first part of the book of Acts, went around together as the leading two apostles at the time. Barnabas and Saul were sent out together as a pair of apostles to the Gentiles. And there are probably others that I did not go over. But we see the

pattern there of "two by two."

However, we saw from the eternal evidence though—from Revelation 11—that the most likely pair of types never worked together. They were actually 500 years apart, or so. That is, Moses and Elijah. Their lives, or their works, are what are pointed to in Revelation 11: 5-6 concerning fire proceeding from their mouth and devouring their enemies, and also the drought and the water to blood. So it seems like the primary types of the Two Witnesses are these two men—Moses and Elijah—with bits and pieces of the others thrown in for good measure.

What you come down to is that the Two Witnesses fulfill many of the prophetic types. You might call them *the ultimate definitive prophets*. Everything that God wants to see in a prophet will be fulfilled in these Two Witnesses. Of course, they are not "the Prophet." The Prophet, from Deuteronomy, is obviously Jesus Christ. He was Himself modeled after Moses—as it says, "A prophet like unto you." So Moses is certainly a prototype prophet. And the Two Witnesses will be a lot like him and Elijah. They are going to be what the world needs, exactly when it needs it; and they will do the work.

Okay, that was all the review I'm going to do. Now we are going to gallop through these last few verses—from Revelation 11: 7-14. Hopefully I'll have time at the end to summarize what we've learned from this much-too-long series of seven sermons. So, let's take it verse by verse.

Revelation 11:7 When they [the Two Witnesses] finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

The previous four verses—from verse 3 to verse 6—covered the whole of their 3½ year ministry. It didn't tell us a great deal of detail, except that they'll have this *carte blanche* power to protect themselves from harm throughout this 3½ years. Also, they will have a great deal of power in determining what sort of curse, miracle, or what have you to put on the people to emphasize their words.

This tells us that they *finish* their testimony. Herbert Armstrong very frequently said that God always allows His servants to complete their work. They always do what it is that God wants them to do. They get it done—without exception. God doesn't just leave something hanging. He's a very thorough and complete God. When He sends somebody to do a work, He gives them the ability, the gifts, and the means to make sure all the situations are right so that they do finish it before they die. I think we can see this in many cases throughout the Bible and throughout the history of the church.

This word *finish* means: complete or fulfill. Either one of those words are fine. I think that maybe the best one is the word: *accomplish*. They will accomplish their testimony. That gives the idea of being filled and complete in itself. They will do what God asks of them, and it will take exactly 1260 days. God always finishes on time when it comes to the fulfillment of His purpose. He is very meticulous about that sort of thing. If He says it's going to take 1260 days, then it's going to take 1260 days; and that's all it needs—no more, no less.

Here we have, believe it or not, the first mention in the book of Revelation of the Beast. Now,

what's so strange about this is that we are already in chapter 11 of the book, and the Beast hasn't been mentioned at all. In fact, he doesn't really get described until two chapters later in Revelation 13. But we have to remember that this is NOT part of the chronological flow of the book. This is an inset chapter. And in reality the Beast has been active, on the scene, doing his thing, for the whole length of their ministry. He doesn't suddenly pop up at the end and kill them—like the world has finally found a champion to match the Two Witnesses. He has actually been their adversary the whole time, and been doing his work.

This word *beast* is very interesting. It is the Greek word *theerion*. It's not the normal word for "beast" or "creature." If you go back to chapter 4, it talks about the living creatures. That's *zoon*. It simply means living creature, an animal, a creature that breathes and has life. But *theerion* means *wild beast*. It emphasizes their wildness, their bestiality, their non- or un-domestication. This Beast is NOT a tamed beast. It's something that is on the scene, and it is totally removed from the way God is. God is never described in a wild, haphazard fashion. This is on the far end, or the other end, of the spectrum from God—totally wild and unpredictable. So there is a definite contrast here between the living creatures that are mentioned elsewhere. This is definitely not a domesticated type person.

Daniel 11:36-39 Then the king [meaning the king of the north, which we believe to be a type of the Beast at the end; and this is describing his actions] shall do according to his own will. [There you have it. This is a wild man, who wants to do only what he wants to do.] He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god [That's a pretty wild action.], shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt [magnify] himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses [He's a very militaristic type of person.]; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.

This is an ambitious, violent, wild man—as he is described here in Daniel 11, and as Revelation 11 also makes note of. If you want to write down Revelation 13:1-8, his actions are also talked about there—as well as Revelation 17:8-14, where it talks about the ten kings that are given power with him for a time and how he goes to war against God's people and against God Himself (Jesus Christ).

So this is the enemy—the one that these two witnesses are face to face with in the ring, so to speak. They are the opponents. And so God puts up His human champions, and they go blow for blow against the Beast. God's champions are no less powerful, no less up to the challenge, than Satan's champion.

The next word we need to look at here in Revelation 11:7 is *ascends*. I just want to bring this up because it's very interesting in comparison. We'll see that there's a comparison with the Beast and the Two Witnesses throughout this section that we are looking at here. In verse 12, you'll see that the Two Witnesses ascend to heaven. They go from this middle area here on earth (And you'll know why I use that term in a minute.) up to heaven. But it says that the Beast ascends out of the bottom, up to the middle area; and that's as high as he'll go. He ascends out of bottomless pit, in order to wreak as much damage as possible—specifically upon God's people and upon God's plan.

So we have a comparison here—a contrast—between the Two Witnesses and the Beast. The Two Witnesses are of such a quality that they go from earth to heaven; and the Beast comes out of the bottomless pit (which is the ultimate of depths) only up to earth, in order to wreak destruction. I'll point out these contrasts as we go. But I thought that was interesting. By the way, in both places *ascends* is the same word.

Out of the bottomless pit identifies the Beast's source—his origins and his inspiration. In Revelation 9:11, we'll see that this has been mentioned before. This is part of the fifth trumpet, the first woe; and talking about this army that had come, it says:

Revelation 9:11 And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

This obviously identified Satan the Devil, as the king—the angel of the bottomless pit. So you see the origin, then, of the Beast. He's a descendant—a child of—Satan the Devil. He traces his lineage to Satan. Not literally! I don't want you to get that impression. But he would definitely call Satan his 'father' in a spiritual way.

Now this word *bottomless pit*. I think the best way we can look at it is the word abyss. He ascends out of the abyss. Literally this word means "the bottomless" or "the deep." Actually the word "pit" is not there. It's been supplied by the translators, because how else do you explain something like this? It's like a great hole. But it's really just "the bottomless."

And now you have this contrast again. God is the God of the infinite heaven. And here Satan is the king over the bottomless—over the deep. So you have this contrast of up and down, highs and lows, light and darkness. What we are showing here is totally diametric opposites. The Two Witnesses and the Beast, and God and Satan. They are just poles apart. Two ends of the spectrum, you might say.

The next thing here is that the Beast will make war against them. This is the normal word for *war*, but it has a spectrum of meaning. It can go all the way from actually doing battle with, or making war (like armies would make war), all the way to a quarrel between two people. What I think then is that what we have here is a specific use of the general term, to show that this war is going to be fought on many fronts and in many different ways. We'll have real war and fights against them, battles. We'll have strife of one thing or another. We'll have disputes, verbal war, and quarrels—all trying to defeat, in some way, the Two Witnesses in their witness.

So let's not look at this merely as lobbing grenades, or fighting with swords or machine guns, or whatever. This is going to be an all out assault—by whatever means are at the Beast's disposal—to try to put these two down.

The next word is *overcome*. This is *nikao*. This is the word that is derived from the god Nike, which is the god of victory; and that's what the word means—to be victorious, or to conquer. It's the same word, believe it or not, that is used in Revelation 2 and 3 in the phrase "he who overcomes." So it is correctly translated here as "the Beast will overcome them." It means, "be victorious over them." There will come a time, at the end of the 3½ years, when the Beast will seem to win—to have the victory.

The next verb in here is *kill*. This is the general word for kill, *apokteino*; and it literally means "kill, extinguish, or abolish." This is a literal death. It can't be taken any other way. These are real people, and they really die. What we see here then, using these three verbs indicates a process—or a plan—in the Beast's mind. He wants to silence them and he'll set about systematically to do it.

He'll oppose. He'll conquer. And he'll kill. They'll vex him throughout his rule. They'll distract him from what he's trying to do. That will frustrate him to no end. And he will systematically go about putting them out of commission. God will not allow it until the 1260 days are accomplished, because He has a job for them to do. He says right here in His Word—which is the more sure word—that they are going to finish their work. So the Beast can just go to twiddle his thumbs for all God cares, for these 1260 days.

Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

This may be the most controversial verse in this entire sermon today; and it's strange, because there's no controversy with me. There's probably no controversy with you. But the commentators all want to say that this city that we are talking about here is Rome. They are looking at it mostly from a Protestant perspective, where Rome is the bad guy all the time. The popes are always the antichrist, and they cannot see how this could be Jerusalem. They make all kinds of convoluted arguments to say that this is not Jerusalem. But it is Jerusalem!

I'll get to that in a minute, but first I want to go over the phrase "*dead bodies*." This is a really strange thing. It literally is *fallen*. And it's singular. It's really strange. This word—literally, "fallen"—came to mean (in Greek) a corpse or dead body. And so it is correctly translated here "dead body." It's singular.

Why God would inspire John to write a singular "body" (rather than two) is unknown. That's why I said it's weird. It's strange. But I came up with two reasons as to why this could be singular. The first would be that they fall as one. That is, in whatever manner that they are killed by the Beast, it happens to both at the same time. So their bodies fall 'as one' to the street—whether they are both killed with bullets at the same time; they are both beheaded at the same time; crucified at the same time—it doesn't say what means of death accomplishes

that. But that is one way of looking at it—that they fall 'as one.'

The other thing is a more spiritual way of looking at it. That is, that God considers them as one one—as a team. They are so united in everything that they do that God looks on them almost like one person—or as a unit, you might say. But it's kind of a strange thing. And what makes it stranger is that it is used in the singular one more time, and then the next time it is used it is plural.

The word *street* here is literally broad place. The dead bodies *lie* in the street. Actually, that word *lie* is not in the text. So it is "their dead bodies in the street." There's no verb in this sentence actually. The translators have had to add one. So it could be that the Greek word for "fallen" was supposed to kind of supply the verb here—that their fallen bodies are in the street (or, "fallen bodies in the street"). I don't know. There's no verb here. But the street here is a broad place.

I don't know how accurate this is. It's only conjecture. But some have conjectured that it means a courtyard—as in the courtyard of the temple, or a courtyard of some holy place. It will be a place where there are cameras galore, so that all this can be recorded. And who knows, their death may even be arranged for that particular media. But they will be executed publicly, so they would use a large place like a courtyard to do that.

The next word here is *great city*. This is where the controversy starts—that wherever this is, it is called "the great city." The Bible, believe it or not, does not call Jerusalem a great city very often. But it is called a large city, meaning "great," in Nehemiah 7: 4. It is specifically called a great city in Jeremiah 22: 8 and Lamentations 1: 1 (talking about the widows of the great city lamenting). And, believe it or not, here in Revelation it is called the great city one time; but it is one of those places in the Bible that are disputed, because there are certain texts that do not have "the great city." They have "the holy city." So these commentators wonder whether that should be used at all as proof that we are talking about Jerusalem here.

However, on the other side of the coin, the "great city" is used almost all the time in the book of Revelation to mean Babylon. Let's just go to a couple of them.

Revelation 14:8 "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city..."

Revelation 16:19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.

Revelation 17:18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 18:10 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!'

Revelation 18:16 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen...

Revelation 18:18 ...and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

Revelation 18:19 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had

ships on the sea became rich...'

Revelation 18:21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down."

That is why a lot of commentators think that this allusion to a great city means Babylon—because it is so frequently called a great city in the book of Revelation. However, the descriptors that come on after that all point to Jerusalem. It couldn't be any place else.

But before we get there, the word *spiritually* comes up. Some have translated it allegorically. Others have translated it prophetically. But it means "spiritually." It is *pneumatikos*, which means "spiritually." That's the same word that is translated in a different form as *pneuma*—as in *Hagios Pneuma*, which is the Holy Spirit. So the word *phenumatikos* means "spiritually." So we should look at this from a spiritual perspective. What it may be referring to is the city's spiritual state. That's obviously what it means. We should look at this from a spiritual perspective.

It calls it two names: Sodom and Egypt. With *Sodom*, the first thing that comes to mind is perversion. Sodom has been known throughout history, since it was overthrown, as the center of immorality and unrighteousness—and specifically homosexuality and other sex sins. *Egypt* is a symbol of opposition to God, or we could say oppression of God's people, or idolatry, or of worldliness. That is, the world as opposed to God. So what we see here is a city that spiritually has these hallmarks of *perversion of everything that is good* and of *opposition to God*.

And then it says, "where our Lord was crucified." There's only one place where Jesus Christ was crucified, and that was Jerusalem. You should see the loops, and hoops, and mental gymnastics that the commentators go through in order to try to make this fit Rome. They don't want to take the Bible at its word. That it means, "where the Lord was crucified"—Jerusalem! But they say "More Christians have been killed in Rome, so it's just like killing Jesus Christ afresh every time one of His people are martyred." That's one of the normal explanations that they give.

Why don't they just read the Bible? *Where our Lord was crucified* means Jerusalem. So what we see here is that, at the time the armies encompass Jerusalem, the city is no longer called "the holy city." It has nothing to do with God. It is a city of the world. It is a city of blasphemy, of perversion, of being diametrically opposite or opposed to the way of God. So there's no reason to consider this any other place other than the city of Jerusalem. If you can come up with an argument, fine. But it's going to take a good one to convince me that it's not Jerusalem.

Revelation 11:9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies [That's the next singular one.] three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies [plural] to be put into graves.

It's just kind of a weird way of writing. It wouldn't have gotten past my desk like this. I would have corrected it and made them all plural. But God had something in mind when He did this.

He wanted us to get this point of unity, possibly. I don't know what; but maybe He wanted us to see that it was "two in one," as it were. It's interesting. I'm just talking off the top of my head here, but it may be a reference to God and Jesus Christ. They are united in spirit. They are united in Their work. But They are two distinct Persons. So, take that for what it's worth. As I said, it's coming off the top of my head.

Also remember that I've mentioned throughout this series that the Two Witnesses have a great deal of connection with Jesus Christ Himself, and with God. There could be some sort of typology here, but I'm probably reaching for it. So I don't want to put too much emphasis on that. I just mention it as a possibility.

"Those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies." This really confused commentators up until about 1940 or '50, because they did not understand how the whole world would be able to see dead bodies in Jerusalem. So they kind of scratched their heads and thought of it as something that was just a mystery. Well, now we know. Television makes it possible for us to see anything that happens, anywhere on earth. So with the modern technological advancements over just a little more than the last half century, we have Bible prophecy fulfilled in a way.

I've mentioned that the dead body and the dead bodies in this verse are singular and plural. I still shake my head over that one. But the next thing is *not allow*. These people do not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. This is the ultimate in disrespect and desecration. Let's go back to Amos 2, and I just want to pick up one verse here; and just show you how much God is against this sort of thing. That's why it's mentioned here in Revelation 11. In Amos 2, He's going through the judgment on the nations that are surrounding Israel and Judah.

Amos 2:1 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment [meaning, I will punish], because he [that is, the king of Moab] burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime."

He evidently dug up the grave, or dug up the dead body. Then, in the sight of the defeated Edomites, he burned the bones of one of their kings. This is so heinous a crime—to defile the dead—that God says, "Just for that, I'm going to come and wipe you out." (Or, do whatever He needed to do to Moab.) It was a terrible thing for a nation to do against the king of another nation—even though he had been dead for who knows how many years. So God is very much against that sort of desecration.

Now, not allowing the body to be buried—more specifically it means to be put into a tomb. It doesn't mean in a grave necessarily. They are talking about a tomb here. It reminds me very much of what the Italians did in World War II. They strung up the body of Mussolini for public show. Who knows—it may be a bunch of Italians again that do this? I don't know if there's anything particular about their way of looking at life and their mindset. I don't know.

It's been thought in the past that these particular Italians—the Gentiles—are from Babylon. That is, that they are Babylonians that migrated from the area of Babylon to Italy. They made up the

priestly caste there; and that wouldn't be surprising to me, if God worked it that way. I'm probably getting myself in a hole here, and making Italians hate me. But that's not my purpose. It just seems that these things happen at regular intervals, and the same people tend to repeat the same mistakes.

So I just wonder if these [people] will be Babylonians who have come down through the centuries in their same opposition to God, and do this heinous thing against two of God's servants. So let's use the word "Babylonians." That'd be a lot better. It's hard to know who's who anyway these days. It's a wonder—just a question mark in my head—that maybe these same people will be doing that sort of thing again.

Revelation 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Now, here in the same verse is *those who dwell on the earth*. It's a formulaic expression in the book of Revelation. And it simply means those who want nothing to do with God, or the worldly. Maybe the easiest way to define it would be simply the carnal, or the fleshly. If you'll flip back to Colossians 3, we'll see the opposite of this.

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

So there's a definite distinction between those who are godly (those who seek those things which are above) and those who dwell on the earth. Those who dwell on the earth are those who have no higher desire. That is, no higher *spiritual desire*. They are perfectly happy here with their life on the earth. And anybody who wants to tell them about the truth just gets the cold shoulder. They have their minds set on things of the earth.

Here's another set of three verbs—rejoice, make merry, and send gifts. You could say that they are going to be joyful; they are going to celebrate; and they are going to make a holiday out of it by sending gifts to each other. All this action that they take at the death of the Two Witnesses grows out of a sense of relief, it says, that their problems have been solved. "*Happy days are here again,*" in other words.

They'll be so happy that these, who have been thorns in their sides, have been defeated—been killed—that they'll just have pretty much a wild celebration, maybe for the whole 3 ½ days. They are just going to be so glad that these men who tormented them (as they think of it) are dead and finally out of their hair. And their supposed 'heaven on earth' can now go on. But it's the wrong 'heaven on earth.' It's actually the abyss on earth! But they don't know it, because they've been deceived.

The word *tormented* here is the same word that is found in Revelation 20:10.

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the

lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were.
And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

That's the same word—tormented. Satan and his demons will indeed be tormented. What the Two Witnesses did to the people of the earth at this time was NOT torment, but that's how it felt to these people. This meant torture. That's its strongest meaning. It can mean vex (which is a kind of irritation). It can mean harassment, or distress, or question (as in you question someone, or interrogate them, under duress). Probably the most interesting of the definitions of this word is test. They were "tested" by these two prophets, and they didn't pass. They thought the tests were torture, and they did not change at all. We see that in their actions here. They rejoice at their deaths.

I just want you to notice that the Two Witnesses are called "two prophets." They are not called apostles. They are not called ministers. They are called prophets, and that's the way their work seems to go. They do the prophetic type of work, rather than an apostolic type of work. There are overlaps to the two types of work, but God seems to emphasize the prophetic one.

Revelation 11:11 Now after the three-and-a-half days...

I should mention here that the 3½ days of their death—lying in the street—corresponds very well with Jesus' time in the tomb. (We are only off by a half-day.) He was dead for 3 days—exactly 72 hours. These will be dead 84 hours. Remember that I said there are tie-ins here