

A Short-lived Celebration

Revelation 11.7-14

March 09, 2025

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,

The Abyss:

- Means a deep hole, so deep it appears bottomless and immeasurable
 - Often used in modern contexts to describe the sea
 - In the Bible and in Jewish theology, often a metaphorical reference to the place of evil spirits.
 - The Legion of demons begged Jesus not to order them to go into the Abyss" (Lk.8.31).
 - The Abyss is obviously a place that the demons fear and try to avoid.
- Referred to as a place of confinement for evil spirits awaiting final judgment.
 - **Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended.** Revelation 20:1–3

The beast:

- Not likely the star fallen from heaven who was given the keys to the pit (Rev.9.1)
- Can represent the world powers seeking to silence the Christian witness
- This one rises from the pit, an agent to do Satan's bidding
 - **The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false...** 2 Thess.2.9-11

The conquer and murder of the witnesses:

- Comes "when they have finished their testimony," not one second before – God is in control!
- Certainly what has needed to be heard/revealed has been declared leaving rebellious man without excuse:
 - **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.**

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Rm.1.18-19

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,

For those believing the witnesses are literally two prophets:

- The great city is Jerusalem (where their Lord was crucified)
- The three and a half days are 84 hours
- The tribes and nations will gaze through modern media (tv, internet, etc.)

For those following the symbolic view which interprets the slaying of the witnesses as the satanic opposition to the gospel throughout the present age:

- The great city is the world opposing the gospel
 - Symbolically called Sodom for its sexual abominations and idolatrous sin (called Babylon in Rev.17)
 - Also called Egypt for its harsh treatment of God's people and its heard-hearted rejection of the gospel
- The three and a half days symbolize a short (in relation to eternity) period of time, under God's control
- The gazing tribes and nations are those opposed to the gospel throughout the ages who have gloated over the perceived demise of the church

...refuse to let them be placed in a tomb

- Demonstrates the scorn and contempt of the world toward God's people

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.

Demonstrates the world's attitude toward the witnesses be they prophets or the church.

- They don't want to hear about their sin and their need:
 - **He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.** Jn.1.10-11
 - **In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** 2 Cor.4.4

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.

Resurrected!

- The witnesses (prophets and/or the church) cannot remain defeated as our God is a victorious God!
 - **As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 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.**
Dan.7.21-22

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.

Rapture!

- The witnesses (prophets and/or the church) ascend to heaven in the same manner as the Lord:
 - **And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.** Acts 1.9
 - **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. 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.** 1 Thess.4.16-17
- The ascension/rapture occurs between the 6th and 7th trumpets indicating the Lord's return is nigh.
- This amazing event is witnessed by the enemies of the gospel; there can no longer be any doubt!

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.

Corresponding to the ascension of the saints is the judgment of God on the rebellious

- **Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.** Nahum 1.6-8

Many are killed but the rest give glory to God

- Do some yet receive salvation? The 7th trumpet has yet to blow.

- Regardless, they all acknowledge the Lord and His Sovereignty:
- **Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** Phil.2.9-11

¹⁴ The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

Can the Church eventually be stamped out before the Lord's return?

Over two hundred years ago, the French Deist Voltaire scoffed at the Bible and hoped that he was living in the twilight of Christianity, but a century later, the very house where Voltaire once lived in Geneva was the home of the Evangelical Society of Geneva and being used as storage site for Bibles. **The Lectio Continua: Revelation, p.321**

God also had the final word during the Great Awakening. Prior to that time... the church appeared to be dying, if not dead, in England. There was little spiritual life left in people who professed to be believers. But then God raised up ...evangelists throughout England and Wales. Through them God breathed life back into the church, and that valley of dead bones began to stand on its feet. "If asked, Son of Man, can these bones live?" (Ezek.37.3), you might have answered, "No way; the church is dead." But God has the final word. He revives and restores His church to give glory to His name. **The Lectio Continua: Revelation, p.321**

A stirring example from recent years is the experience of the gospel in China. In 1940, William Hendriksen wrote his commentary on Revelation, using the example of the defeated church in Communist China as an example of Satan's beast wiping out the Christian witness. Just as the people of world are said to gloat over the corpse of the church, Madame Mao famously announced that Christianity was dead during the cultural revolution of the 1960's. Great numbers of Christians were arrested, executed, or reindoctrinated to Communism. Fifty years later, the church has experienced a resurrection, the gospel sweeping China with a power that has brought as many as a hundred million people to saving faith. After a period of God's design, the church's witness in China arose in power, casting Christ's enemies into confusion and dismay. **Reformed Expository Commentary: Revelation, p.325**