

The Walking Dead Witnesses of the Last Days

Revelation Series #8

Revelation 11

Introduction: In 1979, Billy Graham was doing a crusade in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He wasn't going to be there for the first night or two of the Crusade, and so Layton Ford, who worked with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, was preaching in the crusade before Billy got there.

Billy was obviously the headliner, but he came a day earlier than expected and wanted to experience the crusade incognito. So, he put on a hat and dark glasses and people didn't recognize him, and he sat in the back.

When it came to the invitation time, Billy noticed a man in front of him was really moved by the service, but he was hesitant to go to the altar. So, Billy tapped him on the shoulder and said, "if you want to go to the altar, I will go with you."

And the man looked at Billy and said, "well, no...I think I'm going to do that tomorrow, ...'cause that's when the big gun comes to town.'

How ironic, here is Billy Graham willing to take the man down personally to the altar for salvation, but he's waiting for the big gun to preach.

We are in a series on the book of Revelation, and today, we're going to look at two big guns that make their appearance during the tribulation. I'm calling this message, **The Walking Dead Witnesses of the Last Days**

The bible speaks of a future time called the tribulation. It will be a period of seven years. The first three and a half years will see peace in the Middle East as the Antichrist comes to power. We saw the first six seals have been broken and with their breaking we have seen war, death, destruction, and calamity on an unprecedented scale. Those on the earth during this time will think surely the end has come. But with the opening of the seventh seal, we are ushered into another period of judgment introduced by the blowing of seven trumpets.

When the seventh trumpet is blown there follows seven bowls of even greater judgment poured out upon this earth.

You do not want to go through the tribulation.

During these 7-years, we don't know exactly when, but two witnesses will appear. Warren Wiersbe thinks it will be during the beginning of the tribulation. But the bible says some interesting things about these two witnesses, these two mighty men of God. So, turn with me to Revelation, chapter 11.

1I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. 2But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

In the previous lesson we looked at Revelation 11:1-2, which dealt with the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem on its original site. This temple is being planned now. Many Jews leave funds in their wills to go toward the rebuilding of the temple. There is also at the present time a rabbinical school in Jerusalem where priests are being trained to minister in the temple in preparation for that time.

If you keep up with happenings in Israel, you might have heard about the five flawless red heifers from Texas that arrived in Israel on September 15, 2022. Many people view this event as a fulfilment of prophecy. Because Numbers 19:1-2 says that red heifer ashes were necessary for the purification rites held at the temple, many have regarded the appearance of a red heifer today as heralding the construction of the third temple.

Here's the picture. The antichrist will come on the scene, and he will sign a peace treaty with the Jewish people, solving the problem of the Middle East. They will rebuild their temple. They will reinstitute their temple worship and sacrifices. Then at the end of that 3 ½ years the antichrist will break that covenant. He will move into the temple and according to Scripture (II Thess. 2:4) he will sit in the temple as God and demand that he be worshipped as God.

Just so you know, the building of this temple will be a repudiation of everything Jesus did on the cross. When Christ died on the cross and said, "It is finished," the Bible says that the veil in Herod's temple was torn in two, from top to bottom signifying that all of it had been completed and fulfilled, and Old Testament sacrifices are no longer required.

Remember: We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

When you look at this 11th chapter you will find that it divides itself into two parts. In the first 13 verses we have scene 1 on EARTH. Then in verse 14-19 we have scene 2 taking place in HEAVEN.

Scene 1 - Earth

3And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth." 5If anyone tries to harm them; fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Here we are introduced to the Two Witnesses, notice...

1. They are clothed in sackcloth.

The word witness in Revelation 11:3 is used to describe persons. Even in the tribulation time God does not leave Himself without a witness in this world. These people are identified as prophets.

Revelation 11:3 says they wear the clothing of a prophet. The Bible says they are clothed in sackcloth. Many times, in the Old Testament, prophets wore sackcloth to give evidence of mourning. They preached that judgment is coming, and sackcloth was a symbol of sorrow because of the sin of the nation.

When King Hezekiah heard that Jerusalem was next on the list for the great Assyrian king Sennacherib's onslaught, "he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD" (2 Kings 19:1).

In Genesis when Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery, they couldn't tell their father that, so they brought him Joseph's coat of many colors dipped in blood, making their dad think he was attacked by a wild animal. The bible says that Jacob tore off his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned many days.

While sackcloth was commonplace at the time John wrote this description, it's been quite a while since the latest sackcloth trends made news at Fashion Week. When these two men show up on the streets of Jerusalem in the Last Days, in their itchy, woven garments, people will take notice.

Sackcloth also signifies repentance. When Jonah went to Nineveh and preached, the people heard that message and the king and the people put on sackcloth and ashes hoping for God's mercy.

In wearing these clothes, it will be obvious to all that the message that these two witnesses are bringing is not one of comfort and joy.

We learn these prophets' ministry lasts for 1,260 days; or 3 and half years, and they are prophesying repentance because the end is coming soon.

Do you feel the sorrow of your sin? When a Christian sins, the Holy Spirit will bring conviction to his heart. Adrian Rodgers said one time that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christina is that a non-Christian leaps into sin and loves it; a Christian falls into sin and loathes it. Which one is true for you?

The are clothed in Sackcloth...

2. They are Spirit-filled and Spirit-led

4They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth."

They have the power of a prophet. Revelation 11:4 indicates that these are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks or lampstands. Zechariah saw the olive trees and the candlesticks.

There have been two temples in Jerusalem. The first temple was known as Solomon's Temple. The second temple was first known as Zerubbabel's Temple, but then became referred to as Herod's Temple after the king greatly expanded it.

Solomon's Temple was destroyed in 586 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar, and most of the Jews in the city were taken captive to Babylon. This captivity took place in three waves. Just as there were three captivities, there were three returns to Jerusalem. The first return was under the direction of Zerubbabel in 538 BC. This group laid the foundation of the temple. Decades later, in 458 BC, a second group returned with Ezra the priest, and restored the worship at the temple. A final assembly came with Nehemiah, to rebuild the walls of the city.

Around the time of the first return, Zechariah had a vision in which an angel showed him a lampstand that was flanked on either side by an olive tree.

Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" 12 Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" 13 He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I said. 14 So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth." (Zechariah 4:11-14, NIV).

Like the two anointed ones in Zerubbabel's time, these two witnesses have been anointed by God to declare the gospel message. Israel was created to be a "light to the Gentiles," and these two witnesses will fulfill that role. Zechariah 4:6 says, ***"It is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord" (NIV).***

The olive trees produce the oil that is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the candlesticks bore the light. So, for a person to be a witness for Christ, they must have the oil of the Holy Spirit to have the light that gives witness of Jesus Christ.

Verses 4-5 indicates that their message will not be popular because they expose the darkness of the Antichrist. Because of that, the world is going to hate them. Not only are they persons and prophets, but notice they are powerful. These men are given the power to devour those who try to kill them.

Look at the power they have. They have the power of drought: They have power to shut heaven, so that it doesn't rain." Then they have the power of death. They have power to turn the waters into blood. Then they have the power of disease "to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." These men have incredible supernatural power as a sign of the truth.

What we learn about these two witnesses is that they are not coming in their own strength, they are coming in the Lord's strength. They are Spirit-filled, and they are Spirit-led. And their ministry is one of power, plagues, and it's one of déjà vu. To quote Yoggi Berra, "It's déjà vu all over again.

You read about these guys, and you think, I've heard about them before.

Elijah the prophet had the power to shut up heaven so that it would not rain (I Kings 17:1). It did not rain in Israel for three and a half years. That is the exact time that these prophets are going to be in power. So the prophet Elijah certainly had the power that it would not rain.

James also references that. Moses had the power to turn waters into blood (Exodus 7:20). That was one of the plagues that God sent on Egypt because they would not let the Israelites go.

But Matthew 17 really nails it down, when, for a moment, the humanity of Jesus was put aside, and His deity was revealed.

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus." Matthew 17:1-3 (NIV)

Moses and Elijah are alive, and in bodies that can be recognized, and they are talking with Jesus. In another passage the Bible tells us that they talked with Jesus about His exodus, about His death. We believe Moses and Elijah were chosen because Moses wrote the law (the first five books of the Bible, the books of the law), and Elijah represents the prophets. These are two great divisions of Old Testament scripture and the most important books to Israel, the law, and the prophets.

Moses (representing the law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) appear and talk with Jesus about His death. Because His death on the cross was the purpose for which He came into the world. He fulfilled the law of God, by living a perfect life; and He fulfilled the prophecy of God by giving Himself on the cross. **So, Moses and Elijah could very well be the Two Witnesses.**

I believe that these two witnesses are going to say that the temple is not valid because the Messiah has already come; therefore, there is no need for sacrifices. Of course, that is going to anger the Jews. Their two great heroes of the Old Testament - Moses, who will preach to them about the law that was fulfilled in Christ; and Elijah, who will preach to them about the prophecy fulfilled in Christ - will vex the Jews on the earth.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the coming of the Messiah the first time; Elijah is going to be the forerunner of Christ coming the second time. Malachi 4:5 prophesies, ***“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.”***

After the church is taken out, it is no longer the Age of Grace; it becomes the Age of Law, and it becomes the age of witness to the Jews for the seventieth week of Daniel. Because the whole purpose of the tribulation is to bring the Jews to the point of salvation in Christ.

Now when it says in verse 5 that fire proceeds from their mouths and destroys their enemies, you can get the idea that they are some kind of fire-breathing person. But that’s not what they are. It’s what Elijah did when they came to arrest him in 2 Kings, chapter 1.

9Then the king sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!' "10Elijah answered the captain, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men." (NIV)

For three and a half years they are preaching and doing miracles to bring people to Christ. And the world is going to hate them. They will try to kill them but can't. No one can harm them as they preach their message.

One thing you need to remember about God in that there is grace even in wrath, Ezekiel 18:32 says, ***"For I have no pleasure in anyone who dies, declares the Lord, therefore repent and live."***

God doesn't want to destroy people. God doesn't want to pour out His wrath. He wants to save. For God so loved the world, He sent... Jesus is a savior. The Lord would much rather see people turn to Him and repent and live.

Even in the darkest of days God is going to have his witness on the earth. During the days of the flood God had Noah. During the days of the Great Tribulation God is going to have His two witnesses. The more **perverted** the times, the more **powerful** the testimony.

Now these guys are different from you and I, but don't forget the fact that God wants you and I to be spirit-filled and spirit-led.

They are called the two witnesses. We are called to be witnesses. Jesus said, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses." We witness in two ways, by our life and by our lips. We are to shine for Christ and share the story of the Good News.

We share the Good News about His love, and we also share the bad news that unless you receive Christ, you are going to die and go to hell for ever.

What is it we see about these two witnesses...

- 1. They are clothed in sackcloth**
- 2. They are spirit-filled and spirit-led**
- 3. They fulfill their mission**

7Now when they have finished their testimony,

Notice the timing of the murderous assault on the two witnesses: "When they finish their testimony." The parallels to Jesus' ministry on the earth are easily seen. Jesus came and was a testimony for truth. All during His ministry, the Pharisees and religious leaders tried to bring Him down.

Time after time they failed...Until the one time they didn't. They cheered and jeered as the Lord hung on the cross. Then He took His last breath. They truly thought they had scored a victory. Three days later, they learned how wrong they were when Jesus rose again.

If heaven is the only purpose of salvation, then God should just take us to heaven when we accept Christ. We ought to die right then and go to heaven, because then we would have no struggle, no difficulty, no temptation.

Everything would be perfect. But that's not how it works. God leaves us in the world for a purpose, and that is to be a witness of Him. So, until our witness is finished, God preserves us. When our testimony is over, when God has finished with us, He calls us home.

They were indestructible until they finished what God had them to do...and so are you...***but then what happens?***

... the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them. 8Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.

We'll see the beast later in Revelation 13. But here we are told that this beast, will opposes them and make war "and shall overpower them and kill them." Look at what happens in verse 8. "***Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city - which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.***"

Undoubtedly this is Jerusalem. "Which spiritually is called Sodom (because of its vice) Egypt (because of its vanity) where our Lord was crucified (because of its violence). It was at Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified.

9For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. It's a terrible thing for the Jews for a body to be desecrated.

10The inhabitants of the earth (the church isn't here-it's just the inhabitants of the earth or the earth-dwellers) ***will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.***

I believe television is undoubtedly predicted in Revelation 11:9 because it specifically says that the people of all the nations will see their dead bodies.

John wrote this in 95 A.D. when the only way that people could view their bodies in the street of Jerusalem was to travel to Jerusalem. We are the generation that has the technology for people in all parts of the world to view the bodies of these two witnesses.

When the two witnesses are slaughtered, there will be global cheering. The world is going to rejoice when these two prophets of God are killed. People will exchange presents and "Happy Dead Witnesses Day" cards. They will think that they have truly scored a victory.

Hell will have a holiday. The Bible says they send gifts to one another. This is the satanic Christmas. I can envision the parties, the drinking, and the laughing, because no longer do they have to listen to the prophets' message that is so convicting.

Isn't that something? This is the only time there is recorded joy on the earth during the Great Tribulation. It is joy over the death of these two faithful preachers of the Lord. Their preaching tormented the people. Bible preaching does that sometimes. Not everybody wants to hear the truth.

When these two witnesses are killed, the earth rejoices. But their joy is short-lived. Verse 11 says, ***'But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.'***

While people are watching on worldwide television, there will be a stunning development. The television cameras will be focused on the two bodies that have been left out in the street to rot. Some reporter will be giving his thoughts about how these two menaces to society deserved their violent end. Suddenly, the cameras will zoom in and someone will say, "I saw movement." The index finger twitches, and the cameraman yells. "There it is again!"

Every channel across the globe breaks from their programming. All eyes are glued to the screen as one witness, then the other, sits up and stretches. Screams of anger and despair echo from one end of the planet to the other. The first witness stands, then pulls his friend up. They say, "We're back." Right before their very eyes, two dead men begin to live again.

12Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

These bodies are obviously dead: they have been watched constantly for three and a half days. They are unmistakably dead. Then while they watch, the Spirit of life from God enters them.

This is like the ascension of Christ on the Mount of Olives when Jesus ascended while His disciples beheld until a cloud received Him out of their sight.

God gives these two witnesses a mini rapture. And verse 12 says and their enemies looked on. In other words, they acknowledged them and considered what this meant. God is reminding them that the church was already raptured, and they explained it away; and now they see these two witnesses raptured. And the people are going to be scared to death. From a party to a panic. From festivities to great fear.

In one more parallel to the earthly ministry of Christ, they will ascend to heaven, but these two witnesses go out with such a bang that John calls it the second woe.

13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

It says that 7000 people died. Compared to the fourth seal that was broken and death and hades followed, a fourth of the earth died, which was about 1.7 billion people, that's a bunch. Seven thousand is not very many. Why does it say that? The word in the Greek for seven thousand people, means "**named men.**" Seven thousand people who were known. The well-to-do, celebrities, dignitaries, and all those who were at this dead witnesses' party.

And when that happens, the bible says the survivors were terrified. Then, with blatant foreshadowing, John warns that the third woe is right around the corner. **We are taken to Scene 2 – Heaven**

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever." "16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. 18 The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small-and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

When the seventh trumpet sounds, another worship service breaks out in heaven. It will start with loud voices calling out, which will then be joined by the twenty-four elders saying out, "***The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.***"

As this chapter ends, John sees something in heaven that he would have read about years earlier. The writer of Hebrews spoke of the tabernacle that Moses built in the wilderness as a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8: 5).

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of His covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a severe hailstorm." (Revelation 11:19, NIV).

This chapter begins with a temple on the earth and concludes with the opening of God's temple in heaven.

Did you know that at any moment eternity could begin for you.

I want to speak to two groups in closing.

1. **Those who have never accepted Christ.** You believe in Jesus in your head, like you believe in Abe Lincoln or Benjamin Franklin. Just some guy in history. Jesus died for you and loves you and you need to make a decision with your heart. If you come to this altar to be saved today, we will cheer you on. If you keep putting this decision off and miss the rapture, and get saved during the tribulation, they will chase you and kill you. It is serious business during the tribulation. Don't face eternity without Jesus.
2. Second group – **You're saved, but you're not sold out.** You're singing the Doobie Brothers song..."Jesus is just alright with me." You better be sold out to Jesus. You need to abide in Him. You need to be surrendered to Him so He can use you. The best ability you can give to Jesus is your availability. You just need to be available.