

Revelation 11:7-12. Retrospective View Of The Two Witnesses – Part III



The papal crusade against the Albigensian Christians.

This is the continuation of [The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's Horae Apocalypticae.](#)

Papal War Against Them. Their Death And Resurrection. A.D. 1163-1530.

[7] And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

[8] And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

[9] And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

[10] And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

[11] And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

[12] And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. (Rev 11:7-12)

THE SAME VOICE of the Lord Jesus himself, as the Angel of the Covenant, must still be considered as addressing the Evangelist; and St. John, still in his representative character – at this time as if one of the Reformers – receives from him retrospectively the history of the struggles and sufferings of Christ's faithful witnesses.

"The Wild Beast" is evidently the same as that mentioned afterwards in chapter 13; – identical also with that Beast long previously represented to Daniel in vision as constituting the last and most fearful form of the Roman Empire, the *persecuting Papal power*.- Of this Beast more hereafter.

The time and occasion of the war against the witnesses, i.e., "when they shall have completed their testimony," has occasioned no small trouble to expositors. In the authorized version, as above, the words "finished their

testimony" would seem to refer to the end of the 1260 years of witnessing; but that this cannot be the meaning is clear, inasmuch as that duration would bring them to the end of the Wild Beast's reign, when he would have no longer power to persecute. May we not rather regard it as having respect to the perfecting their witness and full protestation against all the leading errors of the great apostasy; the putting the sacraments in the place of the Holy Scriptures as the source of life and light to the soul; the substitution of the mediatorship of departed saints; the idolatry, demon-worship, sorceries, thefts, fornications, and murders; and the headship of the system in the Pope of Rome, with his seven thunders and voice of Antichrist? We have already traced the noble protests maintained by both Eastern and Western witnesses against all the former of these errors; but against Rome and its bishops as head of the apostasy, for centuries they protested not. By degrees the Christian mind was prepared for this last step; and ere the termination of the twelfth century, the Antichrist was fully developed before their eyes, and the united Paulikians, Waldenses, and other sectaries boldly denounced the man of sin, and the Babylon and harlot of the Apocalypse. Then did the Papacy, as a body, rouse itself against them, and proceeded to declare and to wage a war of extermination.

It was not until the religious supremacy of Rome was established in every state of Christendom, and the temporal power subjected to its spiritual domination, that Rome could command the secular sword, and use it to the striking down whatever is called heretic. Old as its pretensions were, it was not until the eleventh, or the beginning of the twelfth century, that Papal supremacy was universally established. Then did this ten-horned Beast, wielding the power of the ten kingdoms of Christendom, appear in his maturity; then was he openly testified against by the Christian witnesses; and then did he turn in fierce rage upon his bold assailants.

A.D. 1163. – First, at the Council of Tours, Pope Alexander III., after noticing the detestable Albigensian heresy everywhere spreading, interdicts all from yielding the heretics refuge; – from buying or selling, or otherwise holding converse with them.

A.D. 1179. – Next followed the decree of the third Lateran General Council against Cathari, Patareni, Publicani, and all other heretics, pronouncing anathema, and forbidding that any should harbor them, or when dead should give them Christian burial.

A.D. 1183. – A bull was issued by Lucius III., denouncing them and all that should favor them; giving them over for punishment to the secular arm, and directing that inquisition (a fearful word, new first broached) be made for their detection.

A.D. 1198. – Innocent III., in the very first year of his pontificate, addressed letters to various prelates, charging them to gird themselves for the work of extirpation, and to employ the arms both of princes and people. Then followed his mission of inquisitors to Toulouse under **Dominic, the sainted founder of the accursed Inquisition**; then, at a few years' interval, the proclamation of a Crusade with all its horrors. A specimen of these horrors may be seen in the [storming of Beziers](#) (linked to Wikipedia article

about it). To one that asked how Catholics were to be distinguished from heretics in the massacre about to take place, "Kill them all," was the reply; "God will know his own;" and 7000 of all persuasions indiscriminately suffered.

A.D. 1215. – The fourth Lateran General Council re-urged all former plans of extirpation, and gave new powers and privileges to the Crusaders against heretics, the same as to those who joined in the crusades to the Holy Land. The Councils of Narbonne and of Toulouse followed, in which, besides other methods of detection, even children were compelled to inform against heretics; and, besides other methods of suppression, **the Holy Scriptures were strictly forbidden to the laity.**

During the remainder of the thirteenth and the following century the same Papal anti-witness war continued without cessation. Bulls, councils, inquisitions, crusades, Dominicans, and Franciscans everywhere pursued and tracked with bloodhound spirit these faithful martyrs of their Lord, – not in Piedmont and Dauphiny alone, but in Spain and Calabria, in Germany, France, and Flanders, – not the Waldenses only, but Wickliffites and Lollards in England, and Hussites in Bohemia. And yet, **in spite of racks and prisons, of the sword and of the flame, their voice was still raised in protestation against the lies of Popery,** and for the truth as it is in Jesus. At length, however, towards the close of the fifteenth century, after a furious crusade against Waldenses and Hussites, the Papal object seemed almost attained and its triumph complete. The prediction was about to be verified, "The wild beast from the abyss shall overcome them and kill them."

There is, by the common consent of historians, but one period in European history in which the voice of Anti-Papal testimony was wholly suppressed, and the symbol of DEATH might be properly taken to describe the complete stillness that prevailed. It was the opening of the sixteenth century, just before the Reformation. In vain the Bohemian Churches sent deputies to search through Europe for any of kindred feeling whom they might hail as brethren. The deputies returned unsuccessful. They had only, it is related, to implore God's mercy on fallen Christendom. "The prospect," says Milner, "was most gloomy in the eyes of every true Christian. Europe, though Christ's name was everywhere professed, presented nothing that was properly evangelical. The Waldenses were too feeble to molest the Poppedom, and the Hussites, divided and worn out by contentions, were at length reduced to silence."

But it must needs be that "their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city," wherein "for three days and a half" they of the people and nations should see the dead bodies of these slain witnesses. The character of this passage is evidently shown by the word "spiritually," as figuratively applied to the description of this Sodom or Egypt. This great city is clearly the same which is afterwards called Babylon, the city which then reigned over the kings of the earth, i.e., that Roman ecclesiastical empire comprehending its ten kingdoms subordinate to its sway. The very terms Egypt and Sodom had often been applied to it by Romanists themselves, as well as by the early witnesses and later Reformers – the former name on account of its sorceries, darkness, and oppression of God's people, the latter because of its moral impurity and abominations. But the name which this great city assumed for

itself was that which properly had belonged to New Jerusalem, the holy city, in marked contrast with which it is introduced in the Revelation; the resemblance, however, only holds good to apostate Jerusalem, in that it is the scene in which their Lord (i.e., the witnesses' Lord) has been continually "crucified afresh."

In this last remark we may see an intimation of their Lord's sympathy with their sufferings – even as if he regarded himself as crucified again in them, his members. Have we not also, in the resemblance of the great city to Egypt, Sodom, and apostate Jerusalem, an intimation of its impending punishment – Jerusalem's curse, Egypt's plaques, and Sodom's burning?

By the "street" (lit., broad place or open square) of this great city, the place of concourse, we must understand the chief seat of the Papacy, Rome, to be pictured. Here the defeat and death of the witnesses was to be publicly exposed, and rejoicings in consequence to take place amidst assemblages from all nations.

Marvelously does the history of the period bear out the symbolic statements of the Apocalyptic vision. Such a gathering of the deputies of "people, and kindreds, and tongues: and nations," were met together in this city of Rome upon occasion of the Lateran Council held from A.D. 1512-17 under the pontificates of Julius II. and Leo X. One of its principal objects was the total extirpation of heresies; and upon the last-named Pope's accession no time was lost in proceeding against the only heretics supposed to be surviving – the Bohemian Hussites. By a Papal bull these were summoned to appear before the Council at its next session, and the 5th of May 1514 was fixed for that important event.

Thus was the crisis come which was to try the faith of this little remnant of witnesses and exhibit its vitality or death. And would they then face their Lord's enemies? Would they brave the terrors of death and plead his cause, like many of their noble predecessors, before the Legate and the Antichristian Council? Alas! no. The day arrived. The Council met. But no officer announced the arrival of deputies from Bohemia to plead before it. Not a whisper was heard from any quarter in support of the long-continued heresies. No witness appeared. The orator of the session ascended the pulpit, and, amidst the applause of the assembly, uttered that memorable exclamation of triumph – never heard before or since – "There is an end of resistance to Papal rule and religion: there is none to oppose."³ And again, "The whole body of Christendom is now subjected to its Head, i.e., to Thee." Alas! there was but too much cause of triumph. The witnesses were silent! They were dead! From this day, for three and a half years (i.e., prophetic days), were the maintainers of the truth of Christ to be as dead corpses in the face of apostate Christendom. Let the day be remembered. It was May 5th, 1514.

From the well-known and customary punishment of heretics – and which, among other things, was literally enjoined in an edict issued on that very day for the exclusion of their corpses from burial – was the figure taken to signify the keeping before the public observation, during that interval, the fact of the death of the witnesses or of the suppression and defeat of all so-called heretics. It was not to be put out of sight; but every means was adopted of

preserving the recognition of the fact by the mutual congratulations of the members of the Council – by the making merry and interchange of gifts. And here we have again only to open the page of history in order to see how all this was fulfilled. The magnificent Eastern presents to Leo, the gift of the golden rose to the king of Portugal, the splendor of the festivities of the cardinals at the close of this Council, unequaled since the days of Rome's ancient greatness, is specially recorded by the historian of Leo. In fact, the joy of their triumph told most plainly how the memory of past vexation and injury from the testimony of these faithful men of God still troubled and disturbed these dwellers on the Roman earth. Loud indeed were their congratulations, but not long continued.

The next thing we behold is the wonderful RESURRECTION of THE WITNESSES. " And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet." As to the great event to which this figure applies, history admits of no doubt or hesitation. Never, save in the resurrection of Christ himself, has there been such an instance of the sudden and triumphant resuscitation of his cause and Church from deep depression as was exhibited in the protesting voice of Luther and the burst of the glorious Reformation. The sudden contrast forces itself both on Romish and Protestant writers. Hear one of the former: "The fire, ill-smothered at the close of 1513 and 1514 (in allusion to Leo's Council), was blown up again by Luther's bellows, and spread its flames far and wide, more than ever before." A modern writer, Mr. Cunningham, whose prophetic explanation of the passage accords not with ours, thus describes the transition: – "Europe reposed in the deep sleep of spiritual death, under the iron yoke of the Papacy; when, suddenly, the voice of an obscure monk was heard, the sound of which rapidly filled Saxony, Germany, and Europe itself, shaking the very foundations of the Papal power, and arousing men from the lethargy of ages."

But does the chronology suit? For three days and a half the witnesses were to be looked on as dead. In other words, there was to be an interval of three and a half years between the public recognition of their extinction and their revival. That memorable day of the ninth session of the Lateran Council on which the orator exulted over all extinguished opponents, was, as we have seen, May 5, 1514: the day of Luther's posting up his theses at Wittenberg (the well-known epoch of the Reformation), was October 31, 1517. The interval is precisely, to a day, the period predicted in this wonderful prophecy. Then "the breath of life from God entered into the slain witnesses, and they stood upon their feet!" One hundred years before, the martyr Huss, foretelling from his dungeon the future progress of the Gospel, spoke: – "And I, awakening as it were from the dead and rising from the grave, shall rejoice with exceeding great joy." Strange that Leo's successor, Pope Adrian, should have used the like expression: – "The heretics Huss and Jerome are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther."

"And great fear fell on those that beheld them;" it is not said, on them that killed them. The Council had separated before Luther's protest appeared. Pope Leo, in his regal palace, treated at first any disturbance arising from so mean an origin as a mere passing ebullition of feeling on the part of the monk of Wittenberg. Not so Tetzel, Eck, and others, who looked on with

trepidation. They saw that the very foundation of the Papal system was assailed, and that there was a power in the movement that they could not withstand.

Pope Leo, as we have said in a former lecture, at last realized the danger, and his seven thunders were issued. But it needs not again to recount how the intrepid Reformer disregarded danger and threats; how Gospel preaching was again resumed, the Romish Church declared apostate, and a pure Reformed Church established With the rod of civil power in various countries of Europe. At each step in its advance, the fear of those who beheld it increased in anxiety; nor was it allayed when, after ten years of opposition, the Reformers united themselves together at Smalcald, under the glorious name of PROTESTANTS; a name which, according to its Latin etymology, signifies WITNESSES!

Continued in [Revelation 11:12-14. Ascent Of The Witnesses. Great Earthquake](#)

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