

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 2 THE EARTHLY DRAMA

STUDY NINE

Two Fearless, Future Witnesses

Revelation 11:1–14

God transforms tragic situations into triumphant events. Isn't that great news? He will use what seems like our most insignificant moments to launch significant events yet future.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FROM the earliest days of the church, followers of Jesus have suffered and died because of their allegiance to Him. Wicked regimes despise Christians' single-minded commitment to God over government. And wicked individuals deride those who extend Jesus' call to repentance and self-denial. So they desire to silence these prophetic voices.

For this reason, the hall of faith is lined with the corpses of those who have been crucified, beheaded, stoned, and fed to wild beasts because of their commitment to Jesus.

The great faith of these believers surprises us, inspires us, challenges us. We wonder, *Would I stand strong for Jesus if I were in their shoes?* Then, we try to discern how we can strengthen our trust in God Almighty and increase our boldness for His kingdom.

This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study will look to the example of two fearless witnesses to uncover a belief that every martyr for Jesus Christ holds in common—a timeless truth that can carry any believer through even the most tragic of circumstances.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

No one can suffer for Jesus without prayer. Prayer keeps you connected to the Father, the true source of our life—both in the present and in eternity. Say this prayer as you prepare to open His Word today.

Father, thank You for the example of those who willingly give up their desires, comforts, and even their lives for Your sake. They make Your name known to the world, and they encourage their fellow believers—like me. Help me learn from their example as I study Your Word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In an interlude between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets of God’s judgment, a strong angel appeared and gave John a strange assignment: eat a scroll. So John, being a man of great faith, heeded the angel’s puzzling words and consumed the heavenly scroll. According to *Revelation 10:10*, how did John describe the experience of eating this scroll?

In *11:1–14*, John reveals the message of this scroll—one that is indeed both sweet and sour.



Observation: Two Witnesses

It often feels like the book of Revelation would be much easier to understand if John simply *told* us what he wanted us to know. He could have done this, but instead, he chose to *show* what God revealed to him. By doing so, John presented layers of truth that believers in any generation can peel back to reveal morsels of nourishing truth.

As you work through *Revelation 11:1–14*, start simply by observing what John said.¹

At the beginning of this vision, John received a measuring stick—a piece of wood that worked like a modern-day ruler or yardstick. What did the heavenly voice command him to do with this stick in *11:1–2*?

During this three-and-a-half-year period, the nations would “trample the holy city”—Jerusalem (*Revelation 11:2*). God promised to send two witnesses during this trying time to carry out His purpose with His power (*11:3*). What two metaphors did John use to describe these two witnesses in *11:4*?

1. _____
2. _____

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According to *Revelation 11:5–6*, how would these witnesses demonstrate their God-given power? What would happen to those who would oppose them?

Despite the sweet, miraculous power of these witnesses, their ministry eventually would come to a seemingly sour end. According to *11:7–10*, what would happen to these two witnesses after the completion of their testimony (*11:7*)?

Though the wicked onlookers might have thought the beast had disposed of these witnesses for good, God would later shock them. According to *11:11–12*, what would happen after three-and-a-half days? How would the crowd react to these events?

According to *11:13*, what would happen at the conclusion of these events? How would the people watching respond to this whole sequence of events?

God always works through a remnant. I hope you'll never forget that. The Lord seems to do His best work through a small, relatively insignificant group rather than through the great majority and the big splash. And His plan for the future is no exception. Sometimes He carries out His most significant accomplishments through what seems like the least likely instruments. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: A Prophetic Ministry

The two witnesses of *Revelation 11:1–14* stand in the tradition of Old Testament prophets. They prophesy during a time of tribulation (see *Revelation 11:3*). Like Elijah, they call down fire from heaven (see *2 Kings 1:10–12*). They also halt the rainfall, just as Elijah did—for three-and-a-half years (see *1 Kings 17–18*). They follow Moses in turning water into blood and sending a variety of other horrific plagues (see *Exodus 7:14–25*).

Though these figures had a prophetic role, John chose to call them *witnesses* (see *Deuteronomy 19:15*). To what reality were they witnessing? How did their prophetic ministry validate their message? Feel free to consult a commentary like Pastor Chuck’s *Insights on Revelation* or *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org to help you answer these questions.²

This scene contains three sets of characters. The conflict takes place between the witnesses and a satanic beast. The third group, however, plays an equally essential role for the purpose of the vision. Reread *Revelation 11:9–11, 13*, and in the spaces below, record how the bystanders responded to this conflict:

11:9 _____

11:10: _____

11:11: _____

11:13: _____

What does this progression of responses reveal about how the faithful ministry, unjust death, and miraculous resurrection of the two witnesses affected the onlookers? How is this sequence of events instructive for followers of Jesus who desire to serve as faithful witnesses today?

You know what I think this passage is saying to us? During difficult times, we are to focus deliberately on what God is doing—not on what’s happening around us. Remarkable things happen when we do that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Measuring the Temple

John's call to measure the temple feels out of place in this narrative about these two witnesses—as if John left out some details that connect *Revelation 11:1–2* with *11:3–14*. Well, that's because he did! John wanted us to connect the dots on our own using *Zechariah 2:1–13* as a guide.

According to *2:1–2*, what did the man with the measuring line do? What were the results of this act in *2:3–5*? What then does the measured temple represent?

How does the prophecy in *2:6–13* about Israel's return from exile in Babylon foreshadow what God will do in and through the two future witnesses of *Revelation 11:3–14*?

God's people and God's plans rest under His divine protection. Nothing can stop them—no matter how hard Satan and his beastly horde of demons may try. Let's consider how we can respond to this truth.



Application: Transforming Tragedies into Triumphs

The fearless ministry of these two faithful witnesses demonstrates one essential timeless truth:

God transforms tragic situations into triumphant events.

From this principle, we can develop these practical points of application:

1. Underdogs become overcomers.
2. Weakness becomes strength.
3. Obstacles become opportunities.

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What other triumphant transformations can God produce through tragic situations? Use the following template to write a few of your own application points: _____ become(s) _____.

How does the truth that God can change tragedies into triumphs offer you encouragement in your current situation right now? What does it look like practically to trust God in the tragedy as you await His transformation?

How do you sense the Holy Spirit leading you to serve as a witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in your own context? You may feel nervous or apprehensive, and that's normal! How can you find courage through the example of the fearless witnesses of *Revelation 11:1–14*?

The image of two faithful servants of Jesus Christ lying dead in the street is truly tragic, sickening, and frightening. Yet people suffer for His name around the world every single day. This does not give us reason to fear, though. It instead offers us hope because we know that all of us who follow Jesus will be vindicated through our faith in Him.

Remember that truth and go with boldness as His witness.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for reminding me that You transform tragedies into triumphs. You did it with Your Son. You will do it with these future witnesses. And You can do it in my life. I give my doubts, my pains, and my fears over to You today. By Your grace, transform them and transform me to look more like Your Son. It's in His triumphant name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

