



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like AntiChristmas"

11:7-14

We're coming into the American holiday season. It's nearly Halloween so you're starting to see Christmas decorations. Thanksgiving is in there somewhere.

I was old school for a long time when it came to switching an actual holiday to the Monday closest to it. But now that I am older and get tired easier I look forward (as do you) to any excuse for a three-day weekend.

In the middle of the future Great Tribulation a new three-and-one-half day holiday is inaugurated. It will be celebrated all over the world. It involves the giving of gifts.

It will probably have a catchy name. See if you can come up with a name for it as we read about it in our text.

We've been following the preaching and wonder-working ministry of two witnesses God has on the earth during the first half of the Great Tribulation. They may be Elijah and Moses or they may be men alive during the Tribulation who minister in the style and power of those two Old Testament prophets.

For a time they are indestructible. Their enemies are destroyed by fire coming out of their mouths. Then, suddenly, the world leader we call antichrist is allowed to kill them. It initiates a morbid global holiday.

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

Their deaths cannot occur one moment before they "finish their testimony." Their ministry has a definite course it must run.

Who is this "beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit?" It is the antichrist possessed by Satan. "Beast" is one of about forty different names for him in the Bible. He will be satanically inspired and then satan-possessed.

God will allow the beast to "make war against them, overcome them, and kill them." It seems to indicate some sort of campaign or program to defeat them.

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.

The "city" is Jerusalem. That is the city where "our Lord was crucified."

From a spiritual perspective Jerusalem is as wicked as "Sodom" or "Egypt."

- Sodom and its sister city, Gomorrah, are notorious for both sexual perversion and for being selfishly inhospitable.

- Egypt in Scripture is a type of the world and is always remembered by the Jews as the place of their captivity and cruel servitude for about four hundred years.

The combination reminds me of Pleasure Island in *Pinocchio*. It was all fun for a while; but it led the boys into slavery, first turning them into donkeys.

The antichrist will put their corpses on display in Jerusalem to show his power and might. It gets worse as you see the reaction of the rest of the world.

Revelation 11:9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

“Peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations” puts us on notice that this is a global phenomena. “Not allow” tells us that there is no outcry against this ghastly display.

How sad especially when you consider that these two men were preaching a message of salvation. In the middle of a time of awful trouble on the earth, when mankind needs to turn to God, they instead rejoice and party that God’s servants are fatally silenced.

They would “not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves” might hint that they did not intend to bury them at all but to keep them on display. Think of big game hunters and their taxidermied prey.

There is an incredible insight in this verse and it involves the fact that people from all over the globe will “see” them lying in state. We take it for granted that we can “see” such events. I can still remember watching Ronald Reagan lying in state and then on to his funeral.

When John wrote the Revelation it was impossible and even unimaginable that everyone on the earth might be able to simultaneously “see” such an event as it occurred.

It's really only been the last few decades anything like this was possible. And it's only been very recently in terms of world history that we can actually pull it off.

The advance of telecommunications technology is a proof we are living in the Last Days. Or, at the very least, it is a confirmation that John was a prophet accurately predicting the future of mankind.

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.

“Tormented?” On what planet would the message of God's love and grace be considered torment? Sadly, on planet earth during the Great Tribulation.

Even today people react as though the Good News of salvation were some announcement of doom. It's the greatest news anyone can give you. You can have your sins forgiven, be a new creation, and live forever in a blissful eternity with a glorified body. If that's torment, pile it on!

People refuse to accept that the Bible tells the truth about eternity. They think it narrow and restrictive. In a sense, it is. But nothing could be broader than a way of salvation that need only be believed to be received.

They will “rejoice, make merry, and send gifts to one another.” It sounds like a bizarre twist on Christmas. So that is my title for this holiday - Antichritmas. My theme would be “We wish you an antichristmas, We wish you an antichristmas, we wish you an antichristmas, and a hopeless three years.”

What kind of a “gift” do you give to celebrate the deaths of God’s servants? Probably something that they exposed as sinful and not pleasing to God. In every respect this is an unholiday.

Revelation 11:11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

Live TV is so unpredictable! The two witnesses will be raised from the dead as the whole world watches.

Revelation 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

Everyone will hear the “loud voice from Heaven.” It will be broadcast live over the air.

The two witnesses ascend into Heaven “in a cloud” as cameras follow them until they are out of sight.

Literally they ascend in “the” cloud, a reference to what the Old Testament refers to as the shekinah glory of God.

Revelation 11:13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

God required a “tenth,” or a tithe, from Israel in the Old Testament. Once the damage is calculated and they realize it is exactly a tenth the people will know that the “earthquake” was the hand of God.

We should be very careful to not ascribe to God responsibility for natural disasters unless we are specifically told in His Word that they come from Him.

“Seven thousand people” can be translated “seven thousand names of men.” The idea is that these are men of some renown. Perhaps

world dignitaries have gathered together to officially represent their nations at this horrible antiChristmas. They will be killed, probably in the earthquake and maybe all in one location.

Probably, too, a great many others will be killed.

Again let's be careful ascribing things to God unless they are written in His Word. This week mockumentary filmmaker Michael Moore linked hurricane Gustav to the beginning of the Republican Convention. If we think his comments are ill advised and inappropriate, we should be careful ourselves.

"The rest" who were "afraid and gave glory to the God of Heaven" may be from this group of world leaders. It certainly doesn't describe the rest of the world which, as we will see, remains largely in rebellion against God.

Or this could be a reference to nonbelievers who recognize and declare that this is God's hand but remain in their unbelief and sin. Lots of people acknowledge there is a God and even that He is the God of the Bible. Even the demons believe and tremble without being saved.

Revelation 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

From the mid-point of the Tribulation forward God's judgments start to move much more rapidly. Remember they are likened to a woman's birth contractions which (typically) start slowly then come more rapidly and with more intensity.

Did I mention that the church was raptured way back in chapter four and well ahead of the events of the Great Tribulation? We will be safe in Heaven while these events unfold on the earth.

We read that these two witnesses “finish their testimony.” You and I are witnesses. You and I have testimony to give about God’s love and grace.

God has a definite plan for us, too. It is not as dramatic as the antiChristmas He has planned for His two Tribulation witnesses. But the lack of drama doesn’t make our testimony any less significant to the people we will encounter in our lives.

For our part we should be looking for every opportunity to testify. We should be seeking to discover the good works God has before ordained for us.

In short, we should set our affections on Jesus and do all to His glory.