

Witnesses And Martyrs



Foundations (Day 308)
by Derek Prince

In Revelation 11 we read the account of God's two witnesses during the tribulation period and of their eventual martyrdom "by the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit" – the Antichrist.

> "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... Now after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet... 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." (Rev. 11:9,11-12)

The account makes it plain that this was in the fullest sense a resurrection. Although their bodies had not been buried, these two martyrs had been dead for three and a half days. Then, in the open sight of their enemies, their bodies were resurrected, and they ascended into heaven. It is interesting to notice that their ascension into heaven is similar to each of the other cases that we have already considered in that it takes place in a cloud.

It seems clear that this resurrection of the two witnesses is distinct from the resurrection of Christians described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. It is not associated with the descent of Christ from heaven, nor is there any mention of other accompanying features, such as a trumpet or the voice of an archangel.

If we now turn to Revelation, we find the account of what appears to be a further stage in the resurrection of the righteous.

> "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgement was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and

holy is he who has part in the first resurrection." (20:4-6)

The people whose resurrection is described here are those who were beheaded as martyrs of Jesus during the period of the Antichrist's rule. These tribulation saints are shown as being resurrected at the close of the great tribulation, just prior to the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom. They thus share with Christ Himself, and with all other resurrected saints, the privilege of ruling and judging the nations on earth during the millennium.

Some commentators believe that these tribulation martyrs are included in the resurrection of Christians described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Others view it as a distinct and subsequent stage in the resurrection of the righteous. There is little to be gained by making this a subject of controversy. It is clear, however, that they will share with Christ and the other saints in the privilege of ruling and judging the nations on earth during the millennium.

Devotional

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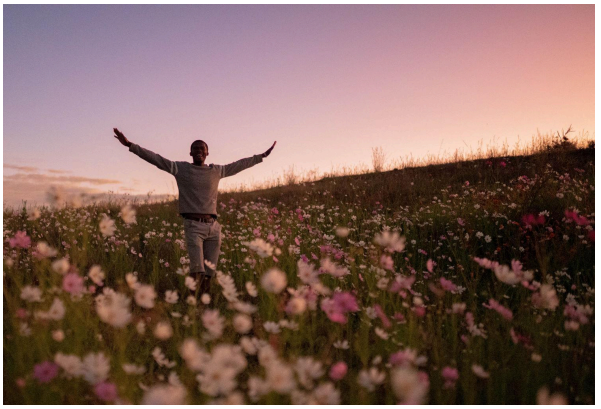

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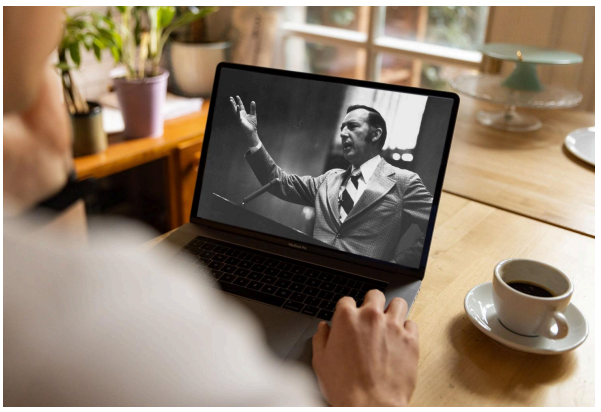

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