GOD’S TWO WITNESSES

REVELATION 11:1-14

We come now to one of the most thrilling and amazing chapters of the entire book of Revelation. “GOD’S TWO WITNESSES”! We see them clothed in sackcloth for 1260 days; slain in the street of that great city; then raised to life again and called up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies beheld them. These were very powerful witnesses that were capable of stopping the rain or of smiting the earth with all plagues. Their story is compelling and providential.

Unfortunately, this is also a story that carries with it a lot of theological controversy. Generally commentators do not employ the principal of symbols in their interpretations of Revelation and this leads to many unreasonable, even impossible, conclusions. Dr. Adam Clarke does not take a firm position as to who these 2 witnesses are but records the conjecture of others. These include the suggestion that they represent early Christian persecution by the Jews; imperial persecution of Christians, or they represent the Albigenses and Waldenses. Many other commentators say they are Elijah and Moses due to their power to stop rain and bring plagues upon people. And yet another writer declares emphatically that the two witnesses were the apostles Peter and James. No doubt there are other choices suggested as being “God’s two witnesses”.

It is so easy to assign an identity to these two witnesses when you limit the criteria you use to describe them. But it is suicidal exegesis to fail to include all of the many qualifications, requirements and time frames associated with their vision proper. For example, if you say they are Moses and Elijah, you have used a literal (instead of symbolic) interpretation of people who lived hundreds of years before the prophecy was even given, which creates a real problem identifying how both Moses and Elijah lay dead in a city street for three and one half days, and were then resurrected, to name only one problem. These two witnesses must fit the descriptions of sackcloth, 1260 days, being slain, dead three and one half days, resurrected and ascending to heaven while their enemies looked on, and much more. Our work is cut out for us. But if we are patient, diligent, unwilling to take short cuts, and if we remember our principals of prophecy, ere long God can reveal this grand story to us. The results will be very gratifying. Let us see.

First we need to set the stage with a brief review of some major things we have identified during the age of the church. It began in power and splendor, then endured persecutions and afterwards gave birth to emperor Constantine who professed to be born of her as a son of the church who decreed her equality with other religions of the empire. This was followed by the Justinian era when his code of laws made the Roman Orthodox Church the state religion. This propelled the Roman church into the seat of authority and brought on the dark ages, when nominal Christianity was a shell of pagan practices and when the word of God was strictly kept from the people by both imperial and papal edicts.

The reformation began in 1517, and its major point of emphasis was a return to the word of God. As the reformation progressed, more and more people and more and more nations became totally disillusioned with a profligate religious system and governments that were essentially bound to its dictates. Thousands broke from Rome at the peril of their own lives. Interestingly, it was during the time of the reformation that multitudes fled the tyranny of a desolate, corrupt and powerful Roman Church, risking the hazards of the sea and the perils beyond, and found the shores of America as a haven from centuries of bondage. Europe was ripe for change, and change was both inevitable and providential.

Desperate conditions cause people to pursue desperate alternatives. If you referred to the church in the 17th and 18th centuries, the general connotation was of the Roman church. Many voices other than protestant reformers, voices coming from quarters with no religious allegiance and with a growing distaste for the abuses of the Roman church, spoke out against religion. To these voices, religion, even “Christianity” meant Romanism with her despicable tyranny, abuse and hypocrisy. Thus there were many who turned against “Christianity” altogether and adopted a philosophy of so-called “reason, liberty and democracy”. The great Frenchmen Voltaire and Rosseau were two of these voices and there were many others.

The reformation had exposed the deep spiritual corruption and error of the Roman church and the papal system. For centuries, since the time of Justinian in 529, she had demanded the allegiance of her members and the rest of the world as well. She treated the least disobedience with the cruelest of punishment; controlled emperors; ruled over vast territories, and was literally filled with moral corruption and pagan institutions. Beyond this, she had hidden the word of God in her cloisters, languages, rituals and arbitrary papal edicts, while denying under penalty the privilege for anyone to own read or teach direct from the word of God except her priests. And while these abuses were being exposed by the reformers, the political realm was likewise reaching a boiling point of unrest and revolt. The Roman church was the largest property owner in the country and paid no taxes. In addition the state was responsible for the financing of luxuries of the clergy. The church levied a tax against the vast agricultural production by the peasants, called a dime, or a tithe, of all they produced. This was not an voluntary offering, it was a tax. The Roman church was ripe for judgments and the populace was seething to administer it.

Near the end of the 18th century, the political, religious and social atmosphere of Europe was a seething pot of unrest, agitation and deep rumblings of war and change. All over Europe, reformation fires were burning and the deep corruption, abuses and excess of Rome were exposed. As previously indicated, this abuse of power and simple humane decencies had stirred a complete back lash of philosophical reasoning. This reasoning carried strong overtones of human elevation and infidelity to God. In many ways the myths and philosophies of ancient Rome and Greece seemed to be resurrected from centuries of “burial” within the practices of the Roman church. It was as if the old paganism of the early Roman Empire that had been outlawed since the time of Justinian, was now ascending out of the abyss of the Roman church, alive and well. The nations of Europe which for centuries had cavorted with the Jezebel of Romanism, could see the coming crash of monarchial systems of government, as the powers of the church were shaking on its very foundation. Judgment seemed eminent.

Let us now return to the text in chapter eleven. In verse 1, John is given a measuring rod, with instructions to “measure the temple of God, the altar, and them that worship therein”. That is to say, the sacred precinct of the holy temple, where God dwelt between the cherubims, and the altar where sweet incense ascended to God, along with those who worshipped there, was to be measured. These articles of the O.T. temple symbolize for us the church (the temple of the Holy Ghost) as the organized body of Christ.

In contrast, (V2) there is a court outside of the temple, given to the Gentiles, a people who do not worship God. By them the holy city shall be trodden under foot for 42 months. That is, the temple of V1 is trod upon by those in the outer court for 42 months. These two verses present a picture of the temple of God, the church, being usurped, tread upon, controlled and misused for 42 months. This period of 42 months translated into prophetic time equals 1260 years. It is an identical length or period of time designated as the measurement of several events of both Daniel and Revelation. Those events are as follows:

a. Dan. 7:25. The little horn speaking great things for a time, times and dividing of time.

b. Dan. 12:7. A time, times and dividing of times to the “end of these wonders”.

c. Rev. 11:2. Forty two months for the treading under (despicable use ) of the temple.

d. Rev. 11:3. Twelve hundred and sixty days for the time of sackcloth testimony of two witnesses.

e. Rev. 12:14. Time, times and half times, for the retreat of the woman into the wilderness.

f. Rev. 13:5. Forty two months, the life span of the beast.

This eleventh chapter deals with two of the events which are measured by this time period which transposes into 1260 prophetic years. One is the measurement of the temple and the other is the measurement of the sackcloth testimony of God’s two witnesses.

**NOTE: THIS EXPLAINS FOR US THE MEASURING ROD OF V1. IT IS A CHRONOMETRIC MEASUREMENT (MEASUREMENT OF TIME) AND NOT LINEAR MEASUREMENTS. IT IS A MEASUREMENT OF THE TIME THE CHURCH WAS TRODDEN UNDER FOOT BY GENTILE (ALIEN, PAGAN) OCCUPANTS, AND THE TIME THE TWO WITNESSES TESTIFIED CLOTHED IN SACKCLOTH (HUMILIATED AND DEMINISHED IN STANDING). YOU CAN’T PUT A LINEAR MEASUREMENT ON THE CHURCH OR THESE TWO WITNESSES, BUT YOU CAN PUT A “TIME” MEASUREMENT ON THEM.**

The measurement of the time allotted for the church to be trodden down and the two witnesses to be clothed in sackcloth is absolutely essential to be able to identify the whole vision of this chapter. We can’t just ignore, minimize or misapply this time frame; it is critical to an understanding of all else that is described in the chapter. The events would mean nothing without the correct measurement, and conversely, the measurement is without meaning detached from the events.

Before fixing this 1260 year dimension somewhere in time, it is important that we first identify who these two witnesses are. After doing so, we can then ask and answer the question as to when they testified in sackcloth. The scripture text will help us with this identification. We first need to dismiss the inapplicable notion that these two witnesses are two specific, literal, individual persons. No name of all history can fit the demands of the text. Who would be an olive tree or a candlestick? Who, in and of themselves, have power to stop rain or cause plagues? Who only testified for 1260 days (if you take it literally), or who has lived as long as 1260 years? And the questions can continue. Moses and Elijah are often identified as those two witnesses because Elijah proclaimed a moratorium on rain (for 3 ½ years) and Moses was the instrument of plagues upon Egypt. But neither of them did so by their own power, but by the power of God through the word he had given unto them. Moreover, neither of them lived during the church age and neither of them lived for 1260 years. There are just too many variables and symbols to fill for it to be them.

Verse 4 begins a list of conditions, events and characterizations regarding these two witnesses. “These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth”. “Two olive trees” and “two candlesticks”? What are they? Usually the scriptures are their own best interpreter, and so it is here. In Zechariah chapter 4, there is an amazing parallel to what we are dealing with here in Rev. 11. In Zech. 4:2-3, an angel comes to Zechariah and says, what seest thou? Zechariah said, I see a golden candlestick with two olive trees by it, on each side of the candlestick. Then, in verse 4, Zechariah asked the question, what are these, my Lord? In verse 6, the angel gives Zechariah the answer: This is the word of the Lord. The explanation does not end there. In verse 11, Zechariah asks for further explanation of “these two olive trees on the right side and left side of the candlestick”. And in verse 12 he asks, “what are these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves” (into the candlestick)? Further, in verse 14, the angel answers, “these are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth”.

In I Kings 6:23-28, there is a description of the two cherubims upon the mercy seat in the temple. They were made from olive tree wood and overlaid with gold. Their wings touched the walls of the temple on each side and the other wings touched each other in the middle, above the mercy seat where God met with Israel. Of course this is a grand type of the two dispensations of the Old Testament and the New Testament, where God in Christ met in the place of mercy for the sins of the world. Flanking this divine condescension of God to meet with man at the place of mercy (calvary) to bring salvation, are the two covenants, the O.T. and the N.T., **THE WORD OF GOD.** Prophetic scriptures laid aside, the fact is that God has had two covenants for man. They are God’s two witnesses to all mankind of all time. They are not two opposing or competing witnesses, but two supporting and corroborating witnesses. They are the word of God; the Bible. God’s two anointed ones. They are the two olive trees that produce the golden oil and the two candlesticks that, from the oil, produce the light for the world.

You may name individuals from Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets to the apostles, and any of them could be called “witnesses for God”. But you cannot single out any two of them and say these are the (only) two witnesses of God. All of these great heroes of faith bore witness to two things: the old covenant and the new covenant, the eternal word of God. These always have been and always will be “God’s two witnesses” in the earth, above and beyond any other personal witnessing of any man in any age. Any testimony borne by any other human vessel, must necessarily derive from these two.

Therefore these are “GOD’S TWO WITNESSES” of Rev. 11:3 that are shown as testifying for 1260 years in sackcloth. Over and over we have seen throughout our studies that the word of God was supplanted with the doctrines of men, drawn from the pit of paganism. We have seen God’s word hidden in a language the common people could not understand. We have seen the legal code of Justinian prohibit the belief in or promulgation of any teaching other than that of the “Holy See” of Rome. We have seen the study of the Bible prohibited, even upon penalty of death. We saw great men like William Tyndale burned at the stake, whose only crime was trying to translate and publish the Bible in the common man’s language. We have witnessed the testimony of multiplied thousands who were put to death because they dared disagree with popish teachings. And we have seen an obscure monk, searching the word of God and finding that “the just shall live by individual faith”. We watched history’s record of his excommunication and persecution because his conscience was bound to the “word of God” and not the doctrines of popes.

Surely these testimonials should convince us that it was the word of God, the O.T. and N.T., God’s two witnesses clothed in sackcloth that unquestionably meets the requirements of Rev. 11:3-4. The “rod of measurement” of Rev. 11:1, is described in Rev. 11:3, as having a dimension of 1260 days. This 1260 day measurement, transposed to 1260 years of prophetic time, has as its beginning the time of the marriage of church and state under emperor Justinian, 529 AD. That is when official, imperial power and authority was given (by Justinian laws) to the Roman church to begin putting the two witnesses in garments of sackcloth through her creeds, her cloak of hypocrisy, her bondage and suppression of its light and liberty and finally through her corruption and tyranny. There the word of God was forced to testify in prison garments of sackcloth, degraded from its high and holy place before God and the church, as the absolute rule of faith to subservience to the caprice of an apostate religious system.

If the marriage of the church and state in 529 under emperor Justinian and through his code of laws, provisions were made that put the power of the state behind the creeds of the “Orthodox (Roman Catholic) Church”, and effectively clothed the word of God in sackcloth, then 1260 years of this clothing (suppression) of God’s word brings you to 1789 AD. What is there at this point (1789) in time that fits the requirements of the text of chapter 11?

Let me introduce some quotes from the history of this era under the subject of **“THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.** “*The unparalleled wonders of the French Revolution were considered by many as the great symbol of other political earthquakes, which should prostrate thrones and altars in a common ruin, transform society, and regenerate the world. -------- There are few periods in the history of the world, which can be compared in point of interest and importance to that which embraces the progress and termination of the French Revolution. In no former age were events of such magnitude crowded together, or interests so momentous at issue between contending nations. From the flame which was kindled in Europe, the whole world was involved in a conflagration, and a new era dawned upon both hemispheres from the effect of its expansion. And yet another historical testimonial of the magnitude of the French revolution. One can hardly exaggerate the importance of the French Revolution in the history of modern times. This tremendous event set loose ideas, systems, parties, principles, and men that created a new world in old Europe. (It was a political revolution) (but) It was a social revolution also; it made far-reaching changes in the economic, RELIGIOUS, legal, educational, administrative, and even MORAL institutions of society. Life in France after the revolution was very different from life before the revolution; the very character of the people seemed changed.*

The French Revolution began in 1789. In 1789, France was one of the major European countries of Europe, or the world. France was also the seat of the “Frankish” dynasty, the ruling throne of a virtually defunct Holy Roman Empire. Louis XVI was on the throne, with Queen Marie Antoinette by his side. The American Revolution had just ended, with France and Marquis de Lafayette lending us help. Benjamin Franklin was a diplomat in Paris for several years. The reformation was strong. The Roman church was still dominant. Taxation on the poorer class (which made up90 % of the population) was extreme. France was nearly bankrupt. For many years there had been many philosophers such as Voiltaire, denouncing the system, especially the church and religion and promoting atheistic reasoning. Wars, famine, a grossly corrupt religious system, growing opposition to the monarchy, all were contributing to deep unrest among the population, especially the poor.

What was to be done? Someone suggested that the Estates General be called. This was a body for legislative purposes consisting of three groups. (1) The clergy; (2) The nobility; (3) everyone else in France. When they convened each group had one vote each, but the 3rd group was comprised of 90 % of the population, which made for a very unfair representation. The Estates General had not been called to a meeting for 175 years; the king ruled supreme in all matters. So they were called. The 3rd group proposed that they all meet as one body and that their votes be in proportion to their members, which would give the 3rd estate a chance. Otherwise, the 1st and 2nd estates always ruled against them because they had special privileges and did not pay taxes, but the 3rd estate did. After a five week standoff, the 3rd estate proceeded to meet anyway and established what was known as the “Constituent Assembly”. This was on 5-1-1789. This was an unprecedented move. Even though they invited the “nobles” and “clergy” estates to join them, that did not happen, except for a few deserters. Over the next two years, with many threats but also with popular backing, this “Constituent Assembly” crafted first a “Declaration of human rights” and secondly a totally new constitution. For the first time in history there came into being a government elected by the people. It retained the office of “king” as a diplomat figure with only the power to delay legislation, but not overrule it. The extent of these changes would be felt around the world.

In the days that followed the beginning of this “Constituent Assembly”, there seemed to be at least 3 issues rising above others to begin with. They were, the failure of the monarchial system; the excesses and abuses of nobility; and, the dislike, disillusionment, abuses of a tyrannical clergy and church. Even though the financial crisis threatened to bankrupt France, yet that issue was not the first order of business. The first work of the assembly was primarily devoted to the elimination of the “old regime”, both political and social or religious. The French Revolution was unlike most in that it was not limited to political reforms. Instead it also was about social reform as well. As we have noted, there had been a strong and increasing spirit of the superiority of man, reasonand human rights, influenced by such men as Voltaire and Rosseau, etc. Voltaire held that reason was the highest level of truth and that through this all else flowed. In essence he argued for atheism, for he was against the church and religion in any form. Given the centuries of abuse by the Roman church, his views gained broad support among the people. According to Voltaire’s views, not only was there a need to reform the political arena, but also the civic arena and how they looked at life. This social element of the revolution was nowhere more evident than in the Roman Catholic Church. Before the revelution there was no religious liberty; the Catholic Church ruled the conscience of the nation. After the revolution, religious liberty was shared by everyone. As good as this was, there was a bloody process to get there.

The National Assembly ended its work on September 29, 1791. The several laws they had passed were merged into one constitution, ready to take effect with the beginning of 1792. France had declared itself a republic instead of a monarchy, which had repercussions over all of Europe. Because this was such a sweeping change and for many other reasons, the consequence of it all resulted in “The Reign of Terror” in France and brought gathering clouds of trouble and war throughout Europe.

Many things were addressed and changed in the new constitution, but we will focus only on its impact in the religious sector of France. If the government of France experienced revolutionary change in all of this, the church as it was known, experienced even greater change. These changes very quickly affected the world. The following list of actions taken by the new constitution against the church will verify this. Don’t forget that “the church” for centuries meant the Roman Catholic Church. The “enlightenment” advocates and writers had been opposing and denouncing “Christianity” (as presented by the Roman Church) for some time. When the constitutional assembly began making laws they were driven by the uproar of the populace fueled in large part by “human rights advocates”, i. e., a devotion to man, the state and freedom.

When the assembly finally faced up to the financial crisis, it was soon reminded that the source of funds were scarce. The Catholic Church was the largest property owner in the country, owning about 20 % of all property. They not only paid no taxes, they levied a tax against the people of one tenth of all they produced. The assembly, with no real love for the Catholic Church, turned to her for financial relief. What they did revolutionized the society of France and soon spread over Europe.

1. Their first move to solve the financial crisis in France was to “CONFISCATE THE PROPERTY OF THE CHURCH”. On the motion of Bishop Talleyrand, a priest who had joined the commons, the Assembly declared that the property of the church was at the disposal of the nation; and by the decree of November 2, 1789, the immense holdings of the church, accumulated through centuries, were confiscated. They then made provisions for selling this property to obtain money for France.

2. The Revolution brought about massive shifting of powers from the Roman Catholic Church to the state.

3. The authority of the church to levy a tax on production was terminated.

4. Special privileges for the clergy were cancelled.

5. The clergy were turned into employees of the state and forced to sign an oath of allegiance to the state.

6. They made the Roman Catholic Church a department of the state. (Not married to but controlled by the state).

7. There followed massive repression of the clergy, including imprisonment and death. Under Catholic rule, Protestants and Jews had no legal status; could not legally marry or inherit property.

8. Voltaire had preached that truth was known through reason alone and that tradition, that is to say religion, was false. He hated the church, even Christianity.

9. All existing dioceses of the church were abolished.

10. Priests and bishops were to be elected by all the people.

11. The clergy was now paid by the government, but that was soon ended also.

The historian “Faber” wrote: “An open profession of atheism, irreligion and infidelity was made and forthwith acted upon by a whole nation once devoted to the papal superstitions. Christianity was formerly abolished as a notorious and malignant imposture by the government of revolutionary France. And so well did the people second this, that, while not a trace of the gospel could be found throughout the reprobate metropolis, every frantic oration in praise of atheism was loudly and enthusiastically applauded”.

Further this historian writes: “The infidel king exalted himself above all law and above all religion. They witnessed both the abolition of all distinctions of a civil society on one day and the establishment of atheism by law on another day. A decree was then passed, ordering the clergy to leave the kingdom within a fortnight after its date; but, instead of allowing them the time specified, even by their own decree, the Jacobin tyrants of France employed the whole of that period in seizing, imprisoning, and putting them to the most cruel of deaths.

The historian Rowan writes: It was decreed, November 29th, 1791, that the members of the clergy who had not taken the oath required by the constitution should be deprived of their pensions, which had been given them as an indemnity for the sale of their property; that they should no longer be allowed to function in their holy offices, even in private houses; that they were suspected of entertaining thoughts of sedition, and were put under the surveillance of the authorities.

In another account of the “Reign of Terror”, the following is noted. Anti-clerical uprising was made possible by the installment of the Revolutionary Calendar on the 24th of October. Hebert’s and Chaumette’s atheist movement initiated a religious campaign in order to de-Christianize society. The program of de-Christianization waged against Catholicism, and eventually against all forms of Christianity, included the deportation of clergy and the condemnation of many of them to death, the closing of churches, the institution of revolutionary and civic cults, the large scale destruction of religious monuments, the outlawing of public and private worship and religious education, forced marriages of the clergy and forced abjuration of their priesthood. Another law was enacted that made all suspected priests and all persons who harbored them liable to death on sight. The climax was reached with the celebration of the goddess “Reason” in Notre Dame Cathedral on 10 November.

Much more could be added, but this informs us of the acts of hostility and godlessness toward everything “religious”, both Catholic and protestant, along with the establishment of atheism throughout France. Thus was born the title, “Infidel France”. France, one of the major countries of Europe and long a bastion of Roman Catholicism, gave birth to a spirit of atheism which the constituent assembly imposed by law on the country. Christianity along with God’s two witnesses, were effectively dead in France. Godless infidelity reigned. So did the reign of terror that resulted.

The Constituent Assembly which convened in May of 1789, worked for the next two years structuring a constitution. One was developed along the lines of their initial “declaration of the rights of man”. This constitution formed the basis of a new republic, with a new form of government, a new social order and ultimately an elimination of anything pertaining to the Christian religion, along with the official institution of the “goddess of reason”. The assembly finished its work and ended near the end of 1791. The aftermath that followed unveiled the awful consequences when a person, a society or a nation, outlaw God and the Bible. The subsequent reign of terror was a spectacle the whole world feared and wondered at.

The historian wrote about it thus: “We are the only people in the world who ever attempted to do without religion. But what is already our sad experience? Every tenth day (the recreation day which the infidels chose to displace the Christian rest day) we are astounded by the recital of more crimes and assassinations than were committed previously in a whole year. At the risk of speaking an obsolete language, and of receiving insult for response, we declare that we must cease striving to destroy the remnants of religion if we desire to prevent the entire dissolution society”.

Then the historian Alison wrote of the restoration of religion. “Everywhere the churches during the reign of terror were closed, the professors of religion dispossessed, and their rights overturned; and the first steps toward the restoration of a regular government were the restoration of the temples, which the whirlwind of anarchy had destroyed, and the revival of the faith, which their fury had extinguished”

The reign of terror was so bad that the Constituent Assembly had to be convened again to re-write it along more moderate lines. On May 28, 1795, a new constitution was written which provided basic religious freedom, a complete reversal of the constitution of 1791. On the 27th of June of the same year, the churches of Paris were opened and services were held in great ceremony. The new constitution, wrote Pressence, was the work of the moderate party, and was presented to the convention by Boissy d’Anglas. It was easy to see that “three years” of contest had overturned many a revolutionary prejudice. As to religious liberty, the new constitution asserted the great principles which had triumphed in the convention after the fall of Robespierre. It contained the words, “Everyone is free to the exercise of his worship. The original constitution that gave birth to an infidel, godless society, was effective at the end of 1791. In 1795, another constitution had to be written, which would provide freedom of religious worship according as the people saw fit. After 3 ½ years the law which gave license to atheism and denied the worship of God, was now reversed. From the end of 1791 to the middle of 1795, France had endured a catastrophic reign of terror. The guillotine was busy day and night. While thousands died (est. 50,000), yet the noticeable fact here was that it focused on the nobility or ruling class, whose blood stained the soil of France. At this point we will return to the text of chapter 11, to see what it says about the two witnesses and their death and resurrection and how this history of the French revolution fits in the scripture.

Rev. 11:7. “And when they (2 witnesses) shall have finished their testimony ----. Their 1260 years of sackcloth testimony ended in 1789. “The beast that ascended out of the “pit” shall make war with them (2 witnesses) and kill them. There was only one beast ever put in a “pit”, and that was Roman paganism which was forced into the pit of papal doctrines, traditions and other abuses. Godless paganism was buried in this pit until it was released in the time of the French Revolution. The beast of ancient Roman paganism or godlessness, came out of the pit in the form of “atheistic France”, and through their constitution, outlawed God, the Bible, the church, clergy and every sign of religion. In other words, the beast of infidelity killed the word of God, the two witnesses.

V8. 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. France was a part of the old Holy Roman Empire; a street if you will. And it was in this street (symbolizing France) that the word of God was destroyed, outlawed and atheism set up in its place. She was spiritually called Sodom because of her deep immorality, and Egypt which symbolizes the bondage and sin of her domain, where also our Lord was crucified. When they destroyed the two witnesses, it also destroyed Christ.

V9. Peoples, kindred, nations and tongues shall see their dead bodies (lying in the street, France). The blatant spectacle of the outlawing of the word of God and the church was heralded with great pomp and revelry. Theatrical productions of the most vile and unholy nature flaunted their allegiance to the “goddess of reason” and their repudiation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The continual parade of debauchery, revelry, profligacy and godlessness would be observed for three days and a half (3 ½ years). From the end of 1791, to the middle of 1795, was the time of the constitutional adoption of atheism in the names of reason and liberty. In June, 1795, because the reign of terror had produced such carnage, war and trouble, a new constitution was adopted “restoring the liberty to pursue the Christian faith again.

V11. 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. The word of God is resurrected; liberty of faith has been restored; both the shackles of atheism and of Romanism are broken. The sackcloth is gone, and they are robed in white.

V12. 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. In our study of the church of Philadelphia, which began about 1800, we saw an unprecedented rise in the spread of the word of God and its open, free teaching. Within about 20 years from 1795, there had sprung up 128 Bible distribution societies, providing Bibles everywhere. The story of Mary Jones, of Llanfihingly, Wales, which sparked the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society, was part of this rapid rise of the Bible, God’s two witnesses. Her sackcloth wardrobe of 1260 years has now been discarded; she has been resurrected from her crucifixion in France, and has ascended to a high and heavenly elevation in the world, the church and the hearts of men.

Finally, the marvelous spectacle for the Christian to observe from all of this prophecy of Rev. 11, is the amazing ability of the word of God to endure its abominable suppression of the dark ages; its resurrection from those who would destroy it completely and its marvelous ascension to the loftiest heights above the world, both in spite of and because of this treatment. Men may oppose it, deny it, seek to destroy it, ridicule it, and blaspheme it, but it still stands.

There is a memorial to the French Hugenots, who endured horrible treatment for their faith in the word of God, in Paris, which reads: “Hammer on ye hostile hands; your hammer breaks, God’s anvil stands”.

There is a poem which I have carried in my Bible for years which sums up the unsearchable riches and value of the Bible, entitled: “This Precious Book”. This precious book I’d rather own than all the golden gems --- that e’er on monarchs’ coffers shown, or on their diadems. And were the seas one chrysolite, this earth one golden ball, and gems were all the stars of night, This book were worth them all. A, no, the soul ne’er found relief – in glittering hoards of wealth; Gems dazzle not the eye of grief; gold cannot purchase health. But here a blessed balm appears --- for every human woe, and they that seek that book in tears --- their tears shall cease to flow.

In closing there is an interesting story about Voltaire who did so much to plant the seeds of irreligion and a hate for Christianity in France and the world. He is reported to have said on one occasion, that the Bible was a worthless book. In just a few years, he said, it will be out dated and forgotten. Well, the few years passed, and the works of Voltaire were sold for nearly nothing and his house was purchased as the distribution point for a Bible Society.

There is no greater folly on earth than to neglect, ignore, disbelieve, hate ridicule and disobey the Bible, God’s two anointed ones which stand before the Lord of all the earth. Read it, seek it, love it and obey it!