

# Revelation Series

by John McGregor

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*The sermon explores the themes of the witness being strong, the battle going wrong, and the work of God moving on, ultimately leading to the establishment of the kingdom of God.*

**Duration:** 35:45

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 11:1

**Topics:** "Revelation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses three observations from a biblical text. The first observation is that there are times when the witness of God's people is strong and they are ready for battle. The second observation is that there are also times when the battle goes wrong and God's people may feel defeated and forgotten. However, the third observation is that there will always be a time when God's work moves on and His enemies are defeated. The preacher emphasizes the power of God's resurrection and the promise that because Jesus lives, His followers will also live. The sermon concludes with the proclamation that the kingdom of this earth has become the kingdom of God and His Christ.

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## Transcript

We're turning back there to walk through it. Let me just give you a note of remembrance. Remember, tonight is not here at 630, but at Hillsdale Alliance, sorry, Heritage Alliance on Hillsdale Street.

I still call it Hillsdale. It's the one with the praying hands roof, OK? Becky, what's the address again? When you have a postie in the group, you can't go wrong, right? Amen. Good, so 630 as we pray together with our brothers and sisters all across the Alliance in the city.

Let me just pray as we look together into his word. Father, we exalt you from our hearts, our minds, and express our love to you not only in song this morning, but we love your word because you have granted that all scripture is God-breathed and all scripture is given to us for a purpose. And Lord, this morning, may your purpose for your word just lift and encourage us as your people.

May we know the touch of God through the word and by your spirit, even as you have already been working with us in this time of worship. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Now, this passage is incredible as you think about it.

If you have an imagination like mine, you can think about these two witnesses. You can think about the battle that goes on. You can think about all of the things that are there.

In the text that we read, and we want to just dwell upon it, perhaps somewhat devotionally this morning. And so as you look at it, obviously, these events are still in the future. But as with all of scripture, there are applications into today.

And as we think about the word of God this morning, this particular chapter has my heart excited and pumping, because not only will it be true in a coming time, but it also can be seen to be true in you and me as individuals, in us as a church, in our homes, and in our lives. And may the Lord just bless his word this morning and strengthen us through it. As we think about his presence, we have been asking not only through song, but through the word, that he would impact our lives.

And I want to just take three singular thoughts this morning from this chapter. And Keith, where is he? He's here somewhere. Can't see him.

He'll be rather shocked, because the three thoughts rhyme. And you know I'm not a poet. But as we think about this text, the things that the Lord has been encouraging my heart to see over the days of this past week are, as we think about the first six verses, first of all, when the witness is strong.

And there are times when the witness is strong, aren't there? Times when there is tremendous authority in the Christian witness, in the Christian life, and as we walk with him and proclaim him. Here, the Apostle John is given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple and the altar and count the people and so on. And in verse 3, the witnesses are given authority.

That's an interesting word. And it's from that authority that God gives that their witness and testimony is so strong. Now, I was asked once in a conference in the States, is it true that Canadians don't have strong feelings about anything? And I said, well, I'm not sure.

But you know, this is a time of strength in witness. Many commentators comment on this. Some would say this is representative of Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets.

Other commentators say this is Elijah and Enoch because neither of them died. And they are back in that sense in strong witness. Others allegorize the passage and turn it into something else altogether.

But I think we can safely say that these two witnesses are given great authority by God. And I tend to think of Moses and Elijah because of what it says in these verses. Because as you read them, you see things that happened in Elijah's life and things that happened in Moses' life too.

So here are the two witnesses given authority. Isn't it an interesting thing when you bump into somebody who is so full of God that it's unavoidable? And sometimes I pray, Lord, long may their tribe increase. Someone who's so full of the love of God and the strength of God and the power of God's Spirit.

I had a man like that in my life when I was a young person far away from God. And no matter where you placed him, he would just come up with Jesus. And as I read in church history characters like George Whitfield, a great revivalist, there is a testimony of a lady in a marketplace one day.

And she's saying to the people who've gathered to hear Whitfield preach. She says, this is the fifth time today I've heard him preach this sermon. And every single time, the tears just flow.

This man is telling us the truth. What was it? It was that he was speaking in the authority that God had given him regardless of the times in which he lived or the circumstances into which he was placed. Preaching, these two witnesses are preaching clothed in sackcloth.

They are preaching for 1,260 days brokenheartedly because sackcloth is one of those symbols when the heart is broken and when there's a brokenness. And you know, sometimes preachers are accused of being arrogant and judgmental and all those things. But the power of God and the anointing of God here is so strong that there is a preaching from a brokenness.

And you know there's something infinitely attractive about that, isn't there? Something wonderful when you know that this is God's word because there's a broken heart behind it. It's as if they are dying men preaching to dying men. And oh, how easy it is to forget that this world is so temporary.

And they are there proclaiming. And you know, when the witness is strong, things are going good. Things are going great.

You know, they are called in verse 4 the olive trees. And the olive trees is a reference back to Zechariah chapter 4 where the light of God comes through those olive trees supplying the olive oil for the light in the temple and in the presence of the living God. So they are not preaching their own stuff or their own ideas.

They are preaching in the anointing of the Spirit and flow of God. Did you notice in verse 5 that they are protected? It says, if anyone harms them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours them. They are protected until their job is completed.

Now, dear Christian brother or sister here this morning worshiping the Lord, sometimes fear descends upon us and we think, oh, no. What if? What if I try something? What if people don't like it? What if? Oh, I'd best just be quiet. Part of this authority is the understanding that they are invincible until the job is done.

Now, I could do a little Irish jig. Maybe Judy could teach me that actually. She does Irish dancing.

I know she does. But you know, just think about this. You get all afraid.

There are so many non-Christians out there and they're just ready to pounce. Look at how the media cuts up the church and anything Christian. Oh, my goodness.

I'll just be quiet. You know, when the witness is strong, it is strong in the power of God, in the spirit of the living God. And there is a sense where in His time, you don't have to worry or be afraid because you're there until the job is done.

You know, some of us with white hair, that ought to give us a little woo-hoo kind of moment. Not just kind of lingering around till the grim reaper comes and we can go to heaven. Praise God.

Hallelujah. There is something for each one of you who are in Christ Jesus to do day by day in walking with Him. And as His Spirit is still at work, there is the power of the Spirit behind that witness, that strength, that anointing of God.

These two witnesses, as we look at them, yes, we know that they are future, but we also need to remember that this is true in our day and time as well. If you walk in the fullness of the Spirit of God, you will not fail. Isn't there one little Pentecostal in here this morning? Okay, I see that hand.

These two witnesses are powerful, says verse six. Let's just read it. They have power to shut up the sky so that rain will not fall during their days.

Here's the spirit of Elijah, isn't it? He's the prophet in 1 Kings 17, 18, and 19 that we see he was led by God in reading the word of God to know that God would bring that if he asked. And so he said, let there be no rain. And there wasn't for three and a half years.

And you see the power here is again leading us toward Moses. They have power over the waters to turn them into blood or to strike the earth with every plague. Where did the plagues take place? In Exodus, right? So as often as they desire.

Oh, my friends, it tells us in verse 10 that the earth or the world was tormented by them. We're scared to make a squeak for Jesus, but the world was tormented. Now, what does it mean the world was tormented? It means that as they lived and proclaimed Christ, there was this righteous witness.

There was this sense of God at work, proclaiming that sin is sin, heaven is heaven and hell is hell. And we must make a choice while we're here upon this earth where we will spend that eternal destiny. And they are doing it in the strength and power of the Lord, not in arrogance, but in humility.

You think about Christians and the church this morning, there is enough power in the witness of the gospel for as long as the Lord gives. And dear church, as we seek to move on and to gather and to grow as the Lord would bless, let us be sure that we center it in the gospel of Christ Jesus and His power will rest upon it in every single way. So we see that the witness is strong.

And Keith, while you were out, I said that this message rhymes. You didn't know that I was a poet. The second thing that I'd like us just to think about and see this morning here in Revelation 11 is, yes, there are times when the witness is strong, but there are times when the battle goes wrong.

At least as we consider it, it seems to have gone wrong. You look here in the middle of this chapter as you consider what verses seven through 10 are saying, when their witness is finished, the beast comes to make war, says verse seven. You ever feel like you're in a war? Mm-hmm.

Yeah, I felt like I was in one all week long. And you asked Judy, she'll tell you, I was getting pretty nervous on Friday. Will there be a sermon Sunday morning? Busy, and so many things go on, aren't there? And sometimes we feel like we're in that kind of warfare that it's just so hard to draw near to the Lord, don't we? And sometimes it seems as if we are overcome and the war is going the wrong way.

Here's what verse seven says. He comes up out of the abyss and will make war with them and overcome them and kill them. Now, whatever happened to victory in Jesus? Whatever happened to when the witness was so strong? Isn't it interesting as you start to look at the word and apply it not only as to what will be in the future, but as to how it affects our lives today because there are times, are there not, when any one of us can be overcome? And there are times when even all of us may feel that way.

The life and witness is silenced, killed, in verse seven. Dead bodies lying in the street, there for all to see, says verse eight. I've seen more than enough dead bodies lying in the streets, and it's not a pretty sight.

And if you're watching your TV these days, you see it in Syria and sometimes in places like Nigeria and so on. That's what this is talking about, isn't it? They're killed and just left lying in the street. Dead bodies for all to see.

Where did it take place? Where will it take place? At Jerusalem, for it says where the Lord was crucified in verse eight. And then in verses nine and 10, it says that there were those who were rejoicing. Can't you see it? Yes, finally, we've shut them up.

There's nobody anymore to proclaim their sin and heaven and hell and decisions and righteousness and truth. Finally, hee, hee, hee, yah-hoo. And the world is rejoicing over the silence of the witness.

And look out, because I'm gonna stop preaching and start interfering any minute now. There are times when it seems that we are defeated, aren't there? There are times when we are silenced and feel a deadness in our very soul. Isn't that true? And there are times when recovery seems impossible.

But dear friends, if you look at the whole counsel of God and at every part of the Scriptures, you will have to come to this determination that is so blessed and so strong and so good. Israel must have felt that way in their time of slavery in Egypt. They must have felt that way when they came to the borders of the promised land.

And when they said, we can't do it. There's too many of them out there. And then Moses said, oh, you've sinned.

And they said, okay, we'll go do it. And he said, don't, you'll fall before your enemies. Sure enough, because you see when we go out of his will, there's always a crash.

But 40 years went by. God didn't leave the thing that way. Samson, I like the character of Samson.

I learned so much from him. The strong one, the strong man, just like the strong witness. Silenced so easily, so quickly, enslaved and blinded.

He must have felt so defeated and dying. But God didn't leave him that way. And so let me go to the third observation that I want us to catch this morning in this text.

Not only are there times when the witness is strong and times when the battle goes wrong. But the third thing that you wanna see in this chapter is simply this. There is time when the work of God moves on.

Israel, 40 years later, God says, nah. I'll die. The old folk had said, we can't go in there.

Our children will die. And God said, that's okay, I'll use the children. And he took them in and gave them the land.

Samson, as he stood between those pillars, his cry is, oh God, would you give me back the strength just this once? What do you think it would feel like to be a CNN reporter in Jerusalem on this day when we get to the last verses in the chapter? Past verse 10, when we get to the place where it says, and the breath from God entered into them again and they stood up. Ladies and gentlemen, as you can see behind me, these two bodies are still lying here, been that way for three and a half days. Yes, there's a party at the Hilton, another one over there at the Sheraton.

The Renaissance is almost on fire as people party. What? God is not going to abandon his work. He's not going to abandon his child.

He's not going to abandon our families. The breath of life from God returns to them. It's just like in Ezekiel 37, when he's told to preach to the dry bones and they come together and sinew comes on them and then

muscle and so on.

And it says, they lay as a vast group of bodies across the floor. And then God says to him, son of man, call the breath, prophesy. And it says, when the breath of God came, they stood up like a mighty army.

I don't know any way to say this. And some of you may say this Irish wishful thinking, but I choose to believe that the best days for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are yet to come. I choose to believe that there comes the breath of God and it sweeps away the competition.

I choose to believe that that's the grind that we have to stand on. And I choose to believe that no matter our condition, he is able to move in in the strength and power of our God. You see, as the life returns and they stand up, it says, fear came.

Talk about killing a party. Yeah. Isn't it interesting as you think? What an awesome thing a Christian is in the hand of the living God.

What an awesome thing to be filled with the spirit of God and to know the love of God in that kind of measure. What an awesome thing as we reflect on this text. In verse 12, it says, the voice of God says, come up here.

You know, if you didn't get that far in the chapter, you might be inclined to say, boy, these two witnesses really did a job for God. And look what happened to them. Left lying there three days in the street, kind of forgotten.

But the work of God goes on. We cannot stop as individuals, as churches, as families. His work goes on.

And the Lord didn't just bring them to resurrection so that he could annoy those people having a party. He's just fulfilling the promise that he gave all the way through. Because I live, Jesus said, you shall, do what? Live also.

That's the power of his gospel and his resurrection. And if you look at what happens here, it says they go up in a cloud. Put out of your mind those nice fluffy things that you see here and there in the sky.

That's not the kind of cloud it's talking about. It's talking about the same kind of cloud when Solomon stood in the temple and prayed and dedicated it. And the Shekinah glory of God came and filled the place.

And the priests put it in beef or boogie and moved on out. Because he took full possession. And that's exactly what he's doing here with his two witnesses.

The job is done. I haven't forgotten about you. Come up here.

Oh, I gotta find another Irishman. I can't always be the one going, wahoo! He is never defeated. He is never going to be defeated.

Verse 13 says an earthquake comes and there's devastation in the city. And it says that people were giving glory to God. You see, when God is at work, no human being can take the glory or the praise.

It's just Him. And don't you love that when we come to verse 15, there's a change that takes place. And there's that voice that says the kingdom of this earth has become, has become the kingdom of our God and His Christ.

Wow. Sometimes when I have preached on this chapter in the past, I just titled it Done But Not Out. And you know, maybe it's not a bad title.

I'm hopeless at sermon titles. But as you consider just these three thoughts this morning, there are times when the witness is strong and we're good to go. But there are times when the war goes wrong and we wonder, Lord, have you forgotten me? Have you forgotten us? Lord, I'm overcome.

But there will always be the time when God's work moves on. And when in His strength and power, all of His enemies are set aside and defeated. There's an old song from Ireland.

I'll quote it in a minute. As you look at verse 16, you see, worship just flowing. The elders are worshipping in heaven.

And the Messiah, that song that we hear sometimes at Christmas time, you know, says, He shall reign. Pastor Brad, how's your theology this morning? For how long? Forever. Smart guy.

Good thing we have him. Yeah, forever and forever. Yeah.

Well, Pastor, it's time to wrap it up and we want to do that shortly. The life of God cannot be quenched. And as we step out and unite by faith and move together, we'll see His hand and know His way.

The old song that I was referring to, we used to sing sometimes on Sunday night. It's an old hymn. Maybe you know it, maybe not.

Most of those are so old, they're new anymore. It's one of the advantages of having this much white stuff. Here's the words for it.

Breathe on me breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with thee I will, one will, to do and to endure. That, my friends, ought to be our goal. Aren't you glad that we have the last picture and the last victory? History teaches me that on December 7th, 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt said to his cabinet, history has recorded who fired the first shot, but it doesn't matter who fired the first shot.

We will fire the last one. And that is the victory that the Christian has, regardless of the circumstances and the goings on. That victory is assured in Christ Jesus.

We can know times of great strength. We can experience temporary times of loss in the battle. We can be assured, though, that setbacks will be addressed by our God and our Savior.

Friends, don't accept the devil's lies. Ask the Lord for a fresh breath of life from him this morning. May we pray.

Father, as we look in your word, we see the strength of your great love. We thank you for a Savior who forgives, who cleanses, who gives life. And it is not temporary life, but eternal life.

Thank you that, yes, as individuals and as families and even as church, we can have times of great strength. And we recognize we can also have times when the war seems to have gone wrong. But Father, our eyes are not upon the negative, not upon the bodies in the street, but upon the one who says, come up here.

The one whose great heart desire is to lift us above all these things, and that we might know beyond the shadow of a doubt that his work will go on in our hearts and lives, in our marriages and homes, in his church, even here at Glencairn. Father, would you bless your people? And for those this morning who may be in the valley time of life, would you touch each heart and lift us into that place where you can pour your Spirit afresh and anew. And for those of us who were rejoicing this morning, Lord, we want to say more.

Pour upon us more of yourself, more of your grace and love, more of your truth. Thank you, Lord, that the victory is indeed sure. In thy Spirit of the living God, we ask that you would be the after speaker, that you would bring these truths and these verses to our minds in times of joy and in times of trial, and that you would cause us, Lord, to know the infilling, indwelling power of your Holy Spirit.

And just before I say amen, let me say to you in a few moments, when the service concludes, there'll be a prayer time. And if this morning you need prayer for a fresh touch, come. If you need prayer for salvation, come.

And if you need prayer because when we live in the flesh, we're always defeated, so we need to live in the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit. Whatever your point of need is this morning, when this service closes, there'll be elders and prayer partners here at the front to meet with you. My Father, we do ask that you would continue to stir our hearts in Jesus' precious name.

God's people sin. As Keith and Mitch.

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