

# Where Are the Tormenting Preachers?



We live in an age where *brutal reality* is often denied and pushed aside in favor of *fiction* and *fantasy*. Too often, when we should be confronted to *awake* and to *arise*, we are instead met with the pacifying lullaby of "*peace and safety*". Sadly, it's madly popular to *give men what they want*, instead of *giving them what they desperately need*. Hence, the demand for clever, forked-tongued charmers has never been greater; *not surprisingly they've taken nearly every pulpit*. Indeed, *truth-tellers* are almost as rare as *truth-lovers*. We tolerate anything and everything, except, of course, *Jesus* and His sin-chilling Word.

Thus, our culture has fallen deeply under the perverted spell of sin. Drunk with iniquity, we've waxed stupid, blind, and decadent. We are, as it were, asleep at the wheel, awaiting sudden and utter ruin. Ironically, our only *hope* is likewise our greatest threat: the *Word of God*. We will either be *delivered* or we will be *judged*, but make no mistake, we will be one or we will be the other. There is no escape.

Unfortunately, for anyone to truly come to God, they must overcome the common deceptions of the day, including what constitutes a *genuine preacher*. The erroneous picture of the soft-spoken, mild-mannered clergyman who is as *hip* as he is *helpful*, must be discarded to the ash heap of *religious fables*. Such a perverted caricature of the *preacher of righteousness* is nowhere found in the Scriptures. However, of the images the Bible does provide, none is more descriptive and telling than what we find in the *Book of Revelation, chapter 11...*

*"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 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. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."* -Revelation 11:1-10

Now, when I read this passage, a very intriguing question comes to mind, especially considering the last phrase of the last verse in our text...

*"...because these two prophets **tormented** them that dwelt on the earth." -Revelation 11:10b*

I can't help but wonder, 'Where are the tormenting preachers in this hour?' Here, in *Revelation 11*, we read the testimony of the two *apocalyptic prophets of God*, a fascinating passage indeed. I have three brief observations for our consideration and application...

## **FIRST, THESE MEN ARE IRREFUTABLY GOD-CALLED**

*"And I will give power unto my two witnesses..." -Revelation 11:3a*

There can be no mistake, this ministry and these two men are God-ordained. The Bible declares their power and authority come directly from *God*. In fact, their *ministry* was even prophesied of thousands of years in advance...

*"...these are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." -Zech. 4:14*

Moreover, if they are *God-called* and *Spirit-blessed*, can there be any doubt that they are likewise holy and devout men? Could God so anoint and empower such men if they did not display the utmost consecration? Absolutely not. So, we conclude their ministry is *God-ordained* and they were *Christlike* in their character. This is important to note, because if we cannot establish their ministry as *God-called*, neither can we confirm their methods as *Scriptural*.

## **SECONDLY, THEY ARE PRIMARILY CALLED TO PROPHECY OR PREACH**

*"...and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." -Revelation 11:3b*

Incidentally, to *prophesy* means to *speak under divine inspiration*. Indeed, these men are called to *declare God's Mind*, to interject *God's mind* into a world bent on sin. Yes, there's the mention of the miraculous. There is *fire and judgment, drought and turning rivers to blood, and smiting the earth with plagues*. However, this is all so their *testimony* can be completed, then God lifts His hand of protection. So above all else, these two witnesses were *preachers of the Word*. Now, a *testimony* is a divine witness or report. Hence, we can conclude, these men are sent by *God* to *speak for God*. In other words, *they have something important to declare*. The *message, the proclamation* is of the utmost importance. Again, these men do not speak their own *words*, but the *words of God*. Think about it, so evil and hostile is the environment, they must be divinely protected to preach. Moreover, they are sent where God knows they will be *unwelcome, unwanted*, and, for the most part, *ineffectual* (as far as reception). Today, when consecrated Christians attempt to obey *God's Word* and submit to *God's Spirit* by confronting

sinners at venues like *Gay Pride Parades*, or *Muslim Festivals*, or *Mardi Gras*, etc., they are often met with the counsel of the lukewarm which usually follows this line of carnal thinking...

*"No one wants to hear what you have to say in that environment, you'll just cause trouble and do little good. You would be much wiser to simply pray".*

## **LASTLY, THEIR MINISTRY IS DESCRIBED AS TORMENTING**

*"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." -Revelation 11:10*

They are *God-called* and they are *Christlike*, yet, their ministry has a tormenting quality. Today, if *ministry* is seen as anything but soothing, comforting, and accepted, it cannot be affirmed by the *religious machine*. The *minister* is, above all, to be inoffensive in the extreme and to appeal to the sinner on his own spiritual level. Often, the very term "*preacher*" is discarded for *clergy*, *reverend*, or *minister* because overall, preaching is seen as archaic and offensive. Careful consideration is made to make both the *messenger* and *message* as culturally palatable as possible. If there is direct engagement at all, it must be done so very carefully, with generous diplomacy and elaborate salutation. The delicate psyche of the *sin-lover* must not be enraged or disappointed: *he must, at least, tolerate the god we present*. Great emphasis is placed on *results* as a direct correlation to Biblical accuracy...

*"Surely, if we are anointed we will be accepted",* they reason.

*Jesus' words in...*

*"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." -John 15:18*

...have now been unconsciously replaced with, *'if the world hate you, do something different, because you must be wrong.'*

Yet, the Bible says of these two *God-called*, *Holy Ghost empowered*, *Christlike* preachers of *God's Word*...

*"...tormented them that dwelt on the earth." -Revelation 11:10b*

How often have I heard responses from lukewarm Christians who decry confrontational, Biblical evangelism with fleshly lamentation such as...

*"I'm so grieved, those folks are out there just tormenting those unbelievers and thinking that Jesus is pleased..."*

They generally do this because their *eyes are on the crowd's reaction* instead of their *ears tuned to God's Word*. Think about it: so universally hated and despised were these two prophets, that not one person is willing to give them a decent burial.

*“And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.” -Revelation 11:9*

In closing, I don't believe it was God's intention to *torment* anyone, though He certainly knew the ministry of these two preachers would do so. Nor do I believe these two prophets purposed to *torment their hearers*. On the other hand, neither did they avoid it.

My point is not, *they tormented, so seek to be tormenting, but rather, don't avoid being tormenting and don't be alarmed*. When a society becomes so demon possessed that the truth torments them, then *the truth tellers are not to blame, but the truth haters*. This is an unpopular thought, nevertheless, Biblical. Of course, we can always be more Christlike, more anointed, but the problem is not with our *message* or our *method*, but with our culture. And when has there ever been a God-called, sin-exposing preacher called to confront a wicked culture who has been accepted? There have been a few: *Jonah and Nineveh come to mind, but the vast majority have been utterly rejected*. In the vast majority of cases, the godly preacher's message tends to annoy and torment those who God intends to deliver. Like *Ahab* responded to *Elijah*, *“Art thou he that troubleth Israel?”* Most see God-called men as trouble-makers, but as *Elijah* answered *Ahab*...

*“And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.” -1 Kings 18:18*

Likewise, the real trouble-makers, according to God, are not the preachers or righteousness but the law-breakers. Think about it, *John the Baptist*, who lost his head for his message, opens the *New Testament* introducing *Jesus* to the world. Fittingly, the *two witness*, close the final book, who can say these are fringe ministries? What our culture needs is more tormenting preachers. Indeed, where are the tormenting preachers for our sin-drunken nation?

*“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” -Ephesians 5:11-13*

—B.W.