

19. November 2022

The two witnesses

Rev 11:3-12

I shall send my two witnesses to prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, wearing sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamps in attendance on the Lord of the world. Fire comes from their mouths and consumes their enemies if anyone tries to harm them; and anyone who tries to harm them will certainly be killed in this way. They have the power to lock up the sky so that it does not rain as long as they are prophesying; they have the power to turn water into blood and strike the whole world with any plague as often as they like. When they have completed their witnessing, the beast that comes out of the Abyss is going to make war on them and overcome them and kill them. Their corpses lie in the main street of the great city known by the symbolic names Sodom and Egypt, in which their Lord was crucified. People of every race, tribe, language and nation stare at their corpses, for three-and-a-half days, not letting them be buried, and the people of the world are glad about it and celebrate the event by giving presents to each other, because these two prophets have been a plague to the people of the world.' After the three-and-a-half days, God breathed life into them and they stood up on their feet, and everybody who saw it happen was terrified; then I heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, 'Come up here,' and while their enemies were watching, they went up to heaven in a cloud.

There are many interpretations about who could be the two witnesses described in this passage, clothed with authority for the fulfillment of their mission. Perhaps we will understand it only at the moment when they appear and openly confront the powers of darkness.

This may be similar to what will happen with the Antichrist, who will appear at the End of Time. He, too, can only be identified when he is already there, exercising his dominion; unless God grants a special intuition to someone, making him understand beforehand that the Antichrist is this or that specific person... This could be in order to warn others, because, as we suppose, the Antichrist will exercise a global dominion, which will surpass all the forms of government that have existed. Currently, the technological means are available for a universal control of people, from which it could

be difficult to escape... But God will be in charge of leading and protecting His own in such a tribulation!

Exegetes who interpret this apocalyptic passage see that the two witnesses appear precisely at the time of the tribulation, to warn people and counteract the power of the Antichrist and his entourage. The two witnesses are endowed with a special authority, reminiscent of the actions of Moses and Elijah. Moses was able to turn water into blood (cf. Ex 7:19-21) and Elijah closed the heavens so that it would not rain for three years (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1). These similarities between the two witnesses and Moses and Elijah have led some to suppose that, indeed, these two personages will appear publicly in the End Times. Others, however, think that it is Elijah and Enoch, because, according to the biblical accounts, these two did not die, but were taken away by God (cf. Gen 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11), to return in times of great tribulation to carry out their mission. There are many other interpretations of these two witnesses, and it would be difficult to list all of them...

My personal opinion is that, in fact, they will be two witnesses clothed with a special authority; that is, two concrete persons, who will appear with the authority of Moses and Elijah, just as it happened with John the Baptist, who worked in the power of Elijah (cf. Mt 17:10-13). Through the eyes of faith, it will be possible to recognize these witnesses, because through them many signs will take place and their witness will become known everywhere. The faithful will be able to realize that these witnesses speak the truth and unmask the web of lies of the Antichrist. In view of the technical possibilities of this time, we can imagine that their message will be widely spread.

So, to be concrete, what can we draw from this passage for our path of following Christ, given that we cannot yet identify either the Antichrist or the two witnesses?

On the one hand, it is an affirmation that even in the most difficult times we can put our trust in God. He does not abandon us in such a dark moment nor does He leave us without His help. The two witnesses, whoever they may be, will come to the aid of the faithful and give them guidance. Even if many people allow themselves to be seduced by the Antichrist - God forbid! - there will be a "faithful remnant" who will not bow their knees to Baal (cf. 1 Kings 19:18).

A second point we can apply from this passage is the call to live with great vigilance. The anti-Christian spirit is already at work in the world and in the Church, and many do not even identify it as such. We must therefore listen attentively to those voices that proclaim the authentic Catholic faith, and not lend our ears to those voices that mislead us. Already now we can train ourselves in this discernment, in order to be prepared in case the influence of those powers that are enemies of God should increase even more. We must resort to all spiritual weapons to be able to identify this spirit of evil even in its most subtle manipulations.

In fact, we have a most important witness - the Holy Spirit - who leads us to the full truth (cf. Jn 16:13). Moreover, we can place our trust in the authentic Magisterium of the Church. If we do this conscientiously and cultivate our spiritual life, we will be equipped for every situation, for no one can snatch us out of the Lord's hand (cf. Jn 10:28).