

# Dying in Christ

Revelation 11:9-10

By Phillip G. Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2017-03-26

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### Text

11:1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who are worshiping there. 2 And leave out the outer court of the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

3 And I will give authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” 4 These are the two olive trees, even the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies. So if anyone wants to harm them he must be killed in this way. 6 They have authority to shut up the sky so that no rain falls during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they wish.

7 When they finish their witness, the Beast of prey that comes up out of the Abyss will make war with them, overcome them and kill them 8—and leave their corpses in the street of the great city! (which is called Sodom and Egypt, spiritually speaking), even where their Lord was crucified.

9 And those from the peoples, tribes, languages and ethnic nations look at their corpses three-and-a-half days, and will not allow their corpses to be buried. 10 And those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and they will enjoy themselves and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

11 And after three-and-a-half days the breath from God entered them and they stood on their feet, and a great fear fell on those who were watching them. 12 And I heard a loud voice from the heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. 13 And in that day there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand individuals were killed in the earthquake. And the rest became fearful and gave glory to the God of heaven.)

14 The second woe is past. Look out, here comes the third woe!<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

John Hus was a priest in Bohemia who sought to bring reform to the church long before the Protestant Reformation happened. He lived from 1369 to 1415. So he died 68 years before Luther was even born. He was an incredible reformer. He saw the Scriptures as the supreme authority in all of life and he was such a powerful preacher of the Word that he became a threat to the pope. The Word of God has a way of irritating compromisers, doesn't it? Well, the pope wanted him tried as a heretic at the Council of Constance, and because the emperor promised him safe conduct, he went in order to be a witness to the truth. Hey - the emperor should be good for his word, right?

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of the Majority Text by Wilbur M. Pickering - [The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken](#).

Apparently not. The emperor went back on his word, had him arrested, and had him burned at the stake at the age of 42. And the Hussites, who were Protestants before there was a Protestant Reformation, took his death very hard. It seemed like such a waste. It seemed that his witness had been cut short.

But even his death became a form of witness to the truths of Scripture. He was given an opportunity to recant before being burned, but he said, "What I taught with my lips, I seal with my blood." "What I taught with my lips, I seal with my blood." In other words, his life was a witness and his death sealed that witness. And that is the way I look at verse 3 and verses 7-14.

Someone asked me last week whether the prophets could really be said to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days if those 1260 days end on the day they were raised from the dead. After all, verse 7 says that they were killed when "they finished their testimony." That would seem to cut their prophesying or their testimony short three and a half days. And it is a legitimate objection - especially since the measurement was made in terms of days.

There are two possible answers. The first possibility is that their prophesying started four days earlier than I put on my chart, which would mean four days earlier than the first half of the war. I'm skeptical of that, but that is one way you could resolve that perceived problem. Then the 1260 days would start four days earlier and end on the day they die.

But the approach I have taken is that their miraculous resurrection, their response to the voice from heaven, and everyone seeing them being caught up all constituted one last prophetic witness to Israel that their words were true. So their verbal testimony ended the day they died, but God allowed their death and resurrection to be one more miraculous prophetic statement to the truth of their testimony. And that it did indeed lead people to repent can be seen in verses 11-13. So just as Ezekiel's silent non-verbal lying on his side for a number of days and his other silent pantomimes were prophetic testimonies that his words were true, this was a prophetic act that showed that their words were true. So I still hold that the 1260 days ends with their resurrection, not with the day they died. And it maps out with everything else so much better.

## **I. The historical context deduced from the text:**

### ***A. The prophets corpses are lying in "the plaza" right outside of the temple (see last sermon)***

And before we apply the passage, I want to give a few more details to set this passage in its historical context. Last week we saw that the phrase, "in the street" in verse 8 has a Greek word that refers to the plaza directly outside the temple walls. So when the Romans "leave their corpses in the street of the great city!" they are leaving their corpses just outside the temple walls where all the defenders of that temple can see them. And I won't repeat all the proofs that I gave of that exact location. But the Greek word for "street" refers to that plaza.

### ***B. The Roman armies (made up of many nationalities - v. 9a) can see the corpses (v. 9c).***

But if their bodies were in that plaza, verses 9 and 10 give us some very significant information about the specific time that this death happened. And I will build the argument bit by bit. Notice in verse 9 that it wasn't just the Jews who saw them. It says, "And those from the peoples, tribes, languages and ethnic nations look at their corpses three-and-a-half days."

Supposedly this introduces a problem for my interpretation. My view is that the reference to the peoples, tribes, languages, and ethnic nations is a reference to the Roman legions. But there are a few people who hold to different views on eschatology who will use that phrase to try to disprove our view that this was fulfilled in the first century. They mistakenly think that Titus would have only had Italians with him in his legions, and Italians only comprise one people, one language, one ethnic group. So this is one of their go-to texts to show that this could not have been the armies of Titus.

Well, they are wrong, and recent research has demonstrated that conclusively. A number of historians and scholars of the Roman legions have said that the Italians had actually become a small minority within the legions in the first century. And at least one legion was completely made up of other ethnic groups. Lawrence Keppie is an expert in Roman history and has written a scholarly book on history of the Roman legions. His research has shown that after AD 68, "the legions... consisted almost exclusively of provincials..."<sup>2</sup> - in other words, of non-Italian peoples from the provinces

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence J. F. Keppie, *Legions and Veterans: Roman Army Papers 1971-2000*, (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), p. 116.

around the empire. And I have quotes from other scholars like Santosuosso,<sup>3</sup> Phang,<sup>4</sup> and Pollard,<sup>5</sup> who have said the same thing. Pollard's book goes into great detail on the specific make up of the legions, and they were from all over the empire. Virtually every nation in the Roman empire could have been involved. After reviewing the most up-to-date scholarship on the subject, Pollard's conclusion is that in most legions throughout the empire, the "legionaries of provincial birth outnumbered the Italians by about four or five to one," and that the legions of Cappadocia, Syria, and Egypt were almost entirely made up of non-Italians (p. 114-115). Well, those three legions were in Israel right at this time.

So when you examine the ethnic makeup of the key Legions here - Legions III, V, X, XV, XII, and XVIII, you begin to realize that they had people who spoke many languages, came in different colors, came from many countries, and represented a very diverse racial background. Josephus mentions a heroic black guy who fought on behalf of Titus. And it appears that he really was an amazing soldier. And in another place he mentions thousands of Arabs and Syrians in Titus' army that had heard that escaping Jews had swallowed gold. So these Arabs and Syrians were disemboweling thousands of Jews who were escaping from the city, looking for gold in their stomachs. One night those two ethnic groups alone disemboweled 2000 Jews. Well, that comprises a huge contingent of Arabs and Syrians. And there are other references to different languages, colors, and ethnic backgrounds in Titus' armies. So this phrase definitely points to the Roman armies who had penetrated the city in AD 70. Premils and others who use objections like this are simply not reading the most up-to-date scholarship.

**This would not be possible if Rome had not already penetrated the second wall.**

But the text also mentions that these Roman armies were looking at the corpses for three and a half days. Well, that would indicate that they are hanging around the bodies for three and a half days. This would indicate a time period when those legions are stationary in one place (they are not

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3 Santosuosso says that through Italians comprised 49% of the Legions in the first half of the century, but AD 70 that had fallen to 22%. Antonio Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens: Soldiers, Emperors, and Civilians in the Roman Empire*, (Westview Press, 2001), pp. 97-98.

4 Phang says, "Recruitment underwent major shifts from Italy in the early first century A.D. to the frontier provinces in the latter first and second centuries." He points out that the vast majority of the soldiers that attacked Jerusalem were provincials. Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service, ideologies of discipline in the late Republic and early Principate*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 19, 44, 57-58.

5 Nigel Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria*, (University of Michigan Press, 2000)

moving), and that one place is the plaza outside of the temple walls. And there was indeed one period when they were stopped and could not advance any further. They camped out in the Plaza. So that hugely narrows down the time period. This event could not possibly have occurred before May 10 of AD 70. The Romans couldn't even see the bodies in the plaza when they were outside the third and second walls. So this has to be a time when they have penetrated both of those walls and were in front of the massive temple walls.

**Since Rome breached that wall on Iyar 12, AD 70 (May 10), the two prophets could not have died any earlier than that date.**

Well, they broke through the outer wall (called the third wall) on Iyar 7 (or May 5), and broke through the second wall on Iyar 12, or May 10.

These are the kinds of clues I use to narrow down time periods. And we have been doing that all the way through chapters 5-11 and seeing perfect time sequences.

**But since verses 7-8 hint at passage of time, it is likely after May 10**

But we have already seen that verses 7-8 show the Beast from the Abyss making war against these prophets. That seems to indicate a passage of time as well. It doesn't just say that they kill them. They make war against them and then overcome them, and then kill them. They are fighting against the prophets and it appears that the prophets were fighting against the Romans. And that should not seem odd. They did the same thing with the Jews in the previous three and a half years. Look at verse 5.

And if anyone wants to harm them fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies. So if anyone wants to harm them he must be killed in this way.

These were not pacifist prophets. Like Elijah, they prophetically called down God's fire on anyone (Jew or Gentile) who tried to harm them. Well, verse 9 says that the demon controlling Titus made war against them. Those words, "made war," indicates a process of time. It didn't just happen in one hour. The next phrase, "and overcame them" also shows that there was resistance by the prophets. The prophets weren't just turning themselves in. They were resisting and had to be overcome. But if there was resistance against the Roman armies in exactly the same way that there was resistance against the Jews earlier, it is my assumption that some of the Roman soldiers were killed by the fire as well. But the Romans continue to attack and at some point they overwhelmed these prophets and killed them.

Now, this next part is reading between the lines, but I think it is a logical reading between the lines. It is seeking to explain why Titus and the Romans would even bother to war against the prophets. How did they even know about them? We can understand why the demon hated them. But what is going on in the heads of the flesh and blood armies? It is a tiny bit conjecture, but here is how I understand it: Since the prophets were Jewish, the Romans no doubt assumed that the prophets were on the side of the Jewish resistance. When the prophets miraculously killed Romans with fire (and verse 5 seems to indicate that they would have), that further confirmed in Titus' mind that these prophets were part of the resistance. In fact, they were a formidable resistance. So Titus wants to make an example of them to those on the temple walls. He wants to demonstrate that even their miraculous prophets are no match for the Roman armies. We know from secular history that Titus tried to negotiate with the Jews on the temple walls to surrender and face better terms, but they refused. So reading between the lines, it is my belief that after Titus has killed these prophets, he ordered his troops to let the corpses of these prophets be left in the Plaza to rot. He does this to make an example of them to the Jews who are watching.

The next question that comes up is, "Well, who would want to bury them?" Verse 9 implies that there are people who want to bury the corpses or at least take them off the street. Who would do that? There are no more Jews around on the Plaza. They are all up on the temple. Well, it is my view that the Roman soldiers who are camped on the Plaza want to get rid of the stench of the bodies. In hot climates, bodies begin to stink, and Roman soldiers may have wanted to get rid of them. But the beast, operating through Titus, would not let them. So the second half of verse 9 says, "and will not allow their corpses to be buried."

On the website timeline I place the death of the prophets at July 31. That allows for a little time before that in which there is an engagement between the prophets and the Roman armies. But there is more in this passage that really nails down the timing.

***C. The Jews "those who dwell in the land" can also see that the prophets are dead (v. 10a) and are still able to celebrate and give gifts to each other (v. 10b)***

Verse 10 says, "And those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them..." Charles in his commentary points out that this expression is literally "those who dwell in the land" and is always a reference to the Jews. So that means that verse 9 refers to the Romans being in the plaza, and verse 10 speaks of

the Jews, who are now camped out quite high above the Romans, and able to look over the temple walls.

**The Jews obviously would not be rejoicing in the plaza - they too would be dead.**

And the text seems to indicate that the Jews were not in danger of being imminently killed by the Romans. They are rejoicing and giving gifts to each other. What's with that? Well, we know from Josephus that the Jews were not in the plaza themselves; they were up on the walls. Yet they were close enough to the plaza to be able to rejoice "over" the prophets.

And the word for "over" is very interesting. In Greek grammar, when the Greek word ἐπί is followed by the dative, it is usually a spatial word. The dictionary says it is a "marker of location or surface, answering the question 'where?' [and can mean] on, upon, near." (BDAG) When it has a spatial meaning, it is always near and above what it is near to. When you look at diagrams that place prepositions spatially in, under, behind, in front of, or on top of, this word is always placed at the top of the diagram to represent something is near and above.

So in my mind's eye I imagine these Jews as being on the wall overlooking the plaza. They are near the body, but also above it. And that means they can interact with the Romans but are safe from the Romans. In fact, Josephus tells us that the Jews and Romans talked to each quite frequently during July. That's how close they were. Usually it was hurling insults at each other, but they were close enough to hear each other. And there is only one month when all of this was possible - July of 70.

The Romans had tried every way they could to batter the walls of the temple and to scale the walls, but the temple was impregnable. Titus knew he couldn't get through, and Josephus tells us that Titus several times tried to negotiate a surrender. This killing of the prophets may have been another attempt to show the futility of resisting the Romans. But the Jewish rebels had the upper hand at this point. The Romans suffered heavy losses with no gains. So this was a time in which the Jews could be more confident - even though the general populace was dying off from disease and starvation. Those defending the temple were not.

Now, let me explain the next clause in verse 10, because that may seem incongruous with the position that the Jews were in during July. But it is not. Verse 10 says, "And those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and they will enjoy themselves and send gifts to one another, because these two

prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth." The objection could come up that the Jews were in dire straights and would not be rejoicing. They certainly would not be enjoying each other. But reading Josephus, I'm not sure that was true of those occupying the temple.

Here is how I understand the passage. When they saw the Romans kill the prophets (no doubt as an intimidation factor), it didn't intimidate them at all. They hated the prophets. They were glad the prophets were dead. But I think it is very possible that these Jews were mocking the Romans in this exaggerated giving of gifts, rejoicing hilariously, and enjoying themselves in front of the Romans. Titus wanted them to be sad and fearful. But they make a huge show of the exact opposite.

This would have infuriated Titus. And it explains why Josephus documents at that precise time of the week Titus immediately did everything he could to get his men to climb the wall, to pound the wall, to risk their lives to get into the temple. This was the time when a bunch of Romans risked their lives by throwing boards across from the Antonia Fortress to the walls and the Jews pretended to flee. But they were simply luring the Romans into a trap filled with incendiary devices, and all the Romans were killed in the fire except one. The point is that Titus was desperate during the four days before the temple was burned; he was desperate to get into the temple, because he feared he was running out of time. So I see this exhibition in verse 10 as the Jews rubbing it in Titus' face. They were indeed glad the prophets were dead, but they were in effect saying, "Thank you so much Titus for doing our work for us. We hated those prophets. Thank you. Thank you."

But whether the rejoicing was genuine or an attempt to irritate the Romans for what they had done or a combination of both, verse 10 says, "And those who dwell on the earth [and the word γῆς is a reference to the land of Israel] rejoice over them, and they will enjoy themselves and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."

### **The only other place from which they would be safe from the Romans yet also be able to see the bodies would be from the temple walls**

Anyway, that is why I say in your outline that the only place from which they would be safe from the Romans yet also be near and above and still rejoice, would have been on top of the temple walls toward the end of July.

## **The timing of the 3.5 years of prophetic witness (v. 3) and the 3.5 days before the resurrection (v. 11) places their death on Ab 5, AD 70.**

But since the prophets prophesy for the entire three and a half year period, the assumption is that it covers the same three and a half years that are mentioned elsewhere - the three and a half years of the first half of the seven year war. That's one of the reasons why I believe that the 1260 days ends, not with their death, but with their resurrection. Well, if that is true, the terminus is Ab 9, and everything has to fit between Adar 19 of AD 67 and Ab 9 of AD 70, in the Hebrew calendar.

### ***D. Since there is only a three and a half day gap from their death till their resurrection (v. 11), we can assume that they were resurrected on the same day that verses 15-19 happen.***

When you couple that fact together with the fact that they are resurrected after three and a half days in verse 11, then you can count backwards from the resurrection of believers, which occurred on Ab 9, which is August 3. We will deal with the resurrection next week (Lord willing), but I at least wanted you to have a handle on how deductions of time can be made even from a tough passage like this one. You can count forwards and count backwards from dates that are solidly anchored. And you can double check your deduced dates with other hints in the passage, just like we have been doing.

Next week we will look at one other hint that nails this time period down to the last week of July. Verse 13 speaks of a tenth of the city falling, and in parallelism says that 7000 men were killed. The one clause seems to interpret the other. So if the tenth is defined by the 7000 (as most commentaries believe - but it is not absolutely certain)<sup>6</sup> then it would mean

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<sup>6</sup> Here are some examples of commentaries who identify the 7000 as being the tenth of the city. "The number seven thousand would suitably indicate a tenth of the population of Jerusalem in the first century AD." George R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation, New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*; ed. D. A. Carson et al., p. 1439; "If "seven thousand" is understood as one tenth of the population, the description fits Jerusalem better than Rome..." Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 792; "'A tenth of the city' could, in fact, be calculated as seven thousand if Jerusalem were in mind, since Jerusalem might have had a population of about 70,000 in the first century..." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC*; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 602-603; "The phrase "they glorified God" at the conclusion of a miracle is an "acclamation" and is frequently found in Luke-Acts (Luke 8:47; 9:43; 13:13, 17; 18:43; 23:47; Acts 3:9). Sometimes, as here, both kinds of reactions are combined (Mark 2:12; 16:8). The phrase διδόναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ, "to give glory to God," is an idiom with several meanings: (1) it can mean "to tell the truth" (John 9:24; Louw-Nida, § 33.468), (2) it can mean "give praise and honor to God" (this is a Lukan formula: Luke 8:47; 17:18; Acts 3:9; 4:21; 11:18; 12:23; 13:48; 21:20), and (3) it can be a verbal indication of conversion, which is probably the meaning here (Trites, *Witness*, 169-70; Sweet, 106-9; Bauckham, "Conversion," 278; disputed by Giesen [1997] 259)." David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*,

that there are only 70,000 Jews left in Jerusalem, since 7000 is 10% of 70,000. That would not be possible even a couple weeks earlier. The population would have been over 100,000 at that point. Several months before that there were over a million, but slaughter, famine, escape from the city, and disease had decimated Jerusalem to right around that amount according to Josephus by the last week of July. So that too narrows the scope of when these prophets could die. I think it all fits beautifully together.

## **II. The practical implications of these verses.**

Now let's end by looking at some of the practical implications of these verses.

### **A. *What can be expected from the world***

#### **Persecution (vv. 7-9)**

First of all, let's look at what we can expect from the world. Verses 7-9 speak of persecution and resistance from the world. The demon from the pit moved Titus to war against the prophets. Titus may not have been self-conscious in why he was opposing the prophets, but the demon was. And demons move people to do irrational things and to have irrational hatred when all providential restraints are removed.

And what do I mean by providential restraints? The book of Romans indicates that there are quite a number of restraints that God has built into society in order to keep people from being as bad as they could be.

First, it mentions men's consciences can restrain them from bad behavior because the light of God's law is placed in every person's heart. And people feel bad when they do something bad because their consciences judge them, so it restrains them to some degree.

But Romans also says that the natural man represses that knowledge of God and His law, or as some translate it, they "hold down the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18), or they "suppress the truth."

But what happens when this suppressing of the truth keeps happening? People's consciences become hardened and they aren't bothered any more. Romans 2 says that when your own conscience doesn't bother you anymore,

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WBC 52B; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 628; "If "seven thousand" is understood as one-tenth of the population, the description fits Jerusalem better than Rome..." Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2d; Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 751. [accord://read/IVP-NT\\_Commentary\\_2#7653](http://read/IVP-NT_Commentary_2#7653)

it's no longer a helpful restraint. But even then, other people's consciences and opinions might restrain your behavior. That is another built in restraint; it is a social restraint. Romans 2:4

who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) This is known as peer pressure. The opinions of others can either accuse you or excuse you. It can go either way.

But as society gets worse, even that restraint can disappear. So what happens to restrain bad behavior when the social conscience of society is hardened? Romans says that the civil government can restrain bad behavior.

And what happens when civil government authorizes or commands evil? Then there is very little restraint left in society. That is the direction our country is headed. Persecution can easily break out with intensity when all of those restraints are removed. It is very easy for demons to war through flesh and blood during periods like that. So the first thing you can expect over time is persecution.

### **Analysis (v. 9)**

Another thing you can expect from the world is analysis. If you have had a supernatural testimony, you will be analyzed. The Roman soldiers probably ignored most Jewish corpses, but these prophets were different. They could not deny the prophetic power that had been working through them, and even though they had been instrumental in killing the prophets, they were fascinated by the prophets. Verse 9 says that these Gentiles "look at their corpses three-and-a-half days." The Greek tense of the verb indicates that they keep looking at those corpses for three and a half days. That can't keep their eyes off of them. We are not told why. Perhaps they had guilty consciences. Perhaps they still wondered if some miracle would happen. They were after all a superstitious people. So there was analysis. And if you have a godly testimony before the world, they will analyze your behavior.

### **Disrespect (v. 9)**

The third thing you can expect from at least some, is disrespect. The beast from the Abyss "will not allow their corpses to be buried." Why? He does everything he can to disrespect God's people. Satan despises God's people. And while the world may have a degree of admiration for Christians and secret respect for Christians, disrespect will eventually arise. The GLBT community has grown with enough influence that even government agents are beginning to show disrespect for the Christian community. It may be

driven by the same demonic impulse.

### **Mocking (v. 10)**

The fourth thing you can expect is mocking. We saw that some of that rejoicing in verse 10 was likely a mocking of both the prophets and the Romans. They didn't have Saturday Night Live, or other comedy shows, but this mocking was their form of comic relief. And the text says that they enjoyed themselves doing this.

### **Troubled (v. 10)**

A fifth possible response is to be troubled by us. Verse 10 says that they were rejoicing in the prophets demise, "because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth." How does prophesying torment? Well, it brought judgments like famine, lack of rain, plagues, etc. just as our imprecatory prayers bring judgments on a nation. But the Word of God all by itself can bring torment to the conscience. And we will see next week that their consciences seem to have been bothered. And the same can be true of unbelievers who witness your life. You might be as sweet as could be, and you might be mystified by why people are bothered by what you believe and what you do. Why should they care? But your very lifestyle can be a rebuke to their lifestyle. Your refusal to be pluralistic can be offensive and troubling to some. Your belief that marriage can only be between a man and a woman may offend those who disagree. It's just the way it is. So don't be surprised when people are troubled by you.

### **Death (vv. 7-10)**

A sixth possible response is for hardened people to actually want to kill Christians. It doesn't happen as frequently in this country, but it is commonplace in Muslim and Hindu countries.

This is obviously not an exhaustive list. Some pagans may actually respect and value you, just as King Darius respected and valued Daniel, Shadrak, Meshek, and Abednego. But those four were also envied, hated, and persecuted by at least some - as the story of the lion's den so clearly shows.

### ***B. How we should view lack of burial (v. 9)***

Another application relates to burial. Some people could care less what happens to their bodies after they die. But that does not fully reflect the Biblical model of treating the body with respect. We are not gnostics who consider the body unimportant. Obviously Satan considers the body to be

important, otherwise he wouldn't disrespect the body. There is a reason why demonically controlled people cut their bodies, pierce their bodies, abuse their bodies, and in other ways show disrespect their bodies. There is a reason why Biblical cultures bury bodies and pagan cultures burn them. Satan hates this amazing part of God's handiwork. We are Biblicists who treat all of creation as belonging to Christ and all of creation (including the body) as needing redemption. There is not one single part of this creation exempted from redemption; it goes far as the curse is found. And we will look at the redemption of the body - the resurrection next week, Lord willing.

***C. What brings joy to a Christian can bring discomfort and even torment to an unbeliever, and vice versa (v. 10)***

But another application is that the very thing that the prophets valued (the word of God) is a thing that brings torment to unbelievers in verse 10 when they are exposed to it. Hebrews 4 says,

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing [there is the potential for discomfort - "piercing"] even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb. 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

That's uncomfortable. And the verse before says that even backslidden Christians can be tempted to avoid the discomfort of that sword by not sitting under anyone who powerfully preaches of the word, or who go to churches that give pabulum. And it leads to further backsliding and even apostasy. But those who are seeking first for God's kingdom and His righteousness, love God's law and even when the law confronts them, they welcome it, because they want to be right with God. Where the unrighteous despise rebuke and go on the attack when there is rebuke, the wise cherish correction. They say with David,

Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it... (Ps. 141:5)

This difference between the world and the righteous is one of the tests of whether we are really believers or not. Do we love God's law? God's people love to walk in the light. They are OK with the sunshine showing the cobwebs. When God shows them cobwebs, they immediately sweep them out. They love the light. But the unregenerate hate the light because their deeds are evil.

***D. But what unbelievers dread (death) believers can face with faith and confidence (vv. 7-10)***

But the last application is that while unbelievers dread death, believers can face death with faith and confidence. And these witnesses went into the lion's den knowing full well that they would die, and yet they did their work with faith. The way they approached death stood as a testimony to unbelievers. I tend to lean in the direction of commentators who believe that verses 11-13 is describing a multitude of Jews repenting and coming to faith. Their death was not in vain. As a result of these prophets' death, multitudes come to Christ.

I started with the story of John Huss. Many people were converted when they saw the joy and confidence with which he faced death. They longed for the same thing. And his testimony continued long after his death. Almost a hundred years later, Luther was hugely impacted by Huss. As an academic monk he had been rummaging through the stacks of a library and stumbled onto a volume of sermons by John Huss. Luther said, "I was overwhelmed with astonishment. I could not understand for what cause they had burnt so great a man." It made him start to think poorly of the pope. But what impacted Luther the most was Huss's ability to face death without fear and with total confidence in his future and in his Savior. Luther feared death, and he wanted what Huss had. He envied what Huss had.

Out in Ethiopia, the funerals of Christians probably led to more conversions than weddings or anything else, and for the same reason. Christians faced death with confidence. They celebrated at the funerals because there was a home-going to glory. There is a sense in which every one of those funerals was yet another victory and another testimony in that believer's life. It was just like Huss said, "What I taught with my lips, I seal with my blood." That was certainly true of these prophets. May it be true of our own attitudes toward death. After prayer we will have the opportunity to make that our prayer in our final hymn. Let's pray.