

## When They Finish • Revelation 11:7

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Alexander The Great*

1. Alexander was only 19 years old when his father, Philip, King of Macedonia, was assassinated.
2. Taking the throne, he faced the complete upheaval of the kingdom his father had managed to scrape together by conquest.
  - a. the Greek city-states Philip had conquered, seeing a new, young and inexperienced king, thought they could easily throw off the Macedonian yoke
  - b. it was a losing gamble; Alexander proved more than up to the task of holding on to the kingdom his father had left him.
3. Within just a couple years, Alexander recaptured the Greek city-states and formed them into a new league and military force bent on the conquest of the entire Mediterranean World.
4. In just 13 years, Alexander's rule stretched from Greece all the way to India and included the powerful Persian Empire, the Middle East, and down into Egypt.
5. Alexander wasn't just an arm-chair general either.
  - a. he didn't sit comfortably in some tent at the back of the battlefield.
  - b. he rode into battle with his army
  - c. there were many stories of Alexander in battle that fueled his troops with a deep sense of loyalty, respect and admiration.
  - d. he faced death many times, and came away miraculously unscathed.
6. That's why his death seems so ironic – he died of a fever at the age of 33.
7. It wasn't an arrow, or a spear, or even a sword that felled Alexander; it was a FEVER!

#### B. *Lawrence Of Arabia*

1. Or consider T.E. Lawrence, better known as *Lawrence of Arabia*.
2. Lawrence joined the British Military Intelligence at the outbreak of WWI and was assigned that task of assisting the Arabs in their revolt against the Turks.

3. During Lawrence's military career he faced dozens of narrow escapes.
4. He even earned a reputation among the Arabs of having the divine favor and protection of God.
5. But shortly after his discharge from the military, he was killed in a motorcycle accident in England.

### **C. Patton**

1. Or how about George Patton, the General of the US Third Army during WWII?
2. Patton was another case of someone who seemed invincible in battle.
3. Like Alexander and Lawrence, there were times when he would stand in the midst of battle almost with a sense that he could *not be hurt* as he commanded his troops.
4. Patton was out driving one day after the war when his car was rammed by another car, killing him.

### **D. More Stories of the Same**

1. I could go on and give dozens more stories of men and women who stared death in the face, and walked away untouched.
2. In fact, most of us *probably know someone* who walked away from situations that left us scratching our heads.
3. It's ironic to think of people like Alexander, Patton, and Lawrence, who faced death SO MANY TIMES, and yet were protected, only to be felled by something like a fever or an accident.
4. Their lives, and deaths reminds us of an important lesson we see into today's study –

## **II. TEXT**

### **A. Vs 3-6**

**<sup>3</sup>And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."**

**<sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. <sup>5</sup>And if anyone**

**wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. <sup>6</sup>These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.**

1. I won't go in to the identity of these two witnesses this morning; we covered that last Wednesday.
2. Let me just quickly review what we read here in vs. 3-6
  - a. this takes place during the first half of the Tribulation
  - b. the Church has been raptured before the Tribulation begins, so its witness has been pulled out of the Earth.
  - c. but God will not leave Himself without a witness;
  - d. He sends these two who will center their ministry in the City of Jerusalem as we see in v. 8
  - e. they are supernaturally empowered to prophecy for 1260 days; 3½ years, the first half of the Tribulation.
  - f. their message is one of calling the nations to repentance, as is indicated by their attire; they wear sackcloth.
  - g. v. 4 is an image drawn from Zechariah 4 meant to show that these two witnesses are specially selected and empowered by God to perform a specific ministry and He gives them *everything they need* to get the job done.
  - h. along with their message, they receive the ability to verify their authority to speak for God by performing some notable miracles [\[1\]](#)
  - i. their calling by God is further verified in that when anyone tries to harm them and shut them up, fire comes out of their mouths and incinerates them!
    - 1) folks, this isn't just a case of really bad breath; this isn't habanera hot sauce
    - 2) God will sovereignly and miraculously preserve the life of these two men throughout the length of their ministry.
    - 3) no one will be able to touch them to harm them.
    - 4) look at v. 5 again . . .

**And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.**

- j. all those who move against the two witnesses are judged in the same manner.
  - k. it probably won't take too many such attacks till their critics learn and leave them alone.
  - l. but the point will have been made abundantly clear to the entire world, as we see in vs. 9 & 10, that these two men are prophets of God, who speak His message of repentance.
3. They will proclaim this message for 3½ years – then, the time of their ministry will be finished as we read in v. 7.

### **B. V. 7**

**<sup>7</sup>When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.**

1. V. 3 makes it clear, the two witnesses are assigned the task by God to carry on their ministry for 1260 days.
  - a. why does John spell it out like this?
  - b. well, take a look at v. 3 . . .

**And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."**

- c. who's speaking? It's the messenger from Ch. 10, which close study reveals is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!
- d. that's why He refers to them as "**My two witnesses"**
- e. as always, the prophets of God are called to bear testimony *to Him!*
  - 1) not to some church or denomination
  - 2) not some spiritual experience
  - 3) but to the truth and reality of Christ
- f. and that's precisely what these two do – for 1260 DAYS.
  - 1) the time of their ministry isn't given as 42 months nor 3½ years
  - 2) it's spelled out *to the very day*

- 3) and the reason why becomes clear here in v. 7
2. Because when the sun has set on the 1260<sup>th</sup> day, they've done their job and there is no more reason for them to live on the Earth.
  3. They have fulfilled the purpose for their lives here, and it's time for them to retire to their eternal rest.
  4. So we read that Satan makes war on them and kills them.

### **C. Tragic?**

1. Some read this and think it's tragic that these two very powerful men of God would be *overcome* by the devil.
2. They see it as a tremendous setback to the kingdom and plan of God.
3. But it's the very opposite – they die because their time is up and God permits it.
4. Their death is as much a part of His plan as was their life, as we go on to see in the next verses.

**<sup>8</sup>And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. <sup>10</sup>And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.**

**<sup>11</sup>Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup>And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. <sup>13</sup>In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.**

5. Without their death, the witnesses *could not have been resurrected*.
  - a. God makes sure the entire world gets the news of their death.

- b. 3 days go by, giving every major news agency time to set up their cameras in Jerusalem and train them on their prostrate corpses --
    - 1) these two trouble-makers who have dared to suggest the antichrist is a lying devil
    - 2) and who have boldly proclaimed for over 3 years that the world is headed in the wrong direction
    - 3) they've decried the evil and sin of the nations
    - 4) they've rebuked the immorality and debauchery of the world
    - 5) and they've smitten the Earth again and again with plagues as proof their message was from God.
  - c. but for the most part, those they've preached to have only opposed and hated them.
  - d. there's been precious little positive response to their message of repentance.
  - e. and most people have come to loath them, aching for the day when their voices will be stilled.
  - f. finally, the world's champion is able to silence the prophets; and they break out in wild celebration.
  - g. for 3 days they party, sending gifts and cards to one another.
  - h. I can just see the Hallmark card now - "Roses are red. Violets are blue. I'm glad the witnesses are dead; how about you?" See you at the party!
  - i. then, half way into the 4<sup>th</sup> day after their execution, while the cameras are still trained on them, they stand to their feet looking none the worse for wear.
  - j. the entire world sucks in it's breath in a spasm of intense fear and shock.
  - k. then a loud voice from heaven is heard calling them up.
  - l. the two men of God lift off the ground and are taken up into the skies, disappearing from sight into a cloud which obscures the cameras' vision and brings an end to the celebration of the world over their death.
6. As the entire world stands in silent and rapt attention, it finally dawns on them; God is real, these two men were His prophets, their message was true, and they've made a colossal mistake in rejoicing over their death.
7. In a temporary moment of sanity, a moment that will quickly pass,

they stop to give glory to God.

8. Can you see how *all* of what we read about these two witnesses is part of God's perfect plan?
  - a. not just their lives and ministry
  - b. but their death and resurrection and ascension into heaven.
  - c. they never could have been raised if they hadn't first been slain.

#### **D. When They Finish . . .**

1. There's a phrase at the beginning of v. 7 that I want to ask you to take careful note of this morning –

#### **When they finish their testimony . . .**

2. The two witnesses are unstoppable and invincible, *until* they complete their God-ordained mission.
3. But once that mission is complete, once the earthly purpose for their lives is finished, there's no need for them to stick around.
4. What's true for these two witnesses is no less true for you and I.
5. For just like these two future witnesses, God has a plan and purpose for us.
  - a. we *too* are God's witnesses > *True Jehovah's Witnesses*
  - b. the standing order of our lives is to be a witness to Jesus Christ
  - c. Acts 1:8 says that we are to *bear testimony* to Jesus Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the Earth.
  - d. we may not have the ability to fire off a lightening bolt against those who oppose us
  - e. but Jesus *did* say signs would follow us as we faithfully bore witness of Him.
  - f. Mark 16:15-18

**15**And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **16**He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. **17**And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; **18**they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

6. Jesus spoke of the signs *that would follow us* as we went forth to bear witness of Him.
  - a. note that – *the signs follow us*, as we believe and bear witness.
  - b. far too many Christians today are *following signs* & seeking after the miraculous; their faith is so weak, it needs *constant* affirmation and proof.
  - c. it's like a leaky air mattress that needs to be constantly re-inflated by seeing the supernatural.
  - d. what they don't realize is that a sign is meant to *point at something*, to *announce* something,
  - e. and in the NT, we see that God gives signs, not to coddle immature Christians or to wow the crowds of those who seek the spectacular.
  - f. signs are given *to verify the authority of the gospel message* and those who preach it.
  - g. they are given to point to the fact that God is loving, caring, and compassionate and desires that all men and women would be saved and healed from the greatest need of all - the problem of sin.
7. This is why we encourage people to come forward for prayer after service.
  - a. we preach the Word of God and we give testimony to the power of God to save the lost from their sins.
  - b. we fully believe and expect that God will give ample evidence of the authority and truth of that message by working signs as we come to Him and give Him the opportunity to work.
  - c. and He has, time and again!
  - d. we've seen many healings
  - e. we've seen many, many miraculous answers to prayer.
8. But I'll be the first to admit that not everyone is healed and not every prayer is answered in the way people might like.
9. The reason for that lies in our text today –
  - a. when our time on earth is up, when our days have reached their end
  - b. or to use the words of v. 7, when we've finished our testimony and the time of our witness is complete – then it's time to go home!
10. For the witnesses of Rev. 11, their death will be a quick one at



- the hands of the antichrist.
11. For others of God's servants, the process of death is a long, slow lingering one.
    - a. you see, while some of us are called to *live* for Christ, others are called to *die* for Him.
    - b. what I mean is, while for *most* of us, it's the days of our health and daily living that provide the context to bear witness to Jesus.
    - c. but for some special saints of God, it's the courageous and joyous way they face illness and death that bears testimony to the hope they have in Christ.
    - d. it's not given to us to chose the time or means of our departure from this world.
    - e. that's part of God's sovereign and perfect plan for us.
    - f. our one duty is to bear testimony to Him *all our days*.
  12. But my brothers and sisters, when our days are up, when we've reached our 1260<sup>th</sup> day, and our God-appointed testimony is up, who would want to hang around any longer?
  13. Actually, we have a story about this very thing in scripture –
    - a. King Hezekiah became ill and a prophet went to him with the message from God that he needed to set his affairs in order because his time was up; he'd completed the task God has set him and it was time to retire to his reward in heaven.
    - b. but Hezekiah pleaded not to go – he wanted to live longer.
    - c. so, God granted his request – I think more than anything *just to pass on this lesson to us!*
    - d. Hezekiah lived for another 15 years, and folks, they were a miserable 15 years!
    - e. much trouble was birthed in Hezekiah's family and the nation of Judah because he outlived his God-ordained mission and tried to hang on to his life past the God-appointed limit.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Invincible!*

1. In the same way the two witnesses or Rev. 11 were *invincible* until their job was done, so too, you and I are invincible until the day our God-ordained task is complete.

2. *As long as we're faithfully following the Lord and walking in the Spirit, death can't touch us! We're invincible. (Say it again)*
3. David understood this and said in Psalm 23 -

**Yes, even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me;**

**You've set a table before me in the very presence of my enemies; and at that table You anoint my head with the oil of Your Spirit; protecting me from their attacks.**

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; all 1260 of them.**

**And when they are done, I will dwell in Your heavenly house Forever.**

4. David knew what it was like to walk through the valley of the shadow of death.
  - a. King Saul had hucked several spears at him.
  - b. the army of Israel had pursued him around the desert for years.
  - c. he'd spent time living among the Philistines, the very people who's sworn his death
  - d. and as a young boy he'd gone hand to hand with a lion, a bear, and then a giant named Goliath
5. But David had a sense of destiny – a sense of greatness and the call of God on his life and he knew that as long as he put himself into God's keeping, nothing could touch him!
6. God wants His people to live without fear!
  - a. He wants us to have the settled confidence of knowing that as we abide in Him, He lives in us and will keep and protect us.
  - b. as we walk in the Spirit, we are invincible!
  - c. my friend, do not fear death, for death has lost it's sting in the resurrection of Christ.
  - d. and death cannot come until God's plan for you is done.
  - e. after that, who would want to stick around?

## ***B. The Hindrance of Fear***

1. Far too many Christians lead fearful and timid lives because they don't really trust God to protect them.
2. They believe in God for their eternity, but they cannot trust Him

for today.

3. Now, don't get me wrong – I am not suggesting that people should throw caution to the wind and *presume* upon God to protect them in the foolish situations they get themselves into.
4. What I am saying, is that *as we walk in the Spirit and follow the Lord's leading*, we're invincible until our time is up.
5. In Mark 16 Jesus said that the signs of taking up poisonous serpents and drinking deadly drinks would not harm us, AS WE FAITHFULLY WENT FORTH INTO THE WORLD TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.
  - a. He never said that we ought to make it a practice to just handle serpents or to drink poison.
  - b. it's *as we're going out* to spread the Kingdom of God, if perchance, a snake bit us or we drank or ate something that was potentially deadly – it wouldn't kill us.
  - c. we read about this very thing in the Book of Acts as Paul was on his way to Rome.
    - 1) a storm destroyed their ship and they washed up on the island of Malta.
    - 2) as they were gathering wood to make a fire, a viper bit Paul and everyone waited for him to keel over dead.
    - 3) but he just shook the thing off and continued sharing the gospel with the shipwrecked crew and the Maltese natives who had gathered round.
    - 4) when it was obvious he was unaffected by the snake, they were amazed and many came to faith in Christ.
    - 5) now, Paul didn't hunt around for a snake as a means of evangelizing!
    - 6) he understood his task was to preach Jesus and knew that till his calling to do that was up, nothing could truly harm him –
    - 7) but that everything that happened to him, even the hard stuff, was a part of God's means of *making him an effective witness to Christ*.
      - a) so he was afflicted with an illness
      - b) he was shipwrecked more than once
      - c) he was beaten by the magistrates now and again
      - d) on and on the list of hardships goes
      - e) but every one of them had proven to be the platform from

which the gospel was preached with power and thousands were saved!

6. But even Paul knew that the days appointed for his testimony would end.
7. Listen to his words in his last letter – (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

**6 I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

8. Some of you have heard about opportunities to go on a short terms mission trip to some place like the Sudan, Uganda, India, Russia, or even to Mexico
  - a. the Holy Spirit has urged you to go
  - b. but you've declined, fearful of what might happen to you.
  - c. you've hear stories about the crime, or the water & food in these places
  - d. and out of fear, you've turned a deaf ear and cold shoulder to the moving of the Spirit on your heart.
9. How big is your God?
  - a. is He only as big as your SUV with air bags and seat belts?
  - b. is He only as big as your pepper spray and burglar alarm?
  - c. is He only present in upper middle class neighborhoods?
  - d. does His protection stop at the borders of the United States, or maybe even Ventura County?
10. God wants us to live without fear of anything but Him!
11. And He's *already* SAVED you!
12. If you knew the day and manner of your death, how would it affect the way you live today?
  - a. the point is, none of us *does* know.
  - b. only God knows the day and manner of our departure.
  - c. what we *do have* is **TODAY** – He wants us to live it with courage and faith that He holds *all our tomorrows*.

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[\[1\]](#) John 10:12, 37-18 14:10-11 1 Cor. 2:4-5