

Persecution Of Believers In Jesus

'This just the beginning of sorrows. They will hand you over to suffer persecution and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. Many will be offended and will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will rise up and lead many astray, and the love of the great body will grow cold because of multiplied iniquity, but he who endures to the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom of God will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:8 to 14) ... 'This is the beginning of intolerable suffering. Watch yourselves for they will turn you over to councils. You will be beaten in the synagogues (churches). You will stand before governors and kings for My name's sake as a testimony to them and the Gospel must first be preached to all nations ... Brother will hand brother over to death, and a father his child; children will stand against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everybody for My name's sake, but he who endures to the end will be saved' (Mark 13:8 to 13) ... 'They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, turning you over to synagogues and prisons and you will stand before governors for My name's sake. This will be a time for you to bear testimony ... you will be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives and friends and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated by everybody because you bear My name ... by your patient endurance you will win the eternal life of your souls' (Luke 21:12 to 19) ... 'A time is coming when whoever kills you will claim they have offered a service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me, but I (Jesus) have told you these things so that when these things happen, when they occur you will remember that I warned you about them' (John 16:2 to 4) ... 'When they had preached the Gospel and made disciples of many people ... establishing the souls of the new disciples and encouraging them to stand firm in the faith, telling them that it is through many persecutions that we must enter the Kingdom of God' (Acts 14:21 & 22).

Jesus was warning His disciples, there would be many believers who will endure murderous persecution; some will be killed and others will turn away from Him; then Jesus says, only those who endure to the end will be saved. By implication, those who turn away will be lost. Through such intense persecution, Jesus said the Gospel; the message of the Kingdom of God will be preached the world over, before the end of the time of persecution comes. This Bible study is an urgent warning to Christians everywhere to be prepared for persecution, because there has been a sudden increase in violence towards Christians. Not every Christian will be murdered for their faith, but in Western nations, so-called Christian nations, believers are sometimes harassed, bullied, ridiculed, mocked, rejected by their families; some unbelieving spouses refuse to allow their children to be taught anything about the Lord; some believers have had their children removed by unbelieving spouses; some deeply genuine believers are terribly persecuted by weaker, carnal Christians; some are called heretics by their church leadership because they are deeply committed to Jesus; some weaker Christians walk out on their deeply committed spouses, because the committed people put Jesus first. Jesus warned us these things would happen and they are increasingly occurring in Western nations, and sadly, in the church itself because the leadership refuse to allow Jesus to be the Head.

It is a terrible fact that persecution of Christians in many other nations is on the increase. There has been a dramatic surge of violence against believers, and some have been murdered in Pakistan, India, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, in other nations around the Middle East, in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Arabs have murdered Christians in Jerusalem. Religious and political extremists all over the Middle East, in India and other nations, are murdering Christians. They are being killed in their homes. Their churches are being blown up or firebombed, killing dozens of believers including young children. Thousands have been maimed. Almost a thousand Christian families have been forced from their homes in Iraq to the American protected area of the north. In Iran, many Christians are being arrested and removed from their families for having church meetings in their homes. Jesus warned us this would happen before He returns. We watch the reaction of extremists in these countries when they kill Christians. They raise their right fist and claim they did it for their god, just as Jesus warned they would do. These murderers claim to know God, but if they did, they would not be killing God's people. Their gods are not the God of the Bible. What is worse is when people who previously claimed Jesus as their Messiah, backslide and turn away from him, then turn against genuine believers and pursue them with hatred. Jesus said that would happen, and He said that is not the end; it is just the beginning of sorrows.

There is a surge of persecution, but the good news for Bible-believing Christians is this: Jesus said, "On this Rock (Jesus) I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it' (Matthew 16:18). Nothing and no one will be able to overcome the Might of the Lord in building up His church. In spite of terrible persecutions, the church is growing rapidly in these nations. More people are being born-again at a faster rate than at any other time in history. This truly is a time of great sorrow for some and a time of great

rejoicing for others. There are millions of Christians who live in safety in their countries, but there are millions who are not safe and face terrible persecutions. Those of us who are safe must pray for our brothers and sisters in Jesus. We will after all, be with them in the Kingdom of God one day. Although we are safe for now, that does not mean it will stay that way, and as the world darkens towards the end of this age, as Jesus repeatedly warned us, we must be prepared. Jesus warned us, that many who are not prepared will be offended and fall away. They will be eternally lost. When serious persecution comes, we must hold on to our faith, even if we are facing death. There are eternal rewards for those who stand firm in the face of persecution. Jesus said persecution is a test of our faith. If we pass the test we are rewarded. If we fail the test we lose our salvation. There is no middle ground. We must overcome the fear of persecution and death if we are to receive the rewards Jesus has for us. Jesus overcame the fear of persecution, rejection, torture, pain and death, and if we want the rewards He has held for us, we must also overcome.

It is the fear of persecution that has led millions of Christians to believe in the rapture. When the unscriptural rapture never comes and those people are faced with real persecution, it is likely they will become offended and fall away. That is why it is so important to accept this may happen to us and to our families, and stand our ground. There have been many thousands of missionaries who have been killed while trying to spread the Gospel message. It takes real commitment to Jesus to be a missionary in a hostile nation. 'He who overcomes is he who believes Jesus is the Son of God' (1 John 5:5). Ladies and gentlemen, persecution of believers is taking place all around the world right now; this minute. That is a fact of modern life, and we have been urged by the Lord to put this message out there so God's people are prepared for what may come their way. Jesus did not say if these things happen, He said when they happen ... but Jesus said not to be afraid. 'Do not be afraid of the things which you are about to suffer. The devil is about to throw some of you in prison so that you may be tested ... be faithful even when faced with death and I will give you the crown of life' (Revelation 2:10).

The following verses are all written in the Book of Revelation: 'To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the paradise of God' (2:7). 'He who overcomes will never be harmed by the second death' (2:11). 'To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the manna that is hidden and I will give him a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone, which no one understands except he who receives it' (2:17). 'To him who overcomes and who obeys My commands to the end, I will give him authority over the nations' (2:26). 'He who overcomes will be clothed in white garments and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels' (3:5). 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the house of My God and he will never go out of it. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem which comes from heaven from My God, and My own new name' (3:12). 'He who overcomes, I will give him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame and sat down beside My Father on His throne' (3:21). 'They overcame him (the devil) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony. They did not love their lives even when faced with death' (12:11). 'They who overcome will inherit all these things; I will be their God and they will be My child' (21:7).

Amen and God bless you.

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