

The End Times Sign of Christian Persecution

(Broadcast: October 1, 2014 | <http://www.twave.tv>)

Format: Edited Transcript



By [Nathan Jones](#)

Vic Batista: We are going to talk about signs of the times, and particularly we will be focusing on the persecution of Christians, as Jesus foretold in Luke 21 and Matthew 24.

Nathan Jones: It's great to include Don McGee in our study. Don McGee is a long-time friend of Lamb & Lion Ministries. He has been one of my teachers over the years, so it is a great blessing to have him share his knowledge.

Vic Batista: Don, would you be able to share with us your contact information? How can individuals be able to get a hold of you in case they want more information about your ministry?

Don McGee: Certainly, and I thank you for that opportunity. People can contact us at Crown & Sickie Ministries. If they would like a phone number, it is 985-748-2943, or they can contact us on the web at crownandsickle.com, or they can reach us by email at csm01@att.net.

Vic Batista: Today's subject matter is one that is very important. When talking about the signs of the times, we have to look particularly at Luke 21:12. It reads, "*But before all these things they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, deliver you up to the synagogues and prison, you will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake.*"

Nathan, could you recap for us briefly some of the other end times signs Jesus gave in Luke 21 before we jump into our next sign along with Don McGee?

Nathan Jones: The context chapters are from Matthew 24, Luke 21 and parallel in Mark 13. The Apostles were at the Temple in Jerusalem and they are "oohing" and "awing" over the splendor of the Temple. Then Jesus announces, "This whole thing will be destroyed, not one stone will be left upon another." And, they are like, "What?!" By the time they get across the valley to the Mount of Olives, they ask Jesus three questions:

1. When will the Temple fall?
2. What will be the sign of the end of the age?
3. And, what will be the sign of Jesus' coming?

When they were looking to know what signs would point to when the Temple will fall, we know from history that the date was 70 AD. What will be the signs of the end of the age? This is the referring to the end of what we now call the Church Age. What will be the sign that Jesus is coming? We know from prophecy that that's referring to the Second Coming at the end of the seven-year Tribulation that is coming upon the earth.

Jesus gave them ten signs that they could look out for to know when the Temple would fall, and for us today that the Lord is coming really soon. Those signs would increase in frequency and intensity the closer they got to the actual event. The signs Jesus gave we are talking about earthquakes, famines, plagues, signs in the sky, and others. Christian persecution is the eighth of the ten signs that the Lord gave us.

Israel at the Center

Vic Batista: We see that there are just a lot of these signs going on even today, starting with the regathering of the nation of Israel. What an incredible sign! Don, I was going to ask if you could skip a little ahead to the ninth sign and tell us a little bit about the miracle of the regathering of the nation of Israel.

Don McGee: Well, Vic, there is no precedent for what has happened in Israel. Never in the course of humanity has a nation of people, that has been for all practical purposes dead by being dispersed throughout the world, been resurrected as a nation again. The Jews have been brought back together again as a nation, having their own state. The prophet Ezekiel in chapter 37 prophesied that this would indeed happen. There's been no precedent whatsoever in the secular world. But, it did happen. God brought those people back together as a nation in 1948.

Interestingly, the regathering of the Jews is just beginning. All the Jews of the world are going to be brought back to Israel who are not in Israel today. The Bible says they will be coming when the vast majority, or an overwhelmingly majority, and some even say when every last Jew, will be brought back to the land of Israel. Of course, that will not happen until the Tribulation period which follows the taking out of the Church at the Rapture.

The idea of a nation of people being brought back to their land from the graveyards of the Gentile world is a phenomenal miracle! I believe it parallels the Resurrection, if I can use that term of the Hebrew language.

Latin is often called a dead language, though it is still used in the halls of academia, but that's just about it. No one really knows a lot about Latin today. Compare Latin to Hebrew as a biblical language. Hebrew is alive and well and vibrant and dynamic in not only the nation of Israel, but in other places, too. We see a parallel between what happened with the revival of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew nation. I believe the revival of the language was necessary for the completion of the Hebrew nation as the Jewish people.

God is a wonderful God. When He says He's going to do something, He's going to do it. All we have to do is watch these signs occurring. When we observe them, and as we study them, our faith grows. The Word teaches us that we can have faith, and our faith grows by reading the Word of God. And, I'd add, by watching what God is doing in Israel today, it's just a great boost to our faith.

Martyrdom of the Apostles

Vic Batista: Again, we see so many of the signs of the end times just coming together. Nathan, we are also seeing so much of these signs happening right before our eyes, especially the persecution of Christians, right?

Nathan Jones: This century is unprecedented when it comes to the persecution of Christians. Some would think persecution was only back during the early days of Church History, but Voice of the Martyrs, a Christian persecution watch ministry, recently wrote an article where they claimed, "More Christians have died for their faith in the 20th Century than in the 19th Century leading up to it, but as bad as the 20th Century was, the 21st Century is starting to make that look like a Sunday picnic."

When you see the scope and the breadth of the persecution of Christians today and the amount of Christians who were slaughtered over the 20th Century, it's scary to think we're only 14 years into the 21st Century. This century is making the martyrdom of the 20th Century look pale by comparison. We are indeed living in a time of intense Christian persecution.

Vic Batista: Don, you know the situation with ISIS and Boko Haram murdering and maiming seemingly every Christian they encounter. Even in our time, we see so much suffering of Christians transpiring right before our eyes.

Don McGee: We do indeed. As Americans we are somewhat insulated from that kind of persecution, but even in our own country — a country that is founded upon a document called the United States Constitution which guarantees the practice of our religion — we are not really far from suffering. We have seen some degree of persecution as Christians. Just look at it in sports and politics, business on free enterprise, and academia. It doesn't matter; you choose the field and you can find Christians being persecuted for their faith.

I believe that any protection of Christians is going to change when the Church is taken out in the Rapture. Those who are left behind will have no constitutional guarantees. Those who want to study the Bible, even though many will become Christians during that time, they will undergo severe persecution, even to the point of even having to give their lives. That's even here in America!

Nathan Jones: When Jesus gave the answers to those three questions, He was covering three different time periods. The first was the fall of the Temple, which happened in 70 AD. The Apostles knew persecution. Only one of the Apostle didn't die from persecution, and that was John. The Romans tried to boil him alive, but he somehow survived.

Let's look at how the Apostles died for their faith:

- James the son of Zebedee was beheaded.
- Matthew was killed by a halberd.
- James was beaten to death by a club, then crucified, and then stoned.
- Matthias was stoned and beheaded.
- Andrew was crucified.
- Peter was crucified upside down.

- Bartholomew was flayed alive and then crucified.
- Thomas was killed by a spear out in India.
- Simon the Zealot was crucified.
- Paul as we know was beheaded in Rome.

The Apostles knew death. They were willing to die for their faith in Christ. And, throughout the centuries since, we have seen Christians die for their faith in Jesus Christ.

As Jesus answered the Apostles' three questions, we learn that as we get closer to the Rapture that the persecution of Christians will increase in frequency and intensity.

We are told that even greater numbers will give their lives for Jesus Christ during the Tribulation. They in particular will be persecuted beyond measure by the Antichrist. As a matter of fact, we can go to Revelation 6:9-11 and 7:9 concerning the Fifth Seal Judgment. It reads, *"I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, 'How long sovereign Lord, holy and true until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'"* And it goes on, *"A great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb."* During the Tribulation, when someone gives their life to Jesus Christ, no matter where they are in any part of the world, they are going to be subject to persecution and likely martyrdom.

Vic Batista: Don, you did mention to us that persecutions are going to continue to get progressively worse. Of course, right now most people have no idea what the Tribulation is all about, especially when it comes to the of persecution Christians and Jews.

Don McGee: They do not. Even those of us who study prophecy regularly cannot imagine what it's going to be like. Jesus said that it is unprecedented. There's no event in the history of humanity that can even approach the bloodshed and the horrors that are going to be experienced during that period of time. Sure, we've gone through some bad situations. We've had the Inquisitions and then the Holocaust and what is happening even now to the people in the Middle East who are Christians. We have seen bad things. But, even that isn't a real marker for the depth of the degradation and persecution and hatred that will be poured out on the Christian people during the Tribulation time period.

Vic Batista: Absolutely! As you know, Don, that's why we also encourage everyone to come to the arms to Jesus Christ right now while there is still time. The Tribulation events are going to happen for real, sad to say. Sometimes people think Bible prophecy is a game or a joke, but we know that the window is going to close. The Rapture of the Church will take place we believe very soon, and then what's coming is going to be a really, really horrific situation.

Witness During Persecution

Vic Batista: Nathan, you're talking to us about the sign of persecution. We opened up in Luke 21. What are some of the other things that Jesus said would transpire during persecution?

Nathan Jones: One of the things about the persecution that we read about in Luke 21:12 is interestingly what Jesus says in verse 13:

"This will result in your being witnesses to them; but make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves, for I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, they will put some of you to death, all men will hate you because of Me but not a hair of your head will perish by standing firm you will gain life."

It's interesting that even though persecution is as horrible as it is, that God turns what Satan plans for evil into good. People get saved. Just look at the Apostles and the way they died. Look how the people witnessed their deaths and must have said, "Hey, they are willing to die for their faith, so I should accept Jesus as Savior as well."

We are seeing the same in this day and age as the Christians in the Apostles' day. Christians in Nigeria are being slaughtered by Boko Haram. ISIS beheads all the people throughout Syria and into Iraq. There are all these other places in the Middle East where Christians are being persecuted. Reports are coming in that because of their Christian witness, Muslims are coming to know Jesus as their Savior. They see these Christian people willing to die for their faith, and God uses that faith to bring their persecutors to Him.

Persecution Through Political Correctness

Vic Batista: Don, I think you would agree that we need to prepare ourselves in this country for a terrible persecution of Christians. It wasn't too long ago reported in the news about someone who was beheaded by a Muslim man?

Don McGee: Yes, that occurred in Moore, Oklahoma. While it made some headlines, only a few news outlets actually really carried that story. The reason is because it's not politically correct in our country today to point a finger of accusation against a Muslim. Much like the shootings at Fort Hood were called "workplace violence" as opposed to terrorism.

These nuances are slight, but they are happening. They are happening in our country right now and we don't even want to talk about them. Why? Because we are not supposed to. There is a pass that is given to the horrors of Islam. Islam is often called one of the world's great peaceful religions, but that's also political correctness.

The truth is people don't want to face the truth. Until people come face to face with the truth, whether it is the horrors of Islam or the fact of the imminent return of the Lord or anything prophetic, then they are going to continue in the way of ignorance which they are living under now. That is indeed a very sad situation.

Vic Batista: Yes, absolutely. No matter what happens, the Bible tells us that Satan and the gates of Hell will not prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ. God has a plan. Every time persecution comes to the Church, it develops and grows, right?

Nathan Jones: Exactly! Do you know what's so amazing to me? When you look at the whole *Left Behind* movie series, both old and new, they will get people talking about the Rapture. And then, when the Church is raptured out, everybody for a few moments at least who are truly left behind, they won't have a single believer in Christ among them across the entire planet. Just think about that.

But then, when they realize the Rapture has actually happened and they realize their loved ones are gone, they will read the materials and the Bibles we left behind. They'll also see the Two Witnesses whom God is going to provide in Jerusalem and who will share the Gospel. There will also be 144,000 Jewish evangelists and the Gospel Angel who will circle the earth, and they will also tell the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We read in the Fifth Seal Judgment how multitudes beyond count from every tribe, tongue and nation will give their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ during the Tribulation. So, the world is truly on the precipice of one of the biggest spiritual harvests that have every happened in the last 2,000 years, and we play a little role in it!

The Test

Vic Batista: Persecution is a way to test our faith. Don, I think we need a little bit more of that in America, because there are so many people who call themselves Christians but are not living as such, right?

Don McGee: You're very right about that. It might have been someone who is part of the Voice of the Martyrs, but they said that, "The blood of Christians is fertilizer to the seed of the Word." So, as terrible as it might seem to have to live under such circumstances, it is those trials which help purify the Church. Persecution separates the wheat from the chaff.

Vic Batista: Yes, absolutely! That's why I know that we're going to have to stay strong. There are so many challenges and persecutions coming. For instance, we have the homosexual agenda. I know people don't want to talk about those sins. But, just think of living in a society where there are so many marriages by men to men and women to women. When we stand up for God's word on that matter, we as Christians we are going to be looked at as a minority, right, Nathan?

Nathan Jones: Yes, exactly, and already are.

Don, that's an excellent quote, I love that quote! As a matter of fact, I've got that written out and posted, because it reminds me all the time of how God turns persecutions into salvations. The quote comes from *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* and it goes, "And yet, notwithstanding, all these continual persecutions and horrible punishments, the Church daily increased deeply rooted in the doctrine of the Apostles and of men apostolic and watered plenteously with the blood of the Saints."

I don't know about you guys, but as a Christian I find it hard to think that dying for my faith could possibly bring more people to Jesus Christ than my lifetime spent witnessing to them. But, God uses our sacrifices for His good. It not that God thinks we are disposable soldiers, but He knows our lives here on this earth are short. Our life's purpose is to bring people to Christ, and if our deaths do that, then He'll use that too to bring people to Jesus Christ.

Don McGee: The way we live is a whole lot more important than those religious accolades we like to repeat on Sunday mornings sometimes. We have church services where as the old folks used to say, "We wax long and loud in our prayers." We try to impress people with our theological knowledge. We use all these terms like sanctification, good terms and all, but often times it is just so much noise. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" is what they say where I'm from. Seeing something is more important than your words. Just watch how someone responds to persecution then. That's going to make a big difference in the lives of those who see what's happening in the lives of Christians.

Vic Batista: So true. Of course, we are not saying that we want persecution to come necessarily, but I think that we need a little bit of a purification in America. We really need as a Church and individuals to wake up in a sense and to take their faith in God seriously.

Nathan Jones: I've been studying the Minor Prophets, because frankly, the Minor Prophets aren't studied very much. I've been doing a lot of reading and writing on them. The more I study the Minor Prophets, the more I realize how Israel through much of the Old Testament was how we are as a nation today.

Take Amos, for instance. Israel at the time of this prophets did have a "religiosity." They went to Temple. They offered sacrifices. They held the Sabbath Day. But, the Jews the rest of the week lived however they wanted. That really bothered God. He detested their false spirituality, the same spirituality that we claim that we have today. It's religion without the real heart for Jesus Christ. That real relationship with the Lord isn't there. That's where the United States is now.

The parallels between Western culture and Israel's culture back in the Bible times are uncanny. We have that religiosity, so to speak, but the real heart and love of Jesus Christ is no longer there. And so, just like with Israel, God uses punishments to get people to turn back to Jesus Christ and renew their faith.

I agree totally with Don that we are now on a precipice. We've reached that point where God now has to bring persecution back to the Western nations to shake up the Church in order to get it vibrant again and so our people will turn back to Him. We know this spiritual apathy of the Church was prophesied in Revelation 3 with the Church of Laodicea, which is the final phase of the Church. The time would be defined by apathy. Clearly, we are living in that time now. But, I'm hoping before we go in the Rapture that there's something that wakes up the Western Church and gets us on fire for Jesus Christ again.

Go to the Word

Vic Batista: Don, there maybe individuals who really don't have a relationship with God. They've heard about Jesus, but they themselves have not committed themselves unto the Lord. What would you say to them in terms of encouraging them as we know that time is running out?

Don McGee: I'd tell them go to the Word. We have a lot of good Bible teachers and preachers out there on radio, television and in churches, but there's also so much out there that's just mere man's opinion regarding salvation and about living our lives. If you want to know about Jesus and about salvation, it's okay to listen to people, but measure every word and every

recommendation according to Scripture. I hear so many times preachers on television and radio declaring what Christianity is about, or this is what you need to do and this is the way you need to respond.

My advice to people is to go to the Word. God gives people a mind that is capable of understanding the translation of the Bible into English. The Holy Spirit guides us in the study of these things. Stick with what the Word says. I guess that is my greatest exhortation and encouragement to people.

Vic Batista: I always encourage people to go to the Word of God. The Bible says in John 3:16 that, *"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son; so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."* That is the Word of God speaking to the heart of man.

End of Program