



COUNTDOWN TO THE APOCALYPSE

CHRISTIANS IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Matthew 24:8-9

May 10, 2015 | DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS

Introduction: Christians have faced persecution for 2,000 years. Yet Jesus predicted there would be an escalation in persecution that would precede His return. Today we will examine the global persecution Christians are enduring in light of Bible prophecy.

I. Persecution In The World Today (John 16:33b)

John 16:33b "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Matthew 5:11-12 "11 Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

A. ISIS in Iraq

Hebrews 11:35b-38 "35b and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground."



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B. China

II. Persecution In The Tribulation (Revelation 13:7, 16-18)

Revelation 6:9 "And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;"

Revelation 13:7 "And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him."

Revelation 13:16-18 "16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six."

III. What Is Persecution?

A. Its Definition



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B. Its Inevitability (Matthew 24:8-9; 1 Peter 4:12-13)

Matthew 24:8-9 ⁸“But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. ⁹Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.”

1 Peter 4:12-13 ¹²“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.”

C. Its Unfairness (1 Peter 2:20-23)

1 Peter 2:21-23 ²¹“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²²WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;”

1 Peter 2:20 “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”

2 Timothy 2:11b-12a ^{11b}“For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; ^{12a} If we endure, we shall also reign with Him;”

IV. Persecution In America

A. The Marginalization of Christians



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Three States of a Moral Revolution

1. What was condemned is now **celebrated**.
2. What was celebrated is now **condemned**.
3. Those refusing to celebrate are **condemned**.

B. The Criminalization of Christianity

V. An Unprecedented Opportunity (Philippians 2:15-16)

Philippians 2:15-16 “¹⁵ that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.”

Conclusion