

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us
An Expository Study of The Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 21- Luke 21:5- 38
318- When Therefore Will These Things Happen?-
Part 4- The Promise of Judgment- Part 2

July 3, 2016

Luke 21:5-38

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

6 *"As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."*

7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?"

8 And He said, *"See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.*

9 *"When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."*

10 Then He continued by saying to them, *"Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom,*

11 *and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.*

12 *"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.*

13 *"It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.*

14 *"So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;*

15 *for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.*

16 *"But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death,*

17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.
18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish.
19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.
20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;
24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,
26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
27 "Then they will see *THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD* with power and great glory.
28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."
29 Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees;
30 as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.
31 "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.
32 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.
33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.
34 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;
35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

36 "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

37 Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.

38 And all the people would get up early in the morning *to come* to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

To the Glory of God

Now, last week, we began the verse by verse exposition of this amazing Passage that Brother Andy just read to you, and I want to continue that today. But, before we do that, I want to remind you of the correct *context* of this Passage.

Now context is an amazing thing. When I was a young man, Lenwood Sawyer, an old established Real Estate Broker in Gulfport, sat me down to tell me what I needed to understand about Real Estate. And this man looked me in the eye and said, "*There are only three things that matter in Real Estate- location, location, and location*". And so in Real Estate, everything else is *subordinate* to the location of the property.

And when I sat in John MacArthur's office back in 2005, he told me that when it comes to Biblical interpretation there are only three things that we need to understand:

1. Context
2. Context
3. Context

Now actually, there are more things to be concerned about than "context" when interpreting the Bible, but the point Dr. MacArthur was making was that getting the correct context is very important if you're going to understand what God said.

Now, many people, in fact, I would suggest that *most* people, when they read the Passage that Brother Andy just read to us, immediately see it as Jesus prophesying about what is going to happen at some point in *our* future. And if you will look at the headings that the editors of

your Bible put over these verses, you will see that even the editors of the Bible you hold in your hand think that is the case.

But, there are things we need to understand about the English versions of our Bibles. First of all, we need to remember that the verse and chapter divisions that are in our Bibles are not inspired. These things were added much later to help us read and understand the Scriptures. It might surprise you to know that the Chapter divisions were not added to the Bible until the late 1200's, and verse divisions were not added until the mid-16th Century.

Now let me try to put that in perspective for you. What that means is that for over 1,200 years after the Resurrection there were no Chapter divisions in the Bible. And it also means that we have had verse divisions for only about 500 years. So for 1,500 years there were no numbered verses in the Bible. And the various "section headings" that you see in your Bible, that describe what the section is supposed to be about, were not added until the 20th Century.

And I said all that to say this, I think that Chapter and verse divisions can be very useful. But not always. Many times these man-made divisions help us to study and learn the Scriptures. But not always. There are times when the Chapter and verse divisions get in the way and actually hurt our efforts to learn God's precious Word. Case in point is the first Chapter of **Ephesians** where no less than 3 verses end with phrases that belong in the next verse. And in **2Corinthians 4**, the first six verses belong to Chapter 3. And I have learned long ago to basically ignore the section headings.

We must understand, dear friends, that the Holy Spirit moved upon men to pen down entire *Books*, not chapters and not verses. The way that God led these holy men was to give whole Books that were meant to be read first, and then studied. And for 1,200 years after the Resurrection, that's how the Bible was read.

For example, God wrote the Bible in such a way for us to read the *entire Book of Romans*, the *entire Book of Ephesians*, the *entire Book of Ruth*, not simply skim it and hit the "high points" and then move on. And we are to read through the whole Book so we can arrive at the correct context. And we need the correct context, not so we can simply *know* what God said, but actually begin to *love* and what God said so we may strive, by God's Grace, to *obey* what God said.

So we are to first *read* the Bible so that we may get “the plain meaning of the text”. Without getting the plain, simple, and obvious meaning of what God said, nothing else matters. But, thanks be to God, that He has given us “cognitive reasoning abilities” in our minds so we can learn and know. And, over the centuries, science has proven that human beings learn much better and much deeper when we “read” something than we do when we “watch it” or “see it”. And that is why I have made one of the hallmarks of my ministry to encourage you to read, to read the Bible, to read the Puritans, to read the Catechisms, to read serious and deep books that will make you think, and that will cause you to ponder and to meditate, and that will humble you and break the staff of your pride.

In His great Wisdom, God didn’t choose to speak to Man through pictures. He *could* have, but He didn’t. God chose, on purpose, to give us Divine, and Eternal, and Absolute Truth in *words*. Words we can read, words we can study, and words we can understand.

And God gave us His Truth in words that have *specific* meanings, and words that have been placed together into a *specific* context. And so the struggle we have in Bible Study is not to try to find out what the Bible means to us, but to struggle to find out what the Bible meant to the man whom God used to write it. And that requires that we get into the proper context.

You see, there is something called “The Perspicuity of Scripture”. And that “three-dollar” word simply means that while there are deep and profound mysteries in the Bible that overwhelm us and cause us to tremble, the basic meaning of all that God said in Scripture is so clear and so obvious and so evident that a child can understand it.

So, after we read the Bible, we are to back up and then *study* that entire Book, verse by verse, line by line, precept by precept, until we grasp what the Holy Spirit moved upon the human writer to say. And it is in the studying of that Book where we go back to the original languages and conjugate the verbs and research the background, so we may place what God has said in its proper context.

Today, many well-meaning people read the Bible for no other reason than to get one or two verses that they can memorize and keep in their hearts. And they almost *always* memorize the “catchy verses”, the “easy verses”, and the “simple verses”, while mostly ignoring or

skipping over the “clumsy verses”, the “hard verses”, and the frightening ones.

And this is one of the reasons *why* the people of the modern Church have become so shallow, so worldly, so lukewarm, and so “Man-centered”. It is *why* we seem so unable to grasp and learn and teach deep and profound and eternal Truths. And this is *why* people take verses, and even entire Passages, completely out of context. And this is the source of much of our misguided approach to loving and serving God in our day.

Dear friends, we must know that taking a verse or a passage of the Bible out of context is as bad, if not *worse*, than not reading it at all. Because to take something out of context changes the entire meaning of what God said. And so “turning right” could very well become “turning left” when the command to turn is taken out of context. “Stopping” could very easily become “starting”, and “standing up” could become “sitting down”.

And I said all that to say this, the correct context of verses 5-38 of **Luke 21** is *not* what most of the headings in your Bibles say. This is *not* a prophecy about what is going to happen at some point in *our* future. That is taking these verses out of context. And there are two reasons that we know that to be true:

1. The structure of the text from verses 8- 38
2. The Promise that Jesus made in verse 32

In verses 8-38 our Redeemer is giving a long answer in *response* to the single question that was asked of Him in the last part of verse 7. The question was:

Luke 21:7b

... Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?

So the question is:

When?

... when what? *When* will You Return to this earth? No. *When* will the anti-christ rise up? No. *When* will you rapture the Church? No. The disciples were asking Jesus in verse 7 *when* He was going to do what He promised to do? Well, what did Jesus say He was going to do? Look again at verses 5-6:

Luke 21:5-6

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

6 *"As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."*

... and so, in verse 7- Jesus' disciples were asking Him *when* He was going to tear down the Temple, and thus, in effect, end the reign of the Old Covenant and usher in the infinitely superior New Covenant. And so verses 8-38 are His response to that question. So that is the context or the structure of these verses.

But then we also have the Promise that Jesus made in verses 32 that says:

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

So Jesus is making a Promise to the people who were standing there on that day hearing Him speak that *their* generation, the expected lifespan of the people hearing Jesus on that day, would not "pass away" until what He said in verses 8-38 would occur.

Now this Statement is *similar* to another Promise that Jesus made back in **Luke 9**, please go there with me to **Luke 9**. And in verse 27, we read these words:

Luke 9:27

"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

And now read the very next four verses:

Luke 9:28-31

28 Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

29 And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became white and gleaming*.

30 And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah,

31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

This transfiguration of Jesus was a *manifestation*, or a *glimpse*, or a *snap shot* of what the Kingdom of God *is*. So, from that we know that the "Kingdom" is not real estate. It isn't a place or even a timeframe. The Kingdom of God is Jesus Christ in His Glory.

And so Jesus promised that *some* of the people who stood there on that day and listened to Him speak, that some of them would not die until they saw the Kingdom of God. And the Scriptures tell us that this Prophecy was fulfilled just eight days later. So that tells us two things:

1. Eight days later some of them saw the Kingdom of God.
2. Some of them died within the next eight days and didn't see it here on earth.

But, in **Luke 21**, our Savior didn't say that the people *themselves* who were listening to Him on that day would not die, but that their entire *generation* would not "pass away" until what He spoke in verses 8-38 were fulfilled. So this is a much longer time frame than eight days. Jesus said very clearly at the end of verse 9:

Luke 21:9b

... do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.

Again, the "end" here is not the end of the world as we know it, but the "end" of the reign of the First Covenant signified by the destruction of the temple, and the end of the Jewish way of life and worship.

And, as we know now, approximately 40 years after Jesus spoke these words, the Roman Army descended down into Jerusalem and

fulfilled all of Jesus' Words here. And 40 years is a long time. But no matter how you slice it or dice it, there is simply no honest way to get 2,000 years or more out of this Statement by Jesus. To suggest that somehow Jesus was prophesying about events that will occur at some point in *our* future is to *invent* a meaning that the text doesn't offer. And it is to take this entire passage out of context.

So, our struggle to understand this Passage should *not* be to try to make the Words of Jesus in this Passage fit in with what is going on in our day or in our future. How the Words of Jesus in verses 8-38 fit in with England leaving the European Union, or with the super-computer in Brussels, Belgium, or with the rise of true believers of Islam slaughtering Christians, or with the micro-chip they are supposedly going to put in our hands, or with the decline of Biblical holiness in the American Church, or with the acceptance of sexual perversity in our culture, is completely irrelevant. Some of those things are very important and we have tons of verses and passages in the Bible that address those issues. But Jesus was *not* addressing any of that in these 31 verses.

So our struggle should be to understand what Jesus is saying within the correct context of this Prophecy being fulfilled about 40 years after He spoke it.

Now, last week, we looked closely at verse 9 and we saw that the "Wars" and "Disturbances" that Jesus was discussing there were the result of all the individual skirmishes that all those "false-Christ" that He talked about in verse 8 were instigating as they were trying to fulfill Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah by overthrowing the Roman occupiers *militarily* and bring Israel back to its former glory. And we also saw that the "nations" and kingdoms" that Jesus was talking about in verse 10 were the various factions that divided the nation of Israel during those years, and all the political, ethnic, and religious tensions that resulted from them not thinking that the other one was right. So now look again at verse 11:

and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

Now I'm not sure just how people kept up with earthquakes back then, I am not familiar with their record keeping, but somehow they did

keep up with these disasters. And according to both Josephus and, the Church historian, Eusebius, as well as the testimony from Scripture itself, beginning with the Death of Jesus on the Cross until many years after, the testimony of many of that day was that there were a greater number of earthquakes than normal. So much so that many of the Romans set up special prayers and offerings to their various deities, and even began to persecute the Jews and even the Church, because the pagans considered the gods to be angry that the Jews and Christians worshipped only one God.

For example, there were at least two earthquakes in Jerusalem within 3 days of Jesus Crucifixion. **Matthew 27:54** tells us that there was an earthquake the moment that Jesus died, and **Matthew 28:2** tells us that three days later, there was another earthquake when the angel of the Lord rolled the stone away from the tomb where Jesus was.

Now many times, plagues and famines are sometimes caused by God Himself as He brings Judgment on a city or state or even an entire nation. But we must understand that one of the results of any ongoing military conflict is the decimation of not only commerce and trade and government, but also of any semblance of order.

And so, chaos reigned in Israel over the next forty years as false christ after false christ rose up and people followed them. And that brought about more and more assassinations and political and social terrorism that resulted in more and more crack downs by the ruling authorities and even the Roman Army itself.

The result was that starvation was common as food supplies were interrupted, and basic sanitary needs went unfulfilled as dead corpses lined the streets. And that brought about plagues and diseases that swept through entire towns and villages all through Israel immediately after the Resurrection.

According to the Puritan, Matthew Henry, in his commentary on **Luke 21**, he wrote the following:

“[Jesus said] There shall be *earthquakes*, great earthquakes, *in divers places*, which shall not only frighten people, but destroy towns and houses, and bury many in the ruins of them. (3.) There shall be *famines* and *pestilences*, the common effects of war, which destroys the fruits of the earth, and, by exposing men to ill weather and reducing them to ill diet, occasions infectious diseases. God has various ways of punishing a provoking people.

The four sorts of judgments which the Old-Testament prophets so often speak of are threatened by the New-Testament prophets too; for, though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also. (4.) There shall be *fearful sights* and *great signs from heaven*, uncommon appearances in the clouds, comets and blazing stars, which frighten the ordinary sort of beholders, and have always been looked upon as *ominous*, and *portending* something *bad*.¹

We have already seen that beginning with the conception of John the Baptist, all the way through Jesus' Ministry, angels and demons and miracles and signs and wonders were prevalent. There was a period of over 400 years after Malachi's prophecy was finished until the announcement by the angel to Zacharias that Elizabeth would bear the fore-runner of the Messiah where there was no Voice from Heaven, no miracle, no sign, and no Prophet. The Heavens were silent for 400 years, and then there was an explosion of supernatural manifestations and angelic visitations and dreams, and this continued throughout the Ministry of Jesus, up to and including the birth of the Church, and throughout approximately the first 30 years of its existence.

And so, from approximately 6 BC until the Scriptures were completed there were supernatural manifestations and signs and wonders and miracles and healings and great activity by both angels and demons. Many of the historians of that day also described heavenly signs during this time like comets and falling stars and meteor showers and total eclipses that frightened people. And, as I said, the pagan Romans saw these things as signs that their false deities were angry and used that as an excuse to persecute the Christians.

Now look again at verses 12-15:

Luke 21:12-15

12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.

13 "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

14 "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;

¹ Matthew Henry; *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

Now the 20th Century proved to be the bloodiest Century in all of human history. More people were murdered and killed in wars and through persecutions in the 100 years of the 20th Century than in all the centuries before. And the 21st Century has already begun even bloodier. Hundreds of thousands of born-again believers have been slaughtered by the savages in the Middle East, and churches that have been in continuous operation since the Resurrection have closed down.

But there are several reasons *why* we can know that this Passage is talking about persecution of the first generation of believers rather than some current persecution in our day, or an escalation of persecution at some point in our future, and that is because Jesus promised here that believers would be hailed before the synagogues.

Now we must understand what synagogues were back then. It was not merely a meeting place as synagogues are today. The Pharisees instituted the synagogues as "Teaching Centers" throughout Israel during the time when the Pharisees were part of the religious ruling class. And they focused primarily on the worship of God through the animal sacrifices.

Now we need to remember that Synagogues were not authorized by Moses in the Torah. God told Moses to institute "Temple Worship", *not* synagogues. Synagogues really didn't begin until the Babylonian captivity of the 6th Century, BC.

If you remember, Dr. Luke told us back in **Luke 2** that Joseph and Mary took the eight-day old baby Jesus to the Temple to offer the appropriate sacrifice. There is no record that Joseph or Mary ever went to a synagogue. And it was in the Temple where they met two old genuine believers, Simeon and Anna, who had lived their entire lives under the inferior Revelation of the Old Covenant. But they believed God and were saved. God had promised a Messiah who would come to end the very Covenant that they were commanded to obey and follow. And both Anna and Simeon somehow understood all this, even though so many didn't. And when they looked at this eight-day old baby, they immediately knew that this was the fulfillment of the Promise of God, and they completely *abandoned* everything they knew and fully

embraced Jesus Christ, *before* He spoke a single Word, *before* He performed a single miracle, and *before* He died and rose from the dead.

The concept of Synagogues evolved over the years out of a need that the Pharisees saw that the people had to be taught the Word of God. So the Pharisees raised up these Teaching Centers all over Israel. And they focused primarily on the worship of God through the animal sacrifices.

But, after the Resurrection, when the false Messiah's rose up and the Roman army retaliated for all the assassinations and political terrorism and chaos, the Jewish rulers tried to show the Roman Authorities that they could keep order. And part of that effort was a renewed crack down on the various aberrant groups that they thought could foster violent rebellion.

So even though the Christians were peaceful and gentle, as Jesus had commanded them, they were seen, by the Jewish authorities, as a *perversion* of their man-made religious system of Judaism and a threat that had to be annihilated. So under the guise of cracking down on the violent terrorists, the Jewish rulers, in concert with the Roman Authority, began an intense persecution against the Christians immediately after the Resurrection to try to appease their Roman occupiers.

And this is why Jesus promises here that His genuine believers would be brought before both the religious *and* the governmental authorities of 1st Century Israel.

So, Jesus said that during the years after His Resurrection, and just before the Romans are used by God to end the reign of the Old Covenant, that genuine believers would be brought before the pagan Roman Authorities, which is why, in verse 12, He talks about:

- ✓ The Prisons
- ✓ Kings
- ✓ Governors

These three aspects have to do with the secular Roman occupiers. But notice also in this same verse that Jesus also says that His followers would be brought into the synagogues for trial and persecution. And this signifies that the Jewish religious hypocrites are

still in charge at the time when this Prophecy of Jesus is fulfilled and that synagogues were still in operation.

So, for example, even though there have been, and are today, secular governments that persecute Christians all over the world, not a single believer has been brought before a synagogue for persecution in almost 2,000 years. ISIS is horrifically persecuting believers today as an outflow of the demonic religion of Islam, yet *none* of them are brought into a synagogue for this persecution. Even in Israel today, Christians are never brought into a synagogue for persecution. This *only* happened during the time frame when the First Covenant was in operation and animal sacrifices were being carried out, and the Jewish rulers were in authority at the same time that the pagan Romans ruled. So this persecution that is promised by Jesus here is not merely governmental persecution, or even the every-day religious persecution by a false religion. Jesus is talking very specifically about *Jewish* persecution against Christians.

So, this Prophecy by Jesus can only be fulfilled if two things are true:

- ✓ A pagan secular Government has the power and authority to persecute Christians.
- ✓ Jewish rulers also have the power and authority to persecute Christians concerning animal sacrifices.

... and of the 2,000 year history of the Church, the only time both of those things were true at the same time was the approximately 40 year time frame immediately after the Resurrection, but before 70 AD.

Now I want you to notice the reason *why* the Christians are persecuted by both the secular and the religious rulers:

... for My name's sake

So, Jesus promised that both the secular government of Rome and the Jewish ruling councils would attack His children, precisely because of Who Jesus is and what Jesus did and what Jesus said. So this persecution was brought to the Christians by both the unsaved Jews and the pagan Gentiles because of what the Christians believed and what they taught about Jesus.

Now, I have said this many times before, but we need to get this down in our hearts. *Nobody* persecutes Christians because they feed the hungry or clothe the naked or build hospitals, or because they teach irrigation techniques to the farmers, or because they offer medical care for the sick. *Nobody* persecutes Christians because they say, "*Jesus loves you and has a plan for your life*". That kind of shallow, surface, lukewarm, preaching doesn't offend anybody.

No, Christians have always been persecuted, and are right now being persecuted, and will always be persecuted, because of what we believe and what we teach.

You see, real, genuine Christians call lost sinners to repentance. They cry out against man-made teachings of the various false religions that cannot forgive a single sin or save a single soul. Christians are burned at the stake and ripped apart by wild animals, and hung on poles and set on fire. Christians are beaten and pulled apart and starved to death and imprisoned. They are shot and beheaded and drowned because they believe and teach that Jesus Christ is God Almighty in human flesh, and that Salvation is found in no other name.

Christians teach that there are no good people on earth, and that all are sinners, and that every human born of woman is falling as fast as they can right into a lake of fire, and Jesus is the only way out. Christians teach that lost people have to come to Jesus broken and convinced by God the Spirit that they are guilty and that they *deserve* eternal damnation or they can't be saved. Christians teach that all human righteousness brought about by religious works and participation of religious rituals and ceremonies, added together, only reaches the level of being a filthy rag. And that is patently offensive to people who are deceived by false religions and are trying so hard to earn God's Favor by what they do for themselves.

Christians teach that Salvation is the radical and the supernatural and the miraculous transformation of the human nature from being fallen to being divine by a sovereign Act of God. And that this New Birth is granted to patently unworthy sinners by Grace and through Faith alone, absent any and all human works so that God alone receives all the Glory. And that is insulting to people who have been led astray by demonically engineered religions.

And so the people enslaved by false religions and man-made philosophies hate the messengers because they hate the Message. And

they hate the Message because they hate the God Who gave the Message. And until God sovereignly grips their hearts, and until God sovereignly inserts Himself into their minds, and until God sovereignly gives them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe, they will continue to hate the Message so much that they will persecute the messengers.

So make no mistake about this, dear friends, when they persecute you, they are not angry at the good deeds that you do before men; they are not offended at your kindness or your gentleness or your efforts to help them. No, all Christian persecution comes about for the sake of Christ's glorious Name, for the sake of His pristine Reputation, and for the sake of His sinless Character. And all Christian persecution is deigned to be carried out for His Glory.

Now look again at verse 13:

It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

Why are you willing to suffer for this Man named Jesus? Why are you willing to endure the loss of all things for this Man? Why are you willing to die for this Man? What has to happen to somebody that will cause them to live their lives with abandon in this radical Love of Jesus Christ? What has transpired in this person's life whereby they feel genuinely blessed by God to be able to suffer and die for the sake of Jesus Christ?

You see, part and parcel to having experienced the miracle of the New Birth is that your entire focus is no longer on yourself and what God might do for you, but is on what will bring God Glory, what will enlarge the Testimony of Jesus Christ, what will make Christ look irresistible? What will make Christ look larger than any problem and better than anything this world can offer?

It is blasphemy to tell sinners to come to Jesus so that Jesus can help them fulfill all their dreams. It is sin to tell lost sinners that if they come to Jesus they will have measurably better lives as far as this world is concerned. We, who preach the Biblical Gospel, must thunder that lost sinners must come to Jesus to die. They will die to self and they will die to sin and they will die to worldly pleasures, and they will die to all their dreams and all their ambitions and all their goals in life.

In the early days of Christianity, the odds that you would die as an old man were very slim. Christianity was not merely out of step with the culture, like it is now; Christianity was an *illegal* and a *persecuted* religion. So, when you came to Jesus back then, you were likely to die very soon after.

Now the modern Church-growth gurus tell us that if you want a large Church, you have to tell people that Jesus will make their lives measurably better, or they won't come. They say it is fantasy to expect people to leave their homes and drive to Church and to sit and hear the Word of God expounded in a serious and deep and precise fashion. And, of course, my response to that is, "*It all depends on how hungry you are.*"

If you are lost or lukewarm or worldly, even the slightest inconvenience will be too much. But if you are hungering and thirsting after Righteousness, if you are panting after God like a deer pants after the water brooks, if you walk through the city seeking Him who your souls loves, then no degree of sacrifice is too great.

So, based on what these pied-pipers teach, and based on the fact that far too many pastors would rather be big and famous than faithful and fruitful, the entire thrust of the Biblical Gospel, that *demand*s and *expect*s selfless sacrifice from every soul who names the Name of Jesus, is turned on its head, and Jesus is now seen as some cosmic sugar daddy Who lives for no other reason than to give you more stuff, and to make much of you, but Who would *never* make any demands on your life. But I wish to inform you this morning that such a "jesus" doesn't exist.

The Jesus of the Bible expects you to see Him as the Treasure of your life so much so that you are perfectly willing to not merely be inconvenienced, but to suffer and die for His great Name. And that isn't what it means to be brave, that is what it means to be saved.

So, when you read the Bible, you find that in spite of the persecution, in spite of the unfair treatment, in spite of the cost, the Church grew *exponentially*, *especially* when it was the hardest. So most of the leaders of the modern Church have it entirely wrong. Sinners are not kept out of the Kingdom because of strong, Biblical Preaching. That is simply not true. God's people are not afraid that Jesus might require something out of them, they're not repulsed by the straight and narrow path, they're not even frightened at the prospect of

terrible persecution. No, people are offended by those in the Church who say they are saved and yet don't think enough about Jesus, or enough about what He said to actually obey Him and deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. And that hypocrisy is not only offensive, the Bible teaches in **Titus 2** that it actually hinders true evangelism.

We must understand that as we sit here today in our comfort and security, that the *normal* function of Christianity is persecution. Persecution, even horrific persecution, that actually imprisons believers and has them tortured and killed, is the way that Christianity has operated for the majority of its existence.

And I believe with all my heart that this short reprieve that we have enjoyed in this nation for 230 years where Christianity is honored and respected, and even favored, is quickly coming to an end. And soon we will taste the severity of persecution in this country that our brothers and sisters all over the world have endured from the very beginning. And when that comes, know this, Jesus Christ is building His Church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

We must remember that the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was begun through the shed Blood of a sinless Lamb, and it spread around the world bathed in the blood of the martyrs.

Sinners are drawn by God the Spirit to the Cross, and that is the end of them. And as Jesus forgives every sin and washes them with red Blood, and as God takes the spotless Righteousness of Jesus and imputes it to them, they now are empowered to live their lives with reckless abandon to the Glory of God!

The Biblical example of true conversion is that Jesus says, "*Follow Me*", and they dropped their nets and followed Him. You may run from God for years. But the Bible teaches that there is a moment in God's Economy when God's Call to Salvation. And that Call is not a request, it isn't a plea, it is a sovereign Command that overrides all your rebellion and all your resistance. And at that moment, God's elect hear the Voice of Jesus, and they come. Jesus said in **John 5:25**:

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Spiritually dead people are suddenly and miraculously and sovereignly given the ability to hear the Voice of God, and those who hear, Jesus said, will live! Theologians call this moment "Effectual Grace" or "Irresistible Grace", and that is exactly how every single one of you was saved. It has nothing to do with your so-called "free will", or your decision or you accepting Jesus into your heart. This is a sovereign Work of God. And the result is that dead people live and lost people are saved!

And that is why these truly saved people are not only willing to suffer, but they are willing to die for the sake of the great Name of Jesus. And that is why you see so many of our brothers and sisters today refusing to deny Jesus as Isis beheads them or burns them alive. But, that is why so many hundreds of thousands of Blood-bought souls were horrifically persecuted during the time immediately after the Resurrection, and yet they remained true. Jesus told them that their persecution by both the religious and the secular rulers was going to be for a testimony to the Greatness and the Glory of Jesus Christ.

So, these first Century believers were arrested in fulfillment of Jesu prophecy here, and they were hauled in before the Roman Governors and the Roman courts, and they were dragged into the Jewish synagogues. And they were accused by the Romans of insurrection, but they were accused by the Jewish rulers of blasphemy. And they were beaten and cut in two and burned alive and crucified and thrown to the animals. And they rejoiced that they could suffer for His Name, and they sang praises as they died, and as their bodies were torn asunder, they lifted up their eyes in Heaven and they beheld the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ!

Amen! Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

