

PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH
Part III
Text: Matthew 24:1-51

Key Word: Persecution

Key Thought: Persecution Takes on Many Different Forms

The disciples were curious as well about some very important questions dealing with future events. They asked three questions.

1. When will this happen?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

What Were These Disciples Told about the Signs Proceeding the Return of Christ?

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8)

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)

III. THE ABUNDANCE OF OPPORTUNITY (Matthew 24:12-14)

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

For the last few weeks we have been looking at the response of Jesus to the 3 questions that His disciples asked as they were leaving Herod's Temple. **These are still vital questions in our generation. People still want to know what is going to happen in the future.** What we believe will in turn have an impact upon the way we live and the decisions we make.

How can we adequately prepare for the coming of the Messiah? We looked at the warnings that Jesus told us to be aware of False Messiahs and False Prophets. Today I want to speak about the second sign that Jesus spoke about. This is not an attractive subject so we sometime avoid speaking about it. In doing so, we are not as prepared as we need to be for the coming of the Lord. I would like to look at the persecution that IS taking place and increasing worldwide in 2 distinct ways.

A. Subtle Persecution

It's important to state that subtle persecution is as damaging as severe persecution. **It has a way of tearing at our faith so that we don't struggle against it as we should be. We get tired of fighting for what we believe is right. We come to a conclusion that we are losing and therefore, what is the use of opposing what we can never change.** We have got to learn that in the mind set of persecution that we need to be persevering and overcoming what is wrong, not giving into it. We cannot stop doing what is right even when the ungodly get upset.

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

A. Subtle Persecution (Contd.)

“You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take.”

Wayne Gretzky
“Speaker’s Idea File”
p. 3.

Let me just mention a few of the subtle persecutions that have been attempting to wear us down over the years.

1. Abortion - Abortion rates have been steadily increasing in proportion to live births since 1994. Teenage pregnancy is on the decline only because of increases in abortion.

There are many reasons for not taking the life of an unborn child that is of a concern to us. According to a statistical report on the health of Canadians in 1999 by Health Canada gave us the following reasons.

- a. Children of teenagers are more likely to have low birth weights, and to suffer the associated health problems.
- b. Pregnant teens themselves are also at a greater risk of health problems, including, for example, anaemia, hypertension, renal disease (kidney failure) and depressive disorders. As well, teenagers who engage in unprotected sex are putting their own health at risk of sexually transmitted infections.
- c. Teenage pregnancy also has economic consequences. Childbearing may curtail education and thereby reduce a young woman’s employment prospects in a job market that requires ever higher levels of training. In addition, recessions since the early 1980s and 1990s and our present crisis means that to maintain an adequate standard of living, dual earning became the norm in many Canadian households. But teenagers who give birth, particularly at ages 15 to 17, are likely to be single. Consequently, most teenage mothers lack a partner to contribute to the household income.

2. Public Education - Many studies have shown that home schooling and Christian Education quality has surpassed that of our public school system. The values that are taught make for a much better society. There is a much lesser chance of these children ending up in our courts and being charged for criminal offences. There is an increasing move from the public system to education based upon family values.

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

A. Subtle Persecution (Contd.)

3. Creation vs Evolution - There has never been and there will never be a missing link to prove the evolution theory. Distinguished professors have been quoted as saying that there is nothing to prove what they believe. They simply believe it because the only other option is to believe in a living, creator God. By doing so they must also surrender their wisdom to the wisdom of God and His Word. This would logically mean that they would have to get saved and surrender their will to God. **They would rather promote a lie than submit to the truth.** Once again we are mocked for believing the truth.

4. Euthanasia/Infanticide - As Christians we value life as God gave to us. There are a number of strong lobbyists who continue with their war of words against those of us who believe it is in God's hands whether we live or die. **We value those in their senior years whether they are healthy or not. They are NOT a burden to our society.** They worked to give us what we need and we should be grateful for everything we have today.

Infanticide (the killing of an infant) has now moved back even worse to include **“partial birth abortions.”** That is the killing of a baby just before it fully leaves the mother's body. Everyone is born in the image of God and we are called upon to value their lives.

5. Sexual Immorality - There has been a growing opposition against anyone who opposes this lifestyle. It has reached a point that they've been given a blank cheque to do what they want. **There is a very clear selective journalism when addressing any of these lifestyles. We are expected to accept everything they say and never oppose what they say or do.**

6. The Birth, Death and Resurrection of our Lord - Anything relating to **Jesus Christ** is opposed in our ever declining society. The word “Christ” really bothers a lot of people unless they are using the name in vain. Lets not exclude the birth of Jesus from our homes and society. **It's not wrong for Christians to be concerned about the commercialising and the replacement of the meaning of the birth and death of our Lord and Saviour.**

I wonder how the Muslim community would feel if we tried to change the name of Ramadan and its meaning to something totally differently that it is today?

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

B. Severe Persecution

These things I have just mentioned are **subtle persecutions** in comparison to the extreme and **severe persecution** that is taking place throughout our world.

1. Hindu Extremists in India

Christian persecution in India rose dramatically in 2021 as attacks by Hindu extremists became more frequent. Hindu extremists have the support of India's ruling party and believe that all Indians should be Hindu. To them, converting Muslims and Christians to Hinduism is simply returning them to their original faith.

Several local state governments have passed and enforced anti-conversion laws that prohibits Christians from trying to convert Hindus or engaging any behaviour that may be perceived as attempted conversion. Hindu extremists argue that these laws protect the majority religion from the minority religion — India is 80% Hindu and 2.3% Christian. Violation of anti-conversion laws is punishable with fines and up to 10 years in prison in some states.

The perception that Christians force Hindus to convert has given pretext for attacks by Hindu extremists on churches, prayer meetings, and Christian schools. These attacks became more frequent, with around 300 reports of violence against Christians, as of October 2021. Police rarely hold the perpetrators of these attacks accountable. Persecution in India is expected to intensify in 2022, according to Release International.

2. Militant Muslims in Nigeria

Throughout 2021, the number of Christians killed in Nigeria arguably reached the level of genocide. About 17 Christians are killed per day, according to ACIA Africa. In 2021's first 200 days 3,462 Christians were murdered — the highest number since 2014.

The conflict in Nigeria is ongoing. Since 2009, nearly 43,000 Nigerian Christians have been killed, according to a report by Intersociety. Boko Haram, Fulani militants, and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have continually targeted Christian homes, churches, and schools.

“Fulani militants destroyed more than 50 villages and displaced nearly 5,000 Christians,” said a Release International partner. *“The attacks by the Fulani now include kidnappings for ransom. Churches, church leaders and Christian communities remain the primary targets.”*

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

B. Severe Persecution (Contd.)

3. Militant Muslims in Afghanistan

In 2021, Afghanistan was marked by the unforgettable images of families flooding the Kabul airport to escape an imminent Taliban takeover. According to Open Doors USA's World Watch List entry on Afghanistan, converts from Islam to Christianity face the greatest threat — death, torture or even institutionalization for insanity. If discovered, Christians must either flee the country or die.

Christians are afraid of being reported by family members or neighbours, and fear violent treatment by the Taliban,

Paul Robinson, the CEO of Release International, stated: *“Our partners tell us that Christians who are unable to follow the outward forms of Islam, such as praying at the mosque and saying the shahada, the Islamic profession of faith, will stand out more clearly. This increases their vulnerability to persecution and the pressure on them to conform.”*

4. Militant Muslims Worldwide

There are at least 300,000 militant Moslems on earth. They call Israel **“little Satan”** and the United States **“big Satan.”**

“There is not a single one of the predominantly Muslim nations on earth where Christians are not persecuted.”

Dr. David Jeremiah
“What in the World is Going On?”
Thomas Nelson, p. 81

“Some experts are projecting that by the year 2040, 80 percent of the population of France will be Muslim. At that point the Muslim majority will control commerce, industry, education, and religion in that country . . . And a Muslim will be president.”

Dr. David Jeremiah
“What in the World is Going On?”
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II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

B. Severe Persecution (Contd.)

4. Militant Muslims Worldwide (Contd.)

Pakistan's prime minister Benazir Bhutto before she was assassinated on December 27, 2007 wrote . . .

The great hope of the militants is a collision, an explosion between the values of the West and what the extremists claim to be the values of Islam . . . if the fanatics and extremists prevail . . . Then a great **fitna (disorder through schism or division)** would sweep the world. Here lies their ultimate goal: chaos."

Benazir Bhutto
"Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West"
Harper Collins. pp. 2-3,20

Are they serious about world domination at any cost? Perhaps I will end by quoting one of their own clerics who delivered this sermon which was broadcast to the entire Arab world from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

"With the establishment of the state of Israel, the entire Islamic nation was lost, because **Israel is a cancer . . . The Jews are a virus resembling AIDS, from which the entire world suffers**. You will find that the Jews were behind all the civil strife in this world. The Jews were behind the suffering of the nations . . .

We [the Muslims] have ruled the world before, and by Allah, the day will come when we will rule the entire world again. The day will come when we will rule America. The day will come when we will rule Britain and the entire world – except the Jews. The Jews will not enjoy a life of tranquillity under our rule . . . Listen to the Prophet Muhammad, who tells you about the evil that awaits the Jews. **The stones and trees will want Muslims to finish off every Jew.**"

Text of Ibrahim Mdaire's Sermon
"The Jerusalem Post"
19 May, 2005

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

B. Severe Persecution (Contd.)

5. North Korea

North Korea is one of the most hostile countries towards Christianity in the world. Religious freedom within the country is nonexistent, and Christians must keep their faith secret or else face execution, torture or imprisonment in a labour camp. Of the estimated 400,000 Christians in North Korea, 50 - 70,000 Christians are currently in labour camps, according to Open Doors USA.

6. Communist China

During China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900, insurgents captured a mission station, blocked all the gates but one, and in front of that one gate placed a cross flat on the ground. Then the word was passed to those inside that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted their freedom and life, but that any refusing would be shot. Terribly frightened, the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. But the eighth student, a young girl, refused to commit the sacrilegious act. Kneeling beside the cross in prayer for strength, she arose and moved carefully around the cross, and went out to face the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining ninety-two students followed her to the firing squad.

"Today in the Word"
Feb. 89, p. 17

Reports continue to come in pointing toward little change in the policies of Communist China. Our politicians would rather trade with them than have them face up to their ongoing severe atrocities. Perhaps we should look more closely at the labels on our clothes and articles we buy. **We are feeding an evil regime.**

Jesus knew what He was talking about almost 2,000 years ago as a sign of His coming. I wonder how prepared our churches as well as our world leaders are for this type of persecution? Some leaders will continue to oppose them while others will choose to continue the failure of trying to appease them in any diplomatic way possible. **Nothing will curtail their desire to take over the world.** The money from these rich oil countries will continue to feed this violence. **Indeed the Scriptures are coming to pass before our very eyes and the worst is yet to come.**

II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)(Contd.)

B. Severe Persecution (Contd.)

What can we do? I don't mean to leave you with a sense of hopelessness. There is no foundation for our hope to stand upon **OTHER** than that of Jesus Christ. **In the midst of all this chaos we must stand upon our Rock, Our Defender, Our Shield, Our Strength, Our Provision, Our One and Only God. He has never lost a battle and He never will. He will not leave us or forsake us.**

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Date: Aug 14/22

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Confidence

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1. Abortion -
2. Public Education -
3. Creation vs Evolution -
4. Euthanasia/Infanticide -
5. Sexual Immorality -
6. The Birth, Death and Resurrection of our Lord -

B. Severe Persecution

1. Hindu Extremists in India
2. Militant Muslims in Nigeria
3. Militant Muslims in Afghanistan
4. Militant Muslims Worldwide
5. North Korea
6. Communist China