

## God's Plan for Persecution, Part 1

Luke 21:12-13

April 7, 2024

Well, we are back in Luke 21 today, and so you'll want to turn in your Bibles to Luke 21, if you're not already there. This fascinating teaching from our Lord on the End Times and in this section, that we're gonna get into, or what we've been in really is our Lord speaking about events in history, and time, and really the future; that span, the time between his post resurrection, ascension into heaven, all the way to his glorious return at the Second Coming.

There are many of you who are staying current with our Bible reading plan, our Bible reading program for our church and if, so you've just finished reading Luke 21. But for, but for some of you maybe, it's maybe you're out of, kind of, a little bit behind; maybe it's been a couple weeks since you've looked into this, so what I'd like to do is just begin by reading this whole section of Jesus' answer starting at verse 5, Luke 21:5.

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I'll start reading from there, "And while some were talking about the temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and dedicated gifts, he said, 'As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be one stone left upon another which will not be torn down.' So 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?' And he said, 'See to it that you are not deceived, for many will come in my name saying, "I am He! And, "The time is at hand!" Do not go after them. And 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.'

"Then, he continued, saying to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 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. It will result in an opportunity for your testimony. So set in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I

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will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

“But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your perseverance you will gain your lives. But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. And 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 countryside must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

“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 against this people, they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive,” into the nations,  
“into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled under

foot by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

“‘And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectations of the things which are coming upon the world; For the POWERS OF THE HEAVENS will be shaken. And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.’

“Then he told them a parable: ‘Behold the fig tree and all the trees: as soon as they put forth *leaves*, and you see it for yourselves,’ you, ‘know that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. But be on,’ your, ‘guard, so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that

day will not come upon you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth.

“‘But keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.’” Now that is Jesus’ answer; all of that in response to the questions that his disciples asked him back in verse 7. “When, therefore, will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”

As we've seen, as we've studied, and talked about these things, that term encompasses the future of Israel, its entire eschatology. It includes the Second Coming. It includes the end of the age. It's speaking about the age of fulfillment, as God fulfills promises of restoration that he made to Israel. But before things get better, which is after the glorious return of Christ, things are going to get worse, a lot worse. There will be, in the future, this unprecedented time of tribulation on the earth, unlike anything the world has ever seen.

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Jesus begins there in verse 8, speaking about the events of the first half of the tribulation. They themselves are a prelude to the end, but not them, in and of themselves, signs of the end. It's not yet the end. There will be false messiahs. There will be human conflict, war, social chaos. There will be the consequences that result from war, like famines and plagues. There will be geological disturbances like earthquakes, cosmic disturbances like terrors, and then great signs from heaven. And yet with all of this Jesus' message to believing Israel is this first, it's this: Do not be deceived. Do not be misled. Don't be led astray by the audacious claims of those who come claiming to be Messiah.

Don't go after the many false Messiahs who rise up, who come in Jesus' name, who claim to be the Christ, who claim to be the Second Coming of Christ himself, and that the end is upon them. Don't follow them. And though they come, as they will, accompanied by false prophets and show great signs and wonders, according to Matthew 24:24, "they will mislead, if possible, even the elect." So powerful, all, are all these signs, Jesus says, even so, even though many will be deceived and follow after them; you don't do that.

He also says, to believing Israel, don't be terrified. A very strong word there for terror, with a very strong injunction. Don't be terrified by conflicts, verses 9 and 10. Don't be terrified by catastrophes, in the first part of verse 11. Don't be terrified by any calamities, whether earthquakes, or terrors or great signs from heaven. To date, none of what Jesus has described in verses 8 through 11 has happened yet, in human history.

Now it is true that there have been isolated instances of each and every one of these phenomenon. Even before the time of Christ, there were false Messiahs, there were wars, social chaos, earthquakes, famines, plagues. If we go back to the Exodus, we see terrors and signs from heaven. None of that has been on the scale that Jesus has predicted here. None of that has been with the frequency or with the intensity that Jesus has predicted here.

Nothing has engulfed the world such as to warrant this very strong language that Jesus uses and the strong injunctions that

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he gives his disciples. In verse 8, "See to it." Be on the lookout so, "that you're not deceived." And then in verse 9, "Do not be terrified." Do not cower in crave and fear, like the rest of the world. Nothing has risen up like that to tempt even believers to this level of deception, or to this level of mass hysteria, and worldwide panic and terror.

If you need to be reminded of the level that Jesus is speaking of, just revisit the sixth chapter of Revelation as Jesus breaks the seals on the scroll and he unleashes, the four horsemen of the apocalypse. We saw there, that 1/4 of the earth's population dies in a very short span of time; just within a few years. Nothing like that has ever happened in the world up, to this point. Not in the decades before Jesus; not in the decades between Jesus' ascension in AD 33, and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. And not at any point since, in history, has anything like this, on this scale happened.

But once they do start to happen, Jesus wants believing Israel to know, all believers to know that these things, according to Matthew 24:8 and Mark 13:8, they are merely the beginning of



birth pains. But the end is not yet; all these things must take place by necessity of the divine plan. But the end does not follow after immediately. Now look at verse 12, because Jesus at this point, in his prediction, puts down the telescope and he picks up the binoculars. He turns from looking to the very far future, and now he shifts the focus to talk about the nearer future. For these disciples, it will be a future of coming persecution followed by Jerusalem's destruction.

Jesus is going to go back after talking about Jerusalem's destruction in verses 20 to 24, he's going to go back to the distant future, pick up the telescope again in verse 25; he's going to return to the theme of signs from heaven, that he left off in verse 11, and that connects to the signs in verse 25, in sun and moon and stars, turbulence in the seas, celestial powers shaken to such a degree and extent that, that people faint from fear and dreaded anticipation all over the world.

All those things are just a prelude to the final sign, which is the sign, the true sign of Christ's return, verse 27, when all "will see the SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with great power and

great glory." It'll be just as lightning flashes from the east and to the West and everybody sees it. Nobody misses it, but there is a lot of history that needs to happen, first.

Verse 12, if you're taking notes, this is the outline that we'll follow for this section, which we'll cover this week and next week, and I hope not the weeks after, but we'll see. We'll see. But if you're taking notes, here's the outline we're going to follow for this section from verses 12 to 19, and you just jot these points down and we'll come back to them. First of all, in verses 12 to 13: The purpose in persecution. The purpose in persecution verses 12 and 13, "But before all these things they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony." That's the purpose in persecution, verses 12 and 13.

Then secondly: The power in persecution. The power in persecution, verses 14 to 15, "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves, for I will give you an

utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute." That's the second point: The power in persecution. What's the power? "I will give you." It's the power of God. The power of Christ. As we'll see, it's a Trinitarian power at work in persecution, to hold us fast, to cause us to endure, to cause us to accomplish God's purposes, and persecution to give an opportunity for our testimony to the Gospel.

Number three, third in our outline: The pain in persecution. The pain in persecution, verses 16 and 17. The pain and persecution is not the persecution itself, but it is why the persecution is happening. Look at it there, "But you will be delivered up, even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you'll be hated by all on account of My name." There's no deeper pain is there than betrayal. Pain in your family as they hand you over and the loyalty and the love that you feel and the affection you feel for your family, when they don't love your Lord and the Messiah and they hand you over, deliver you over to authorities. That is the pain in persecution. It's to see the hand by which it comes.

But finally, the promise in persecution, number four, verses 18 to 19, "And yet in all of this not a hair of your head will perish and by your endurance you'll gain your lives." Now, it may, it may seem like a contradiction that some of you "will be put to death and yet not a hair of your head will perish." We'll get to that when we get to that. But understand that we're talking about eternal salvation, "not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance, you will gain your lives."

So, the purpose, the power, the pain, the promise in persecution that is the outline for verses 12 to 19, that we're going to follow. It's going to take us a couple of weeks to get through those verses, so just be patient. But before we jump into this outline and start to move forward, I want to make a few introductory remarks. Just stick with me. It'll take just a few minutes. But this is kind of a, a, utility here and that I need to address at some point. So it might as well be now.

I want to show you, first of all, the relationship of these verses to the other synoptic gospels, Matthew and Mark. Let's

start by turning over to Mark's Gospel, just to see the relationship of these verses, that we've just gone through in this outline, verses 12 to 19 in Luke 21. And to show how it connects with Mark 13 and the words there; Mark's Gospel, turn to Mark 13 verse 9 and you can see how Mark parallels Luke.

What we've covered in Luke, so far, as Jesus begins to answer his disciples, in Luke 21:8 through 11, as we've just read through about the beginning of the tribulation. This prediction of coming persecution, verses 12 to 19, in the near future, persecution of his disciples that they're going to experience personally; we have that same order of events in Mark's Gospel in Mark 13:5 to 8, that parallels with Luke, 21:8 to 11.

And then we read this starting in verse 9, which also parallels Luke, "but see to yourselves." So he tells them about the events of the great tribulation, and he says, "but see to yourselves; for they will deliver you to the courts, you will be beaten in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a witness to them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations. And when they lead you away,

delivering you up, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. And brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child and children rise up against parents and have them put to death. And you'll be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

The same pattern we read in Luke, isn't it? Note here, once again, the involvement of Jewish authorities in the persecution, as well as, gentile authorities. But notice the Jewish authorities, the reference to the synagogue. There will be universal hatred; a hatred that is as remote and far removed from you, as governing authorities, but also very close and intimate, as close as family members. You'll be hated by all, and yet true faith endures. True faith finds salvation in the preserving of the soul before God. Same pattern in Mark and Luke.

Right, now turn to Matthew's Gospel. Go over to Matthew in chapter 24. Matthew sounds similar to Mark and Luke, but this

section of Matthew, it is a bit different and I'll show you that. Matthew 24:4 to 8, we see that Jesus begins his answer, and as Jesus begins his answer and talks about the end and the beginning of the tribulation, that's parallel to Luke 21:8 to 11, parallel to Mark, 13:5 to 8; ground we've covered already. So far so good.

When we come to Matthew 24:9, what seems at first glance to be much the same or similar, on closer inspection we find that it is different than Mark and Luke. Look at Matthew 24:9, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and deceive many.

"And because lawlessness is multiplied, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." Notice that there is no mention of what Luke recorded of being delivered up to the synagogues. There's no Jewish

persecution talked about here. There's no mention of what Mark recorded of being beaten up in the synagogues. Again, no Jewish authorities and Jewish persecution involved in Matthew's section.

Here in Matthew, there is no Jew-on-Jew persecution. It's all Gentile on Jew persecution; nations against the Jew persecution; betrayal, yeah, that's gonna go on, treachery, lawlessness, love growing cold, that's all there. But the hostility is coming from the nations and it's coming against believing Jews. So in Matthew's account, he records Jesus' predictions about the great tribulation from the start of his answer, in verse 4, all the way to the Second Coming, verses 29 to 31. The whole thing is talking about the great tribulation and, the just, so just before the son of man comes, verses 29 to 31.

Believing Jews who will live through the tribulation period, their endurance and their testimony is going to result in the universal proclamation of the gospel. And it's a gospel, here noted, as the gospel of God's kingdom, preaching that gospel of Psalm chapter 2, preaching that gospel to the whole world as a



testimony to the nations. In other words, these Jews living at that time in the tribulation are gonna proclaim to the entire Gentile world, listen, you had better repent. You had better bow the knee, because our Messiah is returning to set up his kingdom.

So "kiss the Son," now, Psalm 2, bow your knee before the King who's coming, "lest he be angry with you." Yes you. Lest you perish in your rebellion. You'd better put your eyes on him. Humble yourself before him. That's how Matthew differs from Luke and Mark. His entire record of the Olivet Discourse focuses on the great tribulation and the Second Coming. Mark tracks with Luke through the verses in this section, Luke 21:9-12 and 19, but, then it fast forwards. Mark does fast forward past that tribulation and persecution section, fast forwards to the great tribulation and tracks with Matthew from then on. Luke differs from both Matthew and Mark, because he covers not only the persecution against believers, but also covers the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, which is different than Matthew and Mark.

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Luke 21:20 to 24 is about the destruction of Jerusalem and then he moves ahead to the events surrounding the Second Coming from there. Now you're going to want to go back on the website and listen to everything that I said again, and to go through it slowly, so that you can track with what I've said. I realize that the first time of hearing it is sometimes hard to track with and follow the argument, but you will be able to follow the argument, if you go back, write a few things down as you listen.

Listen to the, to the recorded sermon. But since you are in Matthew's Gospel, turn back a few pages and let me show you something that is very familiar. Go to the 10th chapter of Matthew. Remember Matthew? Remember Matthew, chapter 10 is when Jesus summons his 12 disciples. He names them there at the beginning of the chapter, and he gives them power and authority over unclean spirits to cast them out. He gives them power and authority to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

And then he sends them out with instructions to visit not the Gentiles, not the Samaritans at this point, but stick to

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visiting the villages of Israel preaching this message: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. And then he says this; look at Matthew 10, verses 16 and following, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you over to the courts and flog you in their synagogues; and you," you, "will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

"But when they deliver you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." In Luke it was, "I will give you." In Mark, it's "the Holy Spirit who will speak through." Here, it is "the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." Trinitarian power in persecution. Verse 21, "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one," who has in, "who has endured to the end, who will be saved. Whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to

you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.”

All of a sudden, it's turned into an eschatological passage; the coming of the son of man. Not only does that sound strikingly similar to what we read in Mark 13:9 to 13, and then our texts Luke 21:12 and 19, but notice that last statement, “You won't finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.” That final statement there, in verse 23, had spoken two years or so before the Olivet Discourse. It's spoken in the region of Galilee. Clearly, Jesus had been warning them about this coming persecution for a long time. This is material that he has been speaking, repeatedly, throughout his ministry to his disciples, comes up again in the Olivet Discourse; means he's alluded to the tribulation before. He has spoken of his second coming as well, and yet, how slow of heart they are to believe, how dull they are to understand what Jesus has said and predicted.

Now, with all this in mind, let's go back to Luke 21, Luke 21 verse 12. Let's just give you two more introductory notes. I've

talked to you about the relationship between the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and how all these things kind of, kind of play out in each of those contexts. But now I want to give you a note about the timing of verses 12 through 19, because clearly Jesus has said, "but before all these things." So there is a, a timing issue and the timing that Jesus is warning his disciples about, the time of the coming persecution, this persecution is going to start soon after he ascends into heaven, soon after he sends the Holy Spirit to the church in Acts chapter 2.

In fact, as we are going to see, a little later, the entire book of Acts, that's the sequel to Luke's Gospel; so it's Luke Part 2. It portrays the beginning of the fulfillment of everything that we see in Luke 21:12 to 19 and trace it all the way through the book of Acts, and persecution of the Jerusalem authorities. And, by the way, in Jerusalem it was not just Jewish authorities that were there in Jerusalem, but Jew and Gentile. Jewish authority of the Sanhedrin, but also Gentile authority through the governor, the Roman governor in this case here, Pontius Pilate. But then there are other Roman governors beyond that.

All that persecution from authorities in Jerusalem, whether Jew or Gentile, all that came to an abrupt end when the Romans besieged the city of Jerusalem in AD 66 and then sacked the city and raised it to the ground in AD 70. And that's what we're going to see next, in Luke verses 20 to 24, the destruction of Jerusalem. It's besieging. It's being surrounded by Roman armies. It's being destroyed, and sacked, and razed to the ground, that puts an end to Jerusalem authorities persecuting the Church.

But even Jerusalem's destruction, though it brought an end to temple worship, to temple sacrifice, the entire Jewish system of false worship that rejected its own Messiah, even though all that ended in AD 70, the persecution of Christians did not end in AD 70. Has it? We have a little book called, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*. I don't know if you've ever read from that, but you should.

You should get yourself a, every, every home should have a copy of *Fox's Book of Martyrs* and read from it from time to time. But

we can see that the Romans continued persecuting the Christians for the next two centuries. And sometimes they did it systematically, sometimes as a part of their, their, campaign or their administration. But ever since then, even at the end of the official persecution of Christianity by the Romans in 313 by Emperor Constantine, ever since then, even after the decline of the Roman Empire, persecution has erupted in various places around the world, at various times in history, under various circumstances.

We know persecution against Christians continues to this very day, in different parts of the world. So that's important because what we study about persecution in this section, though it started with the Jerusalem church, this becomes a prototype for all churches and all Christians who will ever experience persecution.

All throughout the church age, any Christian, any church that experiences persecution because of the sake of the name, because of the sake of Jesus' name. This is the prototype of how we endure, how we pass through, how we think about persecution. Not

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all churches are gonna face this level of persecution, at every church, and every place, and every time. Not all Christians are gonna face this level of persecution. But for any church, any church, any Christian that faces persecution, the persecution that came upon the 1st century Jerusalem Church sets a prototype for all Christians throughout the church age, from the 1st to the 21st century, until Christ comes to rapture the church. Whenever that happens. When he takes us home to be with him, this is the paradigm.

So Jesus' words of comfort and encouragement, the way that he prepares his disciples to endure persecution, revealing God's plan for persecution. This prepares all his people, at all times, wherever they live in the world, whenever they live on the timeline of church history, however, they face that persecution. If and when it comes, they will face it knowing the plan. They'll face it with courage. They'll face it with confidence. They'll face it with deep conviction.

One more introductory note to give you, just about the context, and this helps us see the purpose of this section. Why is it



that Jesus pulled out the telescope at the beginning of his answer and looked to the very far future, and then put down the telescope, picked up the binoculars and talked about what was gonna happen next, to them? Why did Jesus stop in his prediction about the birth pains and the tribulation before the end, prior to his Second Coming, and then turn and speak directly to his disciples about the coming persecution? Why? Because his disciples did not see any of this coming at all.

It doesn't matter how many times he predicted his own suffering, his rejection, his betrayal, his arrest, his, his death at the hands of the Romans. Doesn't matter how many times he promised persecution would be coming to them and that they'd need the confidence and the power of the Holy Spirit to, to help them through this. Their operative eschatology was that the coming of Messiah meant, next stop glory for us.

They believed, now that Jesus the Christ has come, and now that they have made their travel, their journey all the way up to Jerusalem, now that they've arrived in Jerusalem, and now that Jesus has taken over the temple, they think, man the king is,

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he's just around the corner. He's going to vanquish his enemies, he's going to set up his kingdom, he's going to restore Israel's rightful place over the nations of the earth and Christ is going to reign on David's throne. And by the way, there will be some thrones around him where we'll sit.

So the Lord is wanting them to understand it's gonna get worse. It's gonna get way worse before it gets better. It's gonna get worse for you. Not only has it been granted to them to believe, but also to suffer for the sake of his name. Philippians 1:29, it's true for all of us, "the faith that has been granted to us by God." In the same sentence that says, "the faith has been granted to us by God," says, "the suffering that we share in Christ has also been granted to us as a gift."

These disciples are going to share in their Lord's suffering, and so Jesus needs right now to start strengthening them. He needs to prepare them for the suffering ahead. In fact, on the very next night, after the Discourse on the Mount of Olives, on this particular occasion, the very next night, remember, Jesus brings the 12 together in the upper room. That's the night of

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his betrayal. And they'll leave the upper room, go back to the Mount of Olives. And that's where, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas brings the Roman cohort to arrest him. But he brings the 12 together before that in the upper room, and he says to them, John 15:18, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.'" Listen, "'if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

It's coming. Beloved, those are words, the Church has lived by ever since the days of the apostles and as true today, they are, as the day that Jesus gave them to the apostles in the upper room. This is how we live. This is what we expect from the world. It's most painful, isn't it? When this hatred from the world enters into our families, enters into our homes, separates parents from children, brothers from sisters, grandparents from grandchildren, grandchildren from grandparents, Right? This hatred is so hard to take, so painful.

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These first disciples had to have their minds reoriented and renewed by Jesus' prediction of this coming persecution. We too, we also need to have our minds reoriented, renewed, girded up by the truth, so that we can endure suffering in our time, so we can live faithfully in our time and persevere in obedience to Jesus Christ. Naturally, we do not like being hated, do we? None of us likes that. We don't like being hated by, every, anyone.

We really like to be liked, but we have to accept this fact that those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, those who reject the lordship of Christ over their lives, those who refuse to fear God and keep His commandments, and those who refuse to revere God's word, if we stand for Christ, if we stand with Christ, they will hate us, and it will be your own flesh and blood that does it. That's the most painful, as this passage shows us even family members will hate us. He said this on many occasions. This is not new.

So this section that we're gonna go through verses 12 to 19, particularly relevant, immediately applicable, to all of us as Christians in every single age. Okay, let's dispense with the

introduction. That's, I'm not in my outline yet, so my time hasn't started. Really. I'm. I'm good to go. All right, first point, first point; let's start to, just, at least cover a couple of these verses for today.

Okay, first point: The purpose of persecution. The purpose in persecution. Look again with the text, verses 12 to 13, "But before all these things." What things? Before the things he just talked about in verses 8 through 11, before all the, the, beginnings of the birth pains of the tribulation. "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. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony."

According to the construction in the Greek language here, it's very clear that Jesus keeps the prediction of, of, suffering in persecution, and the purpose of the persecution conjoined; they're one thought. So on the one hand, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, but on the other hand, join to this prediction of persecution not to be separated from it,

it, that is the persecution will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

See what Jesus is saying here, how he speaks about persecution? He's saying, yeah, yeah, it's coming, persecution's coming. But no worries. I got it all figured out. It's part of the plan. We got it scripted. The Father has written it down. It's in stone. It's going to happen to all of us. In fact, I'm going to go first. Persecution's coming; Jesus says, but it's nothing to be afraid of. Embrace persecution. Embrace suffering. Because, listen, it is not an obstacle to be avoided. It is an opportunity to be embraced. Persecution is something to rejoice in. That's why in the Beatitudes, he says, "When you're persecuted for the sake of the name, rejoice and be glad for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

"Fix your eyes on Jesus." Right? Hebrews 12:2. He "the author and perfecter of our faith, for the joy set before Him," he, "endured the cross." He "despised the shame." He "sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Persecution, suffering even to the point of a shameful death by crucifixion; not an

obstacle to be avoided. No, instead, it's an opportunity to embrace.

So, having said that, let's isolate that first part in verse 12, which is the prediction of persecution. Two main verbs just state the fact of the persecution. They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you. Two main verbs lay their hands on you, persecute you. And then there are two participles that describe the persecution. They'll be delivering you and bringing you. Okay, so the fact of the persecution, they'll lay their hands on you. The word, *epiballō*, it describes a violent movement of the hands. So not just put their hands on you, not patting your back, not giving you a side hug, This isn't even a fist bump. They will throw their hands on you is the idea. They will grab you. They will forcibly put their hands on you to grab you and force you to go where you don't want to go.

Same thing, same verb, by the way, used of the scribes and the chief priests back in Luke 20 verse 19 says, "the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him that very hour." It wasn't hands of appreciation; it wasn't hands of affirmation.

No, they had hoped to catch him in something, saying something against Rome, so they could hand him over to the governor for punishment. Same thing here. They're gonna lay their hands on you and they're gonna deliver you over to the synagogues.

They're gonna cast you into the prisons and they'll bring you before kings and governors. So that's the first word, is the fact that persecution, they're gonna lay their hands on you.

Secondly, the common word for persecute is used there, *diōkō*.

*Diōkō*: It, it refers to a violent, hostile pursuit of somebody. It's basically chasing after them. Just picture it. You know, bullies chasing after a kid down the street. The kid runs and hops over fences and everything. These bullies are just surrounding him and running and running and running, chasing, going after them, pursuing them, trying to catch them. And they want to grab them and order that they can then drive that person away, drive that person out, expel them, sometimes even kill them, as it is in the case with Jesus.

So that's the idea here, chasing you down, grabbing you, getting their hands on you to persecute you. Jesus says this is



what they're gonna do to you. To what end? It's for, the end of delivering you to the synagogues and the prisons. Here, the word delivering you is a legal, technical term for passing someone along in the judicial process. So it means to, basically, to turn you over to the authorities; authorities here represented by synagogues and prisons. Synagogues refers to the Jewish authorities, prisons refers to Gentile authorities.

We know this, in our study of Luke's Gospel, that synagogues, Jesus often was in synagogues every single week on the Sabbath. He found himself in a synagogue. But they were not just places of worship, they're more like community centers, and they had something going on all through the Jewish week. Wide range of functions in the synagogue that serve the local community. It was the heart and soul, really, of the Jewish community.

Ever since the days of the Babylonian exile and onward, the synagogue was the heart of Jewish life, in the towns and the villages surrounding Jerusalem. So the synagogue was a place of instruction on the Sabbath, for reading Torah, reading and explaining the prophets. But it was also, even during the week,

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it was where tradition was passed down from one generation to the next generation; instructing on the market days when, when, when parents would bring, bring, their, their product to market or their whatever trade they were involved in. When they brought that into town or when they brought their crops from the field into town to sell it and trade.

Typically on Mondays and Thursdays, they would come in and then they would bring their children into the synagogue and they would send their children in there for instruction; for school, basically, it was like a homeschool program. Homeschool augmenting program, that's basically what it was. So, vital tool the synagogue was for the enculturation of the coming generations, to teach them the, the law, the prophets, the traditions, all those things handed down.

So very important, the synagogue was for worship, instruction, acculturation, education of the coming generation of the Jews. Synagogue was also the place for the administration of the community and for the adjudication of civil matters, settling disputes. Judges were there. The synagogue ruler would act as an

ultimate judge in his area. The synagogue had the authority to include and to exclude. It had the authority to approve and to censure its citizens. Jesus actually alluded to this function in Luke 6:22, when he said, Blessed are you when men hate you and when men ostracize you, or the word is also, exclude you, when they cast insult to you, spurn your name as evil for the sake of the son of man, blessed are you.

Reference to ostracizing, excluding that is the power Jesus is speaking of, of, the synagogue to excommunicate people from the community. The verb, *aphorizō*, refers to separation; means to push someone outside of a boundary. And that's the idea in excommunication. Synagogue: If you're living in that community, that synagogue, excommunication, that is a big deal. That is a serious issue. One commentator says, "the usual sentence was for 30 days. If there's an offence and you're actually excommunicated from the community, 30 days being excommunicated, where the excommunicant might not come back within four cubits of anybody in that society." Wow.

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Person's treated like a leper, unclean, judged, ousted from the synagogue, no social contacts with friends and family, no physical contact with others. And if that offending behavior continued and persisted, there was a summary judgment. That 30-day sentence could be extended to a permanent excommunication.

Excommunications a huge deal, because it forbade the whole community, for, from trading or interacting at all with that person. No buying or selling, no inviting them over for a meal, no family gatherings. Caught off completely, they might as well be dead. The writer of the Hebrews describes this level of persecution that happened to some Jewish Christians. It's kind of exactly as Jesus predicts here, Hebrews 10:32 and following, "but remember the former days." Now this is a second-generation Christian, those who received the gospel from the apostles, early prophets.

This is a second generation. "Remember the former days when, after being enlightened, you endured great conflict and sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and afflictions, and partly by becoming sharers with

those who are so treated. For you also showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted with joy the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you have for yourselves a better and lasting possession."

Suffering, reproach, afflictions, seizure of property, even imprisonment, the writer continues, and as he continues, we can kind of hear an echo once again of the encouragement that comes from Jesus in our passage. He says, "Therefore do not throw away that confidence of yours, which has a great reward. For you," you, "have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in Him. But we're not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."

Synagogues and prisons: Luke 21, they're joined together here in the Greek construction in such a way that they represent just this united authority, hostile authority. Synagogues represent

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Jewish authority; prisons represent gentile authority and the Roman prisons, they imprisoned the accused. They made the accused wait to stand before an adjudicating authority, mentioned here as kings and governors. And when they, when they were waiting, it was basically in jail waiting for their trial. They waited behind bars; waited in a prison cell.

It's exactly, by the way, what happened to the Apostle Paul, starting in Acts 21:27 and following, and all the way basically to the end of Acts. In Act 21, he goes back to Jerusalem against the warnings by prophets that said, you're going to be, you're going to be seized there, you're going to be arrested there, you're going to be thrown into prison. He said, yeah, I'm going anyway. He was seized by an angry mob at the temple. He was dragged off out of the temple. He was beaten by the mob and the Roman, Roman, tribune, the governor, had to intervene with his cohort of soldiers and centurions.

They arrested Paul. In this case it was for his safety. But from then on Paul is remanded to Roman custody. He's imprisoned first in Jerusalem, then for two years in Caesarea Philippi, and

then finally he's sent away to Rome to await his day with Caesar. Now, as I said here in Luke 21 verse 12, by the Greek construction Jesus uses, he's keeping these two authorities joined together. So whether we're talking about Jewish authority or Gentile authority, they are one in purpose. They're united in hostility. They oppose the one name, verse 12, "for My name's sake."

These are enemies of the name. Why are they enemies of the name? Because that name represents a king, a king who has command over them. The Book of Acts is an extended illustration that shows the fulfillment of what Jesus predicted in this section. And I'd like you to turn to the Book of Acts. Just go over there and we'll kind of start making our way through some of this, in the Book of Acts. Because it's just, it's absolutely fascinating to see how specifically these illustrations kind of apply to what Jesus has said in Luke 21:12 and following.

We can't unpack everything, but we can start to do that in, say, Acts chapter 4. Remember, in Acts chapter 3, Peter healed the lame man in the temple. They're at Solomon's Portico, that

seems to be where the Christians hung out. And the healing of this lame man in the temple remember, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ." Arise, get on your feet. Walk. He was "walking and leaping and praising God." Right?

That healing gave an opportunity for Peter and John to preach the Gospel and the resurrection. Look at verses, chapter 4, right after that section; chapter 4, verses 1 to 3, "Now, as they were speaking to the people, the priest and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly agitated because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening." There's a lot to that story. Okay? We're going to come back to that.

We work our way through the Book of Acts. Probably next year, maybe year after. Maybe we'll start the Book of Acts. I'm just kidding. It's going to take a while to get through Luke, but we will come to the Book of Acts. But notice what happens next in



verse 4, the same expression, laid hands on them and then throw them in jail until the next day. It's already evening. "But many of those who had heard the message believed, the number of the men came to be about five thousand. Now it happened that on the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent."

Basically, you got a, a, colloquium of the Sanhedrin. "When they placed them in their midst, they began to inquire by what power and what name, have you done this? And then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit," exactly as Jesus has promised, "said to them, 'Rulers and elders of the people,'" and on he goes to preach the gospel. Again, look ahead at Acts chapter 5, Acts chapter 5, and you can find your way to verse 17; as a result of the Ananias and Sapphira incident, kind of the first death to come upon, a death of judgement, to come upon the early Church. Great fear came upon the whole Church in verse 11, but also more ministry in the temple.

Verses 12 to 16, again, it was happening at Solomon's portico. That was a place to be. Preaching was there. Healing was there. And then this, as it says in verse 17 of chapter 5, "But the high priest rose up, and those with him (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy." "They laid hands on the apostles," there it is again, "and put them in a public jail." Once again, exactly as Jesus said. The Sanhedrin's attempt to stop the apostles was then thwarted by the Angel of the Lord who conducted a prison break and a prisoner extraction.

I love this. This is my kind of OP, verse 19, "But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison." Didn't even have to use explosives, just opened the doors of the prison and taken them out; "said, 'Go stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this life.' Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach," again.

Just as Jesus said in Luke 21:13, "this persecution will lead to an opportunity for your testimony." Turn the page. Go to Acts Chapter 6, verse 8. We got one of the early prototypical

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Deacons. Prototypes of the Deacons, "Stephen," Verse 8; "full of grace and power," he's "doing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, they rose up, and they were arguing with Stephen. But they were unable to oppose the wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking."

So that promised not just for the apostles, but also for this Deacon, "the Spirit by whom he was speaking. Then they secretly induced men to say, 'We've,' heard from him, 'heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.' And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they came up to him, and dragged him away, brought him to the Sanhedrin." Same thing.

Now we know from the rest of the story, Acts Chapter 7, Stephen doesn't come out of this trial alive, but again testifies about the gospel of Jesus Christ. He testifies before the entire gathered Sanhedrin, the Jewish authorities. It's an absolutely incredible moment. Guess what? The pre-converted Saul of Tarsus

is there. He's hearing all this. He's, he's, he, he, gets in on the act. He's not only there to guard the, the, cloaks and the coats of all those who are stoning Stephen, but he gets into the act, going to lay his hands on the Christians to persecute them, and drag them before the authorities. He becomes a part of this story. On the wrong end of the story, he's one of the persecutors.

Look at Acts chapter 8, verse 1. There's, Saul, "in hearty agreement with putting Stephen to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Oh, no, they're scattered. Oh, no, they're driven away from their homes. But, "some devout men buried Stephen made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off men and women, delivering them up into prison."

But again, what resulted from that? Oh no, I've lost my home. Oh no, I'm driven away. "Therefore," verse 4, "those who had been scattered went about, proclaiming the good news of the

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word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria, began preaching, preaching Christ to them. The crowds, with one accord, were giving attention to what was being said by Philip, and they heard and saw signs which he was doing." And, "in the case of many who had unclean spirits, coming out of them, shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was a great joy in that city." Revival breaks out.

I mean, I don't mind losing my house. Can I be a part of that? The, enemy, enemies of the gospel, which in this case early on included Saul himself, Saul of Tarsus. The enemies of the gospel intended harm, one to shut down the voice of those who speak in the Savior's name. But it's futile. It's useless to oppose this movement. Just as Jesus said, "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony." He says, It's all a part of the plan. It's going completely according to how God the Father has mapped this out. This is exactly how it's supposed to happen. We could keep going through the Book of Acts, and we will one day; we'll have to leave it there for now.

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The entire record, as I said, of the Book of Acts, just keeps unfolding this fulfillment of Jesus prediction and suffering, and it keeps demonstrating God's purpose in persecution, which is to provide an occasion and an opportunity to give a testimony of the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And friend, as we drive this to a close, I'm just going to ask which side of this equation are you on? Do you stand with Saul of Tarsus, the Sanhedrin, all the power brokers of governing authority, in your time, in your community? Will you stand opposed to the son, to the Christ who will come again, in, but this time in judgement? Or will you suffer, the, for the sake of Christ's name? Will you take your stand with him? Will you receive the opprobrium, the contempt, the hatred of the unbelieving world? Will you gladly receive it; rejoicing to suffer for his sake to be persecuted for his name, so that you can have an opportunity to testify to the saving power of Christ?

You're only gonna suffer for him, if you know him. There are many people who claim to know Jesus Christ, but when push comes

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to shove, they fade away. When the heat is turned up and persecution comes, you find them peeling away at a heartbeat. I mean, it only took a, a, pseudo virus, a pseudo pandemic to, to, cause many churches, just to shut down altogether and say, you know what, it's not worth it. It's not worth it.

I feel like that was a blessed test run for us as a church. 2020, 20 was a great year. I love 2020. It was like 2020 Vision. 2020 was a great time for true vision. Do you see clearly, or do you need glasses, or are you blind? You're only going to suffer for one you know personally. You're only going to be loyal to the one you know as Savior and Lord, the one who is your friend, the one you spend time with.

Have you received the saving grace of God through saving faith? Because it's only believers, only the redeemed who've been reconciled to God, and only they who may be counted worthy to suffer for his name's sake. Friend, if that's not you, put your faith in him today. Bow with me in a word of prayer.

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Our Father, we thank you for your marvelous plan that demonstrates your perfect wisdom; a plan that you decreed from before the foundation of the world, that is being unfolded as we see on the pages of Scripture being unfolded in Jesus Christ. We thank you that the greatest work of history was done at the dividing line of history in the first coming of Jesus Christ, that powerful time of Jesus' life and ministry, his death, burial in the tomb, his resurrection from the dead, all those things have set a dividing line in the point of history, so that we even, we even number our calendars differently because of it.

The whole day of worship was changed from the Sabbath to the Lord's day, Sunday, the first day of the week, which the day in which he rose from the dead. This one perfect life has made all the difference, and we pray that even today it would make a difference in some who do not yet know you, haven't been reconciled to you because of Christ. Would you be pleased to save a few more that they may bring glory to your name through gratitude and joy and joining the rest of us in the proclamation of the gospel. And would you help the rest of us to see the implications of the fact that we serve a sovereign God who's



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declared the end from the beginning, and has, and governs everything on the way through by his perfect providence.

Would you help believers here, to see how to apply this to their lives, that they may never worry or be anxious again. Because even the worst that could happen to us, which is our physical death, that's the very best that could happen to us, because it transports us immediately into your presence, in the presence of our beloved Savior. Please glorify yourself in Christ through us. In his name we pray. Amen.