

Sign of the End Time - Persecution (Luke 21:5-19)

The discussion of today's sermon focuses on one of the signs of the end time: persecution. This is the sign of the end time that **must** be proclaimed to all believers. To give us some context, the verses of 5-11, dealt with three great subjects: the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord's return, and the end of the world. But today we will stick with the fourth great subject of persecution.

It's true that believers are persecuted in every generation, but right before the end time there will be a great intensification of persecution throughout the whole world. Believers will be persecuted as never before. Note the words, "But before all this, they will lay hands on you." Believers must be prepared. This is the purpose of the present passage. The passage can be applied to believers in every generation to prepare them for facing persecution.

To give us a little more context; throughout history, many false Messiahs will come (v. 8), and there will be wars (vv. 9-10), natural disasters (v. 11), and, of course, our subject for today: persecution. Both governing authorities and family members will turn against God's people, but we should not fear because while they may kill us (v. 16), Jesus assures us that "not a hair of your head will perish" (v. 18). Or as He has already said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more...(for) the very hairs of your head are numbered" (**Luke 12:4-7**). God knowing the hairs of our head is a picture of our eternal security.

With this as an introduction of the persecution of believers, let's take a look at **three** facts. **First**, the persecution will be carried out by both civil and religious authorities. Both the government and religion will persecute true believers right before the end time. The idea is, of course, an intensification of persecution in the end time. This is the very reason

Jesus made a distinction between the end time and the church age

Sign of the End Time – Persecution
of 10

page 3

persecutors. Right before the end of the world, believers will be opposed, abused, arrested, tried, and martyred as never before in human history. Both the courts of the world and the councils of religion will take believers and rake them over the hot coals of persecution. Believers will be afflicted, killed, and hated by all nations.

The **second** reason believers will be persecuted is clearly stated by Jesus: “On account of my name.” The world will try to stamp out and silence believers because they are true followers of Christ. Their intense hatred of the believer will be due to at least **three** reasons: (1) the standard of true godliness, (2) the life of purity, and (3) the message of repentance and of self-denial. Let’s take a quick look at each of these three reasons. **One**, again, was “the standard of true godliness”. The believer sets before the world a different standard—the standard of true

godliness. The world is not godly nor is its standard godly.

Sign of the End Time – Persecution
of 10

page 4

Therefore, by his very nature, and man who lives for the world and does not wish to change opposes godliness. Which is what we are told in **1 John 2:15-16**, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father, but from the world.”

The **second** reason for the intense hatred of the believer is “the life of purity.” The genuine believer lives a life of purity, clean and just. True morality- and- godliness controls the mind, dresses modestly, converses respectfully, and behaves justly. The worldly live to fulfill the lust of their flesh and to have possessions as they wish. Therefore, the believer is

opposed by any person who does not wish to live a pure and just life.

Sign of the End Time – Persecution
of 10

page 5

The **third** reason for the intense hatred of the believer is “the message of repentance and of self-denial”. The genuine believer proclaims the message of Christ: repentance and self-denial. Very practically, few men are willing to change (repent) to the degree that self is totally denied in order to meet the needs of desperate people. Therefore most, even the religious, oppose the idea that men are to live sacrificially in order to save a starving and dying world (that’s both a physically and spiritually starving and dying world).

The result of the persecution will be a glorious witness for the Lord. The persecutors will try to silence the believer, but the very persecution itself will turn out to be a glorious witness for the Lord. How? The believer, standing there suffering, will

show such loyalty and supernatural strength that some, even some of the persecutors, will be attracted to Christ. The believer will show that Christ and eternity are real, and he will be a testimony even as he receives the beatings and swords of the persecutors. We can find this in **Acts**

Sign of the End Time – Persecution page
6 of 10

9:16, “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

The preparation of a defense will not be necessary. When the genuine believer has to give an answer or a defense to his persecutors, God will fill his heart and mouth with a reply. The believer will be so filled with wisdom that his persecutors will not be able to resist his defense.

The betrayal of believers will be heartrending. Believers will be betrayed by their own families and relatives, friends, and neighbors. Some believers will even be put to death because of their betrayal. Note three points. **#1**, Jesus was speaking of the

end time. Betrayal by loved ones will intensify in the end time. **#2**, the reason for the betrayal will cut the human heart. Families and friends will hate the believer because of Christ (v. 17). The believer will stand for the name and righteousness of Christ; therefore, loved ones will betray him. Why? To save their own lives, to

Sign of the End Time – Persecution page 7
of 10

secure some favor, to escape embarrassment, to secure vengeance, to escape persecution themselves, to gain the favor of authorities, to escape fear, and to preserve selfish honor or position.

And the **3rd** point is **all** shall hate the believer. Few will be kind, tender, and loving; dissension and division will prevail in the last days. Most will begrudge what another has or is doing or is not doing. Unfortunately, such behavior has been the case down through the centuries, and too often the church had experienced one person's disliking and opposing another person. Envy, greed, and concern

for security and recognition—all the sins of selfishness—have caused too many to stand against another person's position, beliefs, abilities, and leadership. Criticism and judging, dissension and division among believers have been and are some of the most visible traits of the church, both locally and universally. Jesus said that such hatred will increase and intensify in the end time.

Sign of the End Time – Persecution page 8
of 10

The promise to believers is both glorious and assuring and twofold. **First**, promise is that God is in control of the believer's life, total control. "Not a hair of your head will perish. Jesus meant, of course, spiritual security. He had just said some would be "put...to death" (v. 16). God knows every hair on the believer's head (Lk. 12:7); God is in total control of every single thing concerning the believer. Therefore, if the believer is persecuted, he is under God's care; and if he is being killed, he is under God's care. No matter the persecution and suffering, God sees and is in control. He holds the

believer in his hands, and God turns the suffering into a “an eternal glory and reward far outweighing them all”.

Second, the promise is the eternal security of the believer’s soul. If the believer endures the persecution, he shall possess his soul eternally. The idea is that endurance to the end is **required**. The genuine believer will stand fast and endure. He will not deny his Lord; he could never give in to such, for he

Sign of the End Time – Persecution
of 10

page 9

knows the presence and salvation (deliverance) of the Lord. Very simply, persecution is not to be feared by the Christian believer. Persecution, even martyrdom, is nothing in light of eternity. Despite death (v. 16) and hatred (v. 17), Jesus promised “not a hair of your head will perish” (v. 18). The believer is secure in the arms of Jesus eternally.

It is not that following Jesus isn’t demanding; indeed, it is the most demanding life of all. Yet the

obedience He calls for is exceeded by the grace and strength he provides.

So, what are the lessons we can learn from this Scripture passage from Luke?

Luke teaches us the lessons of focusing on what is eternal, not temporary, and finding hope in God's presence during times of tribulation. It advises believers to be steadfast and not to fear persecution,

Sign of the End Time – Persecution page 10
of 10

as God promises to be with them, provide them wisdom, and ensure that love will have the final word despite earthly struggles.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Lord Jesus, we come to you in the midst of trials and uncertainty. We ask that you fill us with courage so

that we are not terrified by the events around us. Give us wisdom and the words to speak when we are questioned, and grant us the strength and endurance to persevere through any hardship that comes our way. Help us to trust in you, for by my endurance, I will gain my soul. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.