

IT MIGHT BE TODAY

"What Persecution Isn't"

We focus on Bible prophecy each week for about five-minutes, calling it a "Prophecy Update."

Scholars say that of the 2500 or so prophecies in the Bible, there are approximately 500 prophecies of the End Times that are awaiting fulfillment.

We should see things trending in the direction of those prophecies. For example: The Bible predicted that Israel, and Jerusalem in particular, would be incredibly troublesome politically in the End Times. It was to be expected; and it's obviously unfolding just as God predicted.

Today's update is going to be different from all the others. I'm going to talk about something that we think is a sign of the End Times, *but it really isn't*.

I'm talking about the persecution of Christians. Now don't get me wrong: I'll point out in a moment that the persecution of Christians worldwide is increasing, and some say it is worse than at any

time in history. They say it is at “genocide levels” in some countries.

The verse most often cited as the persecution prophecy is Matthew 24:9, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.”

It was part of Jesus’ Olivet Discourse about the End Times. The question is, “When is the ‘then’ He was predicting?”

Matthew 24 & 25 describe the future 7-year Tribulation on the earth. They are **not** about the Church. Jesus did not say persecution would increase in the Church Age as a sign of the end.

Persecution in the Church Age should be expected. Multiple verses tell believers that the entire time between the birth of the church and the rapture will be a time of being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel.

I think it is important to be accurate. There are plenty of signs we are in the End Times. We don’t need to suggest things we cannot defend.

Christians *are* being persecuted like never before. Listen to these quotes from an article titled, *Eleven Christians are killed everyday for their faith in Jesus Christ*.

- In North Korea...If Christians are discovered, not only are they deported to labor camps or even killed on the spot, their families to the fourth generation share their fate as well.
- In Afghanistan... To convert to a faith outside Islam is tantamount to treason. Very often, there is only one possible outcome for exposed and caught Christians: death.
- In Somalia... Islamic militant groups like al-Shabab are de facto rulers who regard Christians with a Muslim background as high-value targets - often killed on the spot when discovered.
- The level of violence against Christians in Libya is very high, and Christians in Libya are subjected to violent, inhumane and degrading treatment.

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/11-christians-killed-every-day-for-their-decision-to-follow-jesus/>

Another article was titled, *In China, they're closing churches, jailing pastors - and even rewriting scripture*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/china-christians-religious-persecution-translation-bible>

Another source posted an article titled, *The Media Won't Say It, but Christians are the #1 Persecuted Group Worldwide*.

Excerpts:

Sri Lanka. April 21. Five hundred wounded, over 300 dead in terrorist attacks.

According to mainstream media and many in the international community, these attacks were another senseless assault on “humanity.” But the destruction of Christian churches on Easter morning was not motivated by generic hatred. We know exactly why these men, women, and children died. They died for their Christian faith.

On the holiest day in the Christian calendar, three bombs ripped through Christian churches, killing hundreds who had gathered peacefully to celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead.

<https://www.dailysignal.com/2019/05/15/the-media-wont-say-it-but-christians-are-the-no-1-persecuted-group-worldwide/>

The persecution of Christians - it is prophesied in the New Testament, and those prophecies have proven accurate. But their increase is not a sign.

Jesus promised He'd return to rapture His church - which entails the resurrection of the dead in Christ of the Church Age, then the translation from earth to Heaven of all living believers.

It is presented in the Bible as an imminent (any-moment) event.

Are you ready for the rapture? If not, get ready, stay ready, and keep looking up. *Ready or not, Jesus is coming!*