

1. The Promise: Christians Will Suffer Persecution for a Time
 - a. “Before these **things**”, however, would be antagonism and adversarial pursuit of Christians because of their union with Jesus
 - i. “Before these things” - indicates the priority of persecution, either in time or in significance, before the wars and destruction mentioned above
 1. Before in time would indicate the persecution would begin prior in time to wars, famines, plagues (all of which occurred during the siege of Jerusalem, where historians record horrible plagues and lack of food during the siege)
 2. Before in significance would indicate the severity of the experience of persecution, trials, imprisonment, and death would take precedence over wars, famines, and plague
 3. Frankly, both fit well, but it seems that Jesus is giving a priority for preparing for the suffering (Sit and Settle), and the overall command is to settle their hearts, thus indicating an emphasis upon the significance aspect
 - ii. The persecution that Jesus mentions would precede the previously mentioned sufferings of war, famine, plagues, earthquakes
 1. We see these very persecutions regarding the synagogues, families, and executions fulfilled in the book of Acts to the particular disciples to whom these words were spoken
 2. These **persecutions are still being fulfilled, for there are still martyrs for the “sake of My name” being chased, tortured, and executed**
 - a. So, this is still a pertinent teaching for us today
 - b. See and Settle are still commands for our hope in the midst of such persecution
 - iii. Revelation 6:9-11
 1. There is a final number of those who are called by God to shed, and when that number is filled, Jesus will come to avenge the injustice against them.
 2. This hope keeps the suffering church from taking up arms, but rather to lay down our lives for the sake of our enemies.
 - iv. This really is meant to encourage us with the reality that persecution has an end and will be avenged when Jesus returns
 - b. This persecution has a flow:
 - i. They will lay their hands on you and persecute (chase) you
 1. having brought you before kings and governors (civic authorities and powers)
 2. delivering you over to synagogues and prisons (social/religious judgment and execution of such judgments against you)
 - a. These are those authorities, civic or legal or philosophical or religious, which govern society practically and have the power to execute judgment
 - b. **To broaden these based upon this issue of authority, the “court of public opinion” may be the court into which Christians are dragged today, too**
 - c. Our society, while still protected by most law, instead tries to use the authority of the shaming tongue to silence Christians for their association and proclamation of the name of Christ
 3. **Persecution and the judgments associated with “pursuing to silence” takes various forms of various severity, but it is all “for the sake of My name”**
 - ii. “They” will include our most intimate relationships

1. Parents – those whom you respect and have provided for you, upheld you, made your flourish
 2. Siblings – those with whom you uniquely share experiences of life, commonality, deep dependence and mutual love
 3. Friends – those with whom you find comradery and comfort, support in tough times, mutual celebrants in joyous times
 4. The gospel identification with Jesus brings not merely discomfort, but hatred, disposal, and contempt by those who should love us the most
 - a. Luke 14:26 – Christ Jesus must take priority over family, pleasing Him more than pleasing our most personal relationships
- iii. The disciples will be persecuted because of their identity with Jesus (the reason for persecution)
1. “for the sake of my name” (phrase used 17 times in the book of Acts)
 2. It is particular persecution, suffering at the hands and mouths of others because of the identification with the crucified Christ Jesus
 - a. Holy in His attitude towards sin – sin so great that He had to die not just teach
 - b. Gracious in His attitude towards sinners – so gracious that He rescues the worst of us and the worst in us, so that anyone is redeemable by His blood and risen life
 - c. You will find persecution for proclaiming the Christ of these two truths
 - i. The lawless will hate you for the exclusivity of Christ as the only way and the expectancy of *repentant* faith in Jesus
 - ii. The legalists will hate you for the inclusivity of Christ’s offer of grace to all kinds of people and the sole means of repentant *faith* in Jesus
 - iii. If we’re not being opposed, it’s probably because we’re silent on one of these (hopefully not both!)
- c. This hatred, because of identification with Jesus, will result in the execution of some Christians
- i. Yet not even a hair of their head would perish
 1. This is a particularly affectionate expression, meant to convey the intimate knowledge, nearness, and concern by God for the believer
 2. This is also to emphasize the certainty down to the smallest detail: not only your head, but the very hairs upon your head!
 - a. Emphatic negation with the *ου μη* particles: “Certainly not!”
 - ii. How can this be?
 1. There are two types of death – temporal (first death) and eternal (second death) (see Revelation 20)
 - a. Rev 2:11; 20:6 – the first death is followed by the resurrection unto life (20:6), and the second death has no power over this one
 2. So, though some believers would be executed here for their identification with Jesus, they would not “perish” in the second death
 - a. The “hair of your head” is a phrase of personal care from God. He is intimately near at the death of His beloved children, so that when one closes his eyes in death, he opens them to the face of Jesus.
 - i. “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8)
 - ii. “I would rather depart [die] and be with Christ, but He has fruitful work for me to do among you” (Phil 1:23)

- b. Thus, this phrase is meant to engender the hope that perseveres, the certainty of life in the face of terrible suffering, shame, betrayal, hatred, and execution.
 - iii. This shows us that the salvation and redemption that Jesus speaks of here is not particularly on **this earth during this age, but is rather of the “eternal” quality**
 - 1. While there may be deliverances in this life, for which we should be very grateful and celebrate, salvation/redemption does not necessitate them
 - 2. Rather, His Word, promise, command, declaration, make certain our redemption
 - 3. His resurrected body preached this more loudly to the hearts of the disciples than any other, thus the hope of resurrection was intensely encouraging (cowered at crucifixion, preached at Pentecost).

2. The Purpose: Persecution Provides a Place for Testifying to the Gospel of Jesus Christ

- a. "opportunity" (ESV) is the word "get out of"
 - i. Luke 5:2 and John 21:9 indicating getting out of a boat
 - ii. Exodus 2:4 speaks of how Miriam watched baby Moses in the basket to see how he would "get out" of it.
 - iii. Phil 1:19 Paul speaks of his certainty that through their prayers he would "get out" of his chains
- b. Thus, Jesus is strongly alluding to the reality that the witness and testimony of the Church would be spread through suffering and persecution, and that this was the means of "getting them out".
 - i. Persecution spreads the gospel. Period.
 - 1. Thus, Jesus commands them to flee the city when they see it surrounded! Get out!
 - 2. Yet, He says it with compassion for the pregnant mothers, thinking of the struggle and the loss of life, even in the moment of the prophesy of vengeance Jesus laments
 - ii. In the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple ceased to be a stumbling block to Jewish Christians (Acts 21), and the meaning of the spiritual temple of the Holy Spirit being the Church took center stage.
 - 1. The New Jerusalem is a people, not a structure, just like the Temple is a people, not a structure.
 - 2. The Church is being built up, but in order for the full measure of God's elect to be brought in, the Church needed to be "released" from the Temple and synagogues through persecution.
 - a. Even Paul was “led astray” to make sacrifices for purification in the Temple! (Acts 21:17-30)
 - b. Paul doesn't even get to proclaim the gospel in the Temple before he is dragged outside “and at once the gates were shut!” (v30)
 - iii. Thus, God used the destruction of the “boat”, Jerusalem and its Temple, to get Christians out to cover some land
 - 1. It is a similar usage of the “destruction” of Eden and the Towers of Babel, so that humanity would “fill the earth” with the glory of the Lord when they would have rather simply stayed put?
 - a. Are the Yazidi people of Syria hearing the gospel through the destruction of one of the oldest churches in Syria?
 - b. The promise is that Jesus would give our Syrian and Iraqi brothers and sisters a mouth and wisdom to proclaim the gospel in this moment.

2. We ought not lament the destruction of our “boats” too greatly, but ought look to the new opportunities to testify to the grace of God in Jesus Christ (SEE).
 - a. Is the boat of the reverential treatment of Christianity burning in our country? SEE JESUS and testify to the good news of redemption!
 - b. Is the boat of privilege and honor burning into shame from the world? SEE JESUS and testify to the hope poured out in Him!
- c. This testimony is not to be worrisome, but is to be in reliance upon Jesus for its power and rhetorical force
 - i. The two commands in this section are “See” in verse 8 and “Settle” here in verse 14
 - ii. “Settle it in your *heart* not to prepare an answer”
 1. Interestingly, Jesus stresses the heart and not the mind here
 - a. Thus, he is not saying to be careless in our preparing of facts or evidence or data regarding the gospel (the gospel is content!)
 - i. Paul “reasoned” in the synagogues and marketplaces (Acts 17:17; 18:4,19; 19:8)
 - ii. We are told to “be prepared to give an answer” (apologia) for the hope which we have in Christ Jesus (1 Pet 3:15) because Christ is Lord over all, and always with gentleness and respect
 - iii. The apostle Paul also stated that the “speech of defense of the gospel” was the reason that he imprisoned (Phil 1:16)
 - b. Rather, he is saying not *to worry* about *practicing* or *rehearsing* a defense
 - i. Matthew (10:19) and Mark (13:11) both use words of anxiety, “Don’t be anxious”
 - ii. It is that our hearts need to be rooted in the sufficiency and presence of the Spirit of Jesus to give us the humbly bold mouth and wisdom to answer for our hope
 - iii. How many of us worry about what we would say?
 1. SEE JESUS!
 2. The more that we are treasuring the gospel for ourselves, for our own hearts, rooting our affections and delight in Jesus and in His glorious work for us because He loves us, the more that our hearts will rest AND the more that we gain wisdom to explain our hope
 3. This our evangelism strategy: settle your hearts in the promises of God in Christ Jesus so that you boast of Him, His work, and His Word *because you feel the weight of its truth*
2. We don’t have to worry our hearts about answering because He gives us a promise
 - a. “I will give you a mouth and wisdom”
 - i. What a promise to root your heart in!
 - b. “They will not be able to contradict you”
 - i. This does not mean that they will accept what you proclaim, but that they cannot give reasonable reasons for rejecting it

- ii. This is what we saw in the apostles' defense of the gospel before the rulers in the book of Acts
 - iii. We should expect to see that today, too!
 - d. We gain our lives by enduring in our witness
 - i. This is a promise meant to encourage perseverance and endurance, both in the immediate sense of escaping Jerusalem's fate, but also in the ultimate sense of escaping the judgment of this world by clinging to the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ
 - ii. "If we hold fast our confidence to the end" (Hebrews 3:6,14)
 - 1. These are those in the rocky soil, those who spring up in the appearance of love for Christ and faith in Him, but when the heat of affliction comes, they wither away and die
 - 2. They are not planted in the water of the Word, nor full of the Spirit
 - 3. Let us persevere, then, for God is faithful to His promise. Don't give up in the face of persecution, for He will win and not a hair of your head will perish, even if you are killed. (Hebrews 10:23)
 - e. It is right to flee persecution and destruction!
 - i. Jesus tells his disciples that when they see imminent destruction to flee to the mountains and don't enter the city, the place of destruction.
 - 1. When God judges the city, it is OK to get out. In fact, you should flee such "vengeance" in order to testify to His Word.
 - 2. History shows that it was Christians who largely escaped the destruction of Jerusalem, because of the words of Jesus here
 - ii. We flee by running to a refuge, to the place of help
 - 1. Psalm 46
 - iii. Just as Jerusalem's destruction was a Type of God's vengeance (a small-scale example of a larger, more ultimate reality) from which His disciples were to flee to the refuge, so also when God's vengeance is poured out upon the whole earth, and it is coming (Rev 6:15-17), we are to flee to the Refuge, the hiding place of Christ our Refuge and Hope and Rescuer from God's righteous wrath
 - 1. Romans 5:9
 - 2. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10
 - 3. Hebrews 6:17-20

Conclusion: Christ our hope, holding us forever in the refuge of God, having become our High Priest forever by offering up His own blood for our offense and thereby making peace with God. He was surrounded by terrors, shaken and starved of God's goodness, baptized in the fire and blood and horrors of God's wrath towards injustice and sin. He became sin that you and I might not perish, not even a hair of our heads. This is our hope and our testimony, that by His blood He has purchased all who come to Him as Lord and Savior, and He will surely, most certainly, cover us from the justice that is coming when His wrath is poured out upon the earth for all its rebellion and atrocities. Flee to the Refuge of Christ Jesus today, for even though you are a greater and more wicked sinner than you even know, He loves you more deeply than you can even dare to hope, having poured out his life and riches that you might share in His glory. Such is the love of God in Christ Jesus. Let us see Him, settle our hearts in His promises, and testify to His glorious greatness wherever He may place us.