

Religious Persecution Today

Commentary for February 1, 2020 — Christian Persecution Past, Present, and Future

The article for this month is "Magic in the Bible." Read the "[February 2020 Newsletter](#)" as an introduction of the article. (Magic users have always been willing to persecute "Christians.") I mean true Christians, not "[Christians in Name Only](#)," as in my July 2010 article.

Violent religious persecution was widespread in ancient times around the world.¹ Jesus said a great deal of blood was shed by the Pharisees in prior times and in His day (Matthew 23:29–35). He said to the scribes and Pharisees about what they would do to His disciples:

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and PERSECUTE them from city to city"

• *Matthew 23:34*

Some disciples would fall away as a result (Mark 4:17). Jesus predicted His own persecution and death (Matthew 16:21; 17:22–23; Mark 8:31).

One Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus persecuted believers in Christ, even encouraging the murder of the evangelist Stephen (Acts 6:8–7:60). Thinking he was performing righteous acts, he persecuted other members of the *ekklesia* of God in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1–3). While traveling to Damascus in Syria, Saul was confronted with the living Christ (Acts 9:1–18).

He believed in Christ's resurrection and was renamed Paul. After his conversion Paul wrote that prior to his encounter with Christ, he **"... was before a blasphemers, and a PERSECUTOR, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief"** (1 Timothy 1:13). As Paul and his associates preached, taught, and performed miracles, he himself was persecuted (Acts 14:5, 19, 16:19–40, 18:14–16, 26:31).

Religious persecution will be against God's people in the future, as Paul tells Timothy: **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves ..."** (2 Timothy 3:1–2). Paul continues from verses 3–7 listing the evils in **"the last days."** In fact, Paul wrote,

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer PERSECUTION. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

• *2 Timothy 3:12–13*

Recognizing Religious Persecution

On September 23, 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, President of the United States Donald Trump was **"the first President of the United States to host a meeting at the United Nations on religious freedom."**

¹ See, "[PERSECUTION](#)" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, James Orr, General Editor, 1915.

Religious intolerance and persecution is a growing problem around the world as we near **“the last days,”** as Paul wrote. ² President Trump said:

“... Regrettably, the religious freedom enjoyed by American citizens is rare in the world. Approximately 80 percent of the world’s population live in countries where religious liberty is threatened, restricted, or even banned. ...

As we speak, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Yazidis, and many other people of faith are being jailed, sanctioned, tortured, and even murdered, often at the hands of their own government, simply for expressing their deeply held religious beliefs. So hard to believe.

I’ve appointed a special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism. We’re standing up for almost 250 million Christians around the world who are **PERSECUTED for their faith. It is estimated that 11 Christians are killed every day for the following — I mean, just think of this: Eleven Christians a day, for following the teachings of Christ. Who would even think that’s possible in this day and age? Who would think it’s possible?”**

President Trump then gave examples of individuals attacked and killed for their faith — of all religions. **“... the world has also witnessed devastating acts of violence in sacred places of worship ... These evil attacks are a wound on all humanity.”** He lists several instances and continues:

“Too often, people in positions of power preach diversity while silencing, shunning, or censoring the faithful. True tolerance means respecting the right of all people to express their deeply held religious beliefs.”

While these fine words are well meant, the apostle Paul prophesied that such persecutions would continue throughout history (they have indeed continued), only to get worse as we approach the time of Christ’s return. Governments will not and cannot solve this problem.

Following the meeting, Sam Brownback, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom spoke at a news conference at the United Nations:

“The United States did this because we think it’s a critical topic at a critical time. Religious freedom is going down around the world, not increasing. Religious **PERSECUTION is increasing. Pew Charitable Trust has it at ... over 80 percent of the world’s population lives in a religiously restricted environment, and that restriction can go from fairly minor items all the way to death penalty for being a minority faith. And that is going on in the world today. [The] level of Christian PERSECUTION in particular is at an all-time high.**

**• U.S. State Department Press Briefing,
“Promoting International Religious Freedom”**

Take notice of persecution of Christians in the news in coming years. Pray that God opens the minds of leaders within persecuting countries at town, city, regional, and national levels to not harm, but help persecuted Christians. Our time is coming.

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² [“Remarks by President Trump at the United Nations Event on Religious Freedom | New York, NY,”](#) September 23, 2019.