



# The Coming Tsunami of Persecution

*by brother Greg*

“THEN YOU will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.”<sup>845</sup>

Our Lord spoke these sobering words to us, as found in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 24. Something in us does not want to accept the idea that in the end times *all nations will hate and persecute Christians*. This seems like a non-reality to us and something that could never happen because we live in such religiously tolerant countries such as Canada, United Kingdom and United States. We would like to edit our Lord’s Words and abbreviate them with a softer less harsh reality. Yet, this will not change the truth our Lord said would happen.

We live in cultures that turn away from pain of any kind, there are pills and remedies for even the slightest discomfort in our bodies. In such an environment persecution and suffering in our bodies for the faith of Jesus Christ seems even more absurd. There is not only a confusion over these things but there is a danger of complacency and

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<sup>845</sup> Matthew 24:9-10

comfort that will have us even more unprepared for the time that will come upon us.

### A TSUNAMI IS COMING

I recently watched a short documentary on the sad events of the December 26, 2004, tsunami that hit Indonesia and caused almost a quarter of a million deaths. It is well known as the *Boxing Day Tsunami*.

The video showed the Tsunami spreading to different regions, hitting the shores of heavily populated areas. What struck me was the complacency of the people in the different areas, even the amusement of it all. At one beach they see a white crescent on the distant horizon spreading across the entire large bay. People watch mesmerized as this white crescent comes nearer and nearer. When the wave swallows up two ships in the bay some of the watchers realize the magnitude of the event that is about to strike but for most it is too late. In another shoreline people smile and laugh in amusement as the entire bay is emptied of water and ships are beached. It begins as a spectacle that is full of fun and amusement as people take pictures. As the water came back in they considered it something fun to watch. When the wave struck that shoreline, many were caught unawares; their running was in vain and multitudes were screaming as they were swallowed in the waves and dragged back out to sea, never to return.

As I watched the video a great sobriety came over me—not just over the deaths of so many people—of what is about to come upon the Christians of the world, with some of us not being aware of the times we are living in. Many of us do not believe this could be the end of time.

Just as the tsunami came without warning, so will the end times persecution come upon many Christians unawares. I am not arguing for any type of position of the rapture of the church, whether pre or post, in this short article. Yet I believe firmly that we will all feel like we are in the great tribulation when this end time persecution wave hits the Church. The birth pains will become worse and worse, and many of those that have believed in a pre-tribulation rapture that would have them escape from all suffering will be 100% unprepared for what is going to come upon them.

Persecution of Christians has not diminished, but has been increasing yearly world wide.

More Christians were martyred in the twentieth century than in all previous centuries combined. Most of the Apostles (*Philip, Matthew, Mark, Peter, Paul*) were martyred. Many were martyred in the Middle Ages (*Huss, Jerome, Joan of Arc*). Between 1540 and 1570 over one million Protestants were publicly put to death in various countries in Europe. Overall, some 50 million were martyred by the Roman Catholic inquisition for *heresy* between 606 AD and the middle of the nineteenth century. Protestant reformers (*Tyndale, Latimer, Cranmer*) were martyred. Some 20 million were martyred during the 70 years of Russian atheism and Communism.

The Apostle John said to the Church in his day that they should not be surprised if the world hated them.<sup>846</sup> Our Lord Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke that all men will hate us.<sup>847</sup> But our Lord also gives us comfort in these words: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.”<sup>848</sup>

“Persecution is always meant for evil, but God always means it for good. And is it not better to suffer in this life to have an extra weight of glory in heaven?”<sup>849</sup>

May we prepare in our minds to suffer for the Name of Christ in our bodies.<sup>850</sup> May we be aware of the times and seasons that are coming upon us.

## TORTURE AND MARTYRDOM

“Some Christians they proved by fire, others by the sword, others by wild beasts; yet others tasted martyrdom from cudgels and iron claws.”<sup>851</sup> Torture not just martyrdom, has been the experience of many of God’s saints in history.

Christians throughout the centuries have been subject to the worst of tortures. The evil of men has excelled in its implements of

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<sup>846</sup> 1 John 3:13

<sup>847</sup> Luke 21:17

<sup>848</sup> John 15:18

<sup>849</sup> Paul Washer

<sup>850</sup> 1 Peter 4:1

<sup>851</sup> Antonio Gallonio (1556-1605)

torture as they punished those they deemed the worst criminals of mankind. Christians who are the light of the world and the salt of the earth are considered the dung and refuse of the earth. The most heinous acts imaginable have been the experience of those least deserving them. History will never truly tell what satan-filled men have done to the righteous of the earth. This sort of thing seems far-fetched to the modern mind yet all across the world these things still occur and will occur more at an alarming rate. An end time persecution of the Church of God is coming and will be worldwide.

Several years ago I was led on a tour of a German castle on the Rhine River. What beautiful architecture, with inlaid stone rooms, pathways and wonderful views of the German countryside! Through room after room we walked, ending the tour by going into the lower rooms of the castle. As we entered the last room I noticed right away some of the devices in the room that clearly showed me it was a room where individuals had been imprisoned. Also, more shockingly, there were implements of torture, including crowns with spikes on them and racks to stretch bodies. My mind raced through Church history to realize this room could have very well been a place where Anabaptist dissenters were tortured for their faith in Jesus Christ.

It should not surprise us that there have been so many martyrdoms in Church history, beginning with the murders of all the Apostles except the Apostle John whom they attempted to boil alive in oil—but he survived—afterwards being exiled to the prison island of Patmos. According to tradition, this is the list of the Apostles' deaths by martyrdom: Apostle Andrew, martyrdom by crucifixion (*bound to a cross*). Apostle Bartholomew, martyrdom by being flayed alive and crucified, head downward. Apostle James the Greater, martyrdom by being stabbed with a sword. Apostle James the Lesser, martyrdom by being thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple at Jerusalem, and then stoned and beaten with clubs. Apostle Mark, was dragged in the streets until his death. Apostle Jude, martyrdom by being beaten to death with a club. Apostle Matthew, martyrdom by being beheaded. Apostle Peter, martyrdom by crucifixion at Rome with his head downwards. Apostle Philip martyred. Apostle Simon, martyrdom by being sawn in half. Apostle Thomas, martyrdom by being stabbed with a spear. Apostle Paul, martyrdom by being beheaded in Rome.

One could rightly rename the first historical Book of the Church from Acts of the Apostles to *Acts of the Martyrs*.

## GOD IS RAISING UP END TIME MISSIONARIES

Many of us in the modern Church age consider martyrdom something of a quick death where those involved would pass away quickly. Yet in Church history it has been the opposite, where faithful Christians have endured great torture and death at the hands of wicked men. I am writing these things not to condemn or frighten anyone but to give us the proper respect and realization of the suffering many have undergone in the Name of Christ, and will also undergo in the coming future persecution. Just as the Church began with a powerful revival of the Word of God—spread through the anointed Apostles' lips—it will end with a great revival of Gospel preaching, yet under similar circumstances of martyrdom and suffering. God is raising up end time missionaries that have no fear of death and have such a great realization of the love of Jesus Christ that they will suffer everything to spread this precious Gospel to the ends of the earth.

## A LIST OF TORTURES

Here is a list of some of the various tortures used widely against Christians in church history (*These tortures were widely used in Church history and there is evidence of some of these today. Jesus will be with us in our hour of greatest need. We caution those who are young in the faith or who are not able to bear it, to go on to the next section. We ask that you please read this list reverently, as such things occurred to countless brothers and sisters in the faith of Jesus Christ throughout the last 2000 years.*) May God prepare us to suffer more to spread this great Gospel of His love:

Martyrs suspended by one foot. Nailed to the cross, head downwards. Hung up by both arms, heavy weights being attached to the feet. Christian woman suspended by the hair. Martyrs hung up by one arm only, ponderous stones being fastened to their feet. Martyr suspended by both feet, and a great stone fastened to his neck. Sometimes the blessed martyrs, after being smeared with honey were

bound to stakes fixed in the ground, and then exposed to the rays of the sun to be tortured by the stings of flies and bees.

Martyr suspended by the feet, and his body and head at the same time pounded with hammers. Sometimes martyrs were bound to the circumference of great wheels, and so hurled from a height over stony places. Martyr whose limbs were interwoven in the spokes of a wheel, on which he was left exposed for days, till he died. Martyr crushed in the press, just as grapes and olives are pressed in making wine and oil. Martyr bound to four stakes and beaten with cudgels. Martyr thrown headfirst into a caldron full of molten lead or boiling oil. Martyr in a large hot frying-pan.

Martyr cast into a burning fiery furnace. Martyr who's limbs are amputated one by one. Hands and feet cut off. Sawn in two with an iron saw. Martyr tortured by having sharp reeds stuck under his finger and toe nails. Martyr thrown down naked to be devoured by wild lions. Martyr wrapped in a wild beast's hide, and so left to be torn by animals.

#### A DAY OF GRACE AND PREPARATION

Oh saints of God, may we weep for such faithful ones that endured so much for that precious Name of Christ that we speak of at times so freely. There is a force of evil so strong that will be fully loosed in the last days to wreak havoc on the Church of God in the earth. This time—right now—is a season of grace to spread the Gospel far and wide, and to meet regularly to encourage each other in the things of the kingdom of God. A day is coming when our freedoms will be gone in the West, Bibles will be burned, churches closed and end time suffering and martyrdom will ensue.

No matter how much persecution and torture we have to endure, we can steadfastly know that Christ is with us. He has promised to never leave or forsake us. Great shall be our consolation soon, as the Apostle Paul said of every earthly trial, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."<sup>852</sup>

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<sup>852</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:17

For an entire life of suffering in this present age is nothing compared to the reward of eternity we will soon be enjoying in heaven. It is the martyr's crown, an emblem of beauty, righteousness and commitment for eternity.

As the martyrs' blood wets the ground, where they have put their seed—their life—there will be an abundance of new lives saved for God who see their witness. God may require of you and I such sacrifice and such a witness that many might be saved, which might include our torturers.

### PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION

We offer a few practical suggestions:

1) To start with, read—to yourself and your family—the lives of martyrs in the Christian faith. One such book widely available is: *Foxes Book of Martyrs*.

2) Develop a theology of suffering from the Scriptures and don't allow small inconveniences and pains to disturb you. The Romanian pastor who suffered much under communism gives us some good advice: "Preparation for underground work begins by studying sufferology, martyrology. The preparation for underground work is deep spiritualization. As we peel an onion in preparation for its use, so God must *peel* from us what are mere words, sensations of our enjoyments in religion, in order to arrive at the reality of our faith. Jesus has told us that *whosoever will follow Him will have to take up their cross*, and He, Himself, showed how heavy this cross can be. We have to be prepared for this."<sup>853</sup>

3) Study the Scriptures towards the theme of martyrdom especially in the Book of Revelation. Learn to practice memorization as an underground Church pastor did while in solitary confinement: "I read the Bible from memory. To memorize the Bible is very important for an underground worker."<sup>854</sup>

May we also be bold to stand for the Name of Jesus Christ before others, and therefore not be ashamed before Him at His coming.<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>853</sup> Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001)

<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> 1 John 2:28