

A World Without Christ?

I recently read a stat in a magazine claiming that, at the rate they are being killed in the Middle East, there will be no Christians left within 5 years. Followers of Christ are being persecuted, beaten, tortured, and killed for the sake of their faith. This does not come as a surprise to us. Christ warned us of the struggles of following him in **John 15:18-19**:

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Christianity is a difficult lifestyle, but it is one we are commanded to live by our Lord and Savior. Jesus instructed us to pick up our cross and follow Him. In doing so, we have to learn to love those who seek to do us harm. Many people choose to ignore this advice, but we cannot pick and choose which of Jesus' commands we will follow. We must be compliant to *all* of His teachings. In studying the scripture we will find that the instructions are clear:

Matthew 16:24-25 (NKJV)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Matthew 5:43-45 (NKJV)

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

People have been trying for centuries to eliminate the influence of Jesus from the world. We are not the first Christians to feel the oppression of the enemy. Fortunately, we can rest assured that we are all part of God's plan. When people are being tormented and killed, these traumatic events tend to result in

the return of many lost souls to God. He knows what He is doing, and He is more than capable of saving humanity. As Peter wrote in **Acts 4:10-12**: *let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

No matter how dire the situation may seem, Jesus Christ will always be in control of it.

Matthew 24:35 (NKJV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Adrian

Prayer requests:

Kimberly Shields needs a kidney/liver transplant. She is meeting with specialists at this time.

Adam and Norma Garcia continue to need our prayers and support. Adam has cancer and will start treatments soon. Norma had a car accident and totaled her car. She is okay.

Shirley Fowler has cancer of the liver. The doctors give her two weeks. Prayers needed for her, her family and the doctors. (Friend of the Sillers)

Blanca Hinojos has brain cancer. Pray for her doctors as well as for her and her family. (Friend of the Sillers)

Lesson Title: My Cross, My Christ

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53: 3 - 6