

Mike Bickle: The Certainty of Persecution

Mike Bickle and I have been friends for more than 35 years, and I've heard him preach some pretty stirring sermons during that time. In fact, Mike says he's preached about 7,000 sermons in his 50 years of ministry, but not many could be more important than the one he delivered in front of his church in Kansas City, Missouri, on New Year's Day.

It's about Christian persecution, but let me explain a little bit about that before I reveal what Mike said in his message.

Open Doors USA, which raises the level of awareness of Christian persecution and supports Christians in more than 70 countries, estimates that more than 360 million believers suffer persecution and discrimination globally. There are some countries, like North Korea and China, where the persecution is extreme.

But we who live in the West, especially here in the United States, have our Constitution and our Judeo-Christian values. We haven't seen the level of persecution believers face in many other countries.

But Mike says to make no mistake about it, it's headed our way, and it's going to be intense. The Bible guarantees it.

In his Jan. 1 sermon, Mike spoke about the "Certainty of Persecution and its Blessing."

"That Sunday morning, I got before the IHOPKC community and told them that this is a really important message," he says. "It's not my version that makes it the most important, it's the fact that it's been talked about so little in the Western church. As a believer for the last 50 years, I haven't heard

or talked much about it.

“But I believe persecution is coming to the West, and it’s a very important subject for us to find out what the biblical narrative is,” Bickle continues. “What does the Bible say about persecution, particularly in the generation that the Lord returns? We don’t know that we’re in that generation, but I have an opinion that there are people that live on the earth today—maybe the 20-year-olds, maybe the 2-year-olds, I don’t know—but I believe we are in that hour where there are people that live on the earth today that will see it with their eyes.”

Most people don’t like to deal with this. It’s not a happy topic. In Christian circles, there are people who have talked about the end times. Hal Lindsey’s “The Late Great Planet Earth” came out about 50 years ago, and it was all about the rapture. There are a lot of different views on the subject.

The Great Tribulation is not something to joke about. We can’t understand exactly what it is, but it has to do with the Antichrist, one-world government, the mark of the beast. These are examples of what will occur during the Tribulation, but Mike wants to help people understand how the coming persecution applies to them.

“I believe that this is one of the more important subjects for the body of Christ in the West to start talking about,” he says. “It needs to get into the conversation of the church.

“When you read the words of Jesus ... and this is a verse that really struck me some time ago ... but in Matthew 24:9, he said ‘Then, all nations will hate you,’” Bickle says. “I never really have focused on that word at all. If you read Matthew 24 verses five, six, seven and eight, Jesus called it the beginning of birth pangs and then, ‘all nations will hate you.’ That time frame hasn’t happened yet. That’s the future, and America is in that cluster. ... There is coming a time where

all people that are true to the words of Jesus, really loyal to what He said, will suffer.

“Jesus said there are a lot of truths that are really popular about free forgiveness, that’s pretty neat,” he adds. Resurrection? Cool. But He also has a number of truths that are unpopular, and mostly we don’t talk much about those. I believe before the Lord returns, the Spirit is going to be zealous that we give the whole counsel of God. ... I think that all nations will hate those that are faithful to the whole message, which is yet future. But it’s inevitable, and it’s coming and will involve the church in the West.”

Yet Mike says Christians should not fear the coming persecution and that it will yield actual benefits to the church.

That’s a concept many believers can’t wrap their heads around, but Mike uses Scripture to back it up.

There’s 1 Peter 4:1, which says, “Arm yourself to suffer persecution.” Mike says we must arm ourselves, which means knowing the biblical narrative. And, Mike says:

“Jesus was teaching on persecution, and in John 15, he said, “Do not marvel when you are hated,” Mike says. “He was telling the church in His generation, don’t marvel, meaning don’t be shocked or surprised when you are hated. Understand that hatred is inevitable. Right now, we marvel when we’re hated. I want a generation of young people that know the biblical narrative. Their hearts will be set and prepared.

 “They’ve determined certain responses they are going to have and how they will be faithful,” he explains. “Those conversations with the Lord and the grace of God that touches our heart is critical. ... If you are shocked and surprised when people hate you for standing for Christ, you are far more vulnerable and will be offended at God, and even will be fearful enough to retreat from your faith.”

Indeed, it's an important message to hear, and you can watch that message here. Please make sure you also listen to my "Strang Report" podcast with Mike on the Charisma Podcast Network.

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