

CHAPTER ONE
 A Warning From Jesus
 About
 The End of the Age

All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, a time is coming when everyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you these things so that when their hour comes you will remember that I warned you. John 16:1-4

This warning is contained within the Last Discourse Jesus gave his apostles. According to John's account, it occurs at the end of the Last Supper before he offered his final prayer, and before the group departed for the Garden of Gethsemane.

Much debate centers around this text. Did Jesus address these remarks to his personal apostles, a warning of the suffering they would endure at the hands of fellow Jews? The statement that his followers would be thrown out of the synagogues certainly suggests so. Or did the "time" refer to Roman persecutions; did he speak to generations beyond his apostles? Perhaps his remarks were intended to warn about both possibilities. Or did he speak to the far future, knowing in his divine mind that John would make such a record?

The remark shows religious persecution, not secular oppression. The source of the persecution comes from those who believe they are doing a service for God, not service to political, social, or ideological programs. More importantly, the supposed service is to God, and not to pagan gods, nor to human representatives of those pagan gods.

Many persons believe that the warning pertained to the days of the apostles. But we must be careful. We may encounter logical difficulties if we accept the traditional date for the creation of John's text late in the first century. According to early church historians, Irenaeus and Eusebius, John lived into the reign of Trajan, 98-117 AD. The initial Jewish persecutions were past.

The Jews were then a scattered people, without a home land, and without the presence, authority, or power of the Sanhedrin. Subsequent Jewish persecutions indeed continued, but they were sporadic and isolated, by local groups in Greek and Roman communities. If John wrote late in the first century he would have had no need to record remarks by Jesus which he knew pertained to those years gone by. In fact, warnings about the end of the age in the synoptic gospels, *Matt 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21*, are not found as such in John's record.

Jewish Persecutions

I searched the religious persecutions which are described in the New Testament. They do not fit the tone or evident intent of Jesus' warning.

Acts 4:3f — Annas and Caiaphas arrested Peter and John because of the healing of a cripple but released them.

Acts 5:18f — They were arrested again for persisting in their teaching. Gamaliel interceded. The high priest had them beaten and let them go.

Acts 6 — Believers greatly multiplied.

Acts 6-7 — Stephen was accused. He was condemned through false witness. He was stoned to death. Saul was consenting, *7:58, 8:1, 22:20*.

Acts 8:1 — On that day a "great persecution" arose against the church, with scattering into the countryside of Judea and Samaria, **but the apostles were unmolested.**

Acts 8:3 — Saul ravaged the church, entering house after house, dragging off men and women and committing them to prison.

Acts 9:1 — He sought letters to the synagogues of Damascus to bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 12 — Herod laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James Zebedee. He arrested Peter during Passover, but Peter escaped through miraculous help.

Acts 26:10 — Saul shut many up in prison, and cast his vote for their death.

Acts 26:11 — Paul states that he was in raging fury against them; he persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Gal 1:13 — Paul persecuted the church violently and tried to destroy it. After his conversion experience he did not go to Jerusalem seeking the approval of the apostles, but rather into the desert of Arabia. He returned to Damascus and then, after three years, he went up to Jerusalem where he visited with Peter and James. He stayed for fifteen days.

Although Paul says that he persecuted them even to foreign cities this statement may have been one of intent, not actual fulfillment. His desire was cut short by his conversion. The New Testament record does not support the assertions he makes in *Acts 26:11*.

The time of Paul's conversion can be determined from *Galatians 1:15-18, 2 Cor. 11:31*, and Josephus' *Archeol. 18:5:1-3*. When Paul left Damascus to return to Jerusalem the city was in the possession of the Arabian king, Aretas. According to Josephus a war between Aretas and the Romans began in the year Tiberius died, 37 AD. According to *Dio Cassius 59:9,12*, the difficulties with Aretas were settled in 38. This would place Paul's conversion in the year 35 or 36, certainly only a few short years after Jesus' death and resurrection. Since the city of Damascus was no longer under siege, three years later he departs and visits Jerusalem, about 38 or 39 AD.

Note that in spite of the vigorous efforts of Paul, and with the enmity of the Jewish leaders, the apostles continued to live in Jerusalem. If he were reaching into private homes to fetch members of the new sect into prison, why did he leave the leaders unmolested? The statements of both *Acts 8:3*, and *26:10-11* seem exaggerated. Even more, the statement in *Acts 8:1* seems self-contradictory. Why would Jewish authorities scatter abroad the followers of the new sect but permit the leaders to remain unmolested in Jerusalem?

After 14 years, in 52 or 53 AD, Paul again goes up to Jerusalem, *Gal 2:1*, where he visited with Peter, James and John. Again, the apostles are living unmolested under the very eye of the Sanhedrin and the high priests.

Other evidence attests to the fact that Jewish persecutions were not severe, or even intermittent.

Acts 9:31 — After Paul's conversion the church had great peace.

Acts 21:8 — Philip, one of seven elected as first leaders of the church, *Acts 6:5*, evangelized from Caesarea, within the territory of Herod, and had a group of disciples *21:16*. While the city may have been under Roman control Jewish authorities certainly could reach individuals there.

Acts 21:10 — Agabus, a Christian prophet, presumably lived and taught unmolested in Judea.

We do not know how much Paul's conversion may have served to dampen the purpose of Jewish authorities. He was their fair-haired boy. He had letters of commission directly from the Sanhedrin. He was well educated and articulate. He had demonstrated great enthusiasm. He was on fire to eliminate the new sect. Suddenly he turns about. For all the fervor he displayed to suppress the new sect, that much he now turns to support it. Jewish leaders certainly were dumbfounded, with plenty of debate and speculation. Perhaps they feared committing other resources. Paul's conversion, coupled with other miraculous events, *Acts 5:18f, Acts 12:4f, Acts 16:23f*, probably created great confusion and irresolution among them.

As I listed above, several episodes in *Acts* have been used to illustrate persecution. But consider circumstances. Zealots and other rebel factions may have had much to do with the fear of the Jewish leaders. Unless they minded their relationship with Roman authorities they were in danger of losing their civil autonomy. Concern by Jewish leaders centered on civil threats, not on religious contests.

John 18:14 — Jesus was executed for political expediency.

The Romans did not want to become involved in internal religious disputes. Witness Pilate's hesitation.

Acts 23:29 — The Roman Tribune did not recognize serious charges against Paul except for concerns of civil disobedience.

Acts 24:1-9 — Ananias and Tertullus framed their charges against Paul before Felix, the governor, in civil terms, not religious defiance.

In his defense Paul clearly emphasized the obedience of the new sect to civil authority. Refer also to the legal hearings before Festus and Agrippa, *Acts 25 and 26*. This conduct on the part of Jewish authorities shows their struggle to maintain themselves against the new religious sect. They did not act as a people who were in sure command.

Under examination the supposed Jewish religious persecutions appear as not much more than social repression.

Some commentators have suggested that persecution under service to God might include those after the first century. Eusebius and other early Christian historians record individuals who suffered martyr deaths at the hands of Jews and Romans. These include Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, c110-c118AD, Polycarp of Smyrna, c155AD, Justin, c155AD, and so on. Others have suggested that Jewish persecutions during the Barhochba uprising, 132 to 135AD, might explain the remark by Jesus. But these suggestions are long past apostolic efforts; they are used to justify a statement which has puzzled the generations.

Roman Persecutions

While it is true that Paul's work in Ephesus provoked a riot, this episode was instigated by commercial traders over their concern for contributions to the goddess Artemis, *Acts 19*. The account is not a good illustration of persecution under service to God. In fact, none of the Roman persecutions were done under service to God. They were done to preserve the status and authority of the pagan Emperor gods.

Ancient religions derived from a particular people and state, just as the Jewish religion was unique to the people of Israel. Among the Romans the laws of the Twelve Tables required that any religious worship not publicly sanctioned was penally forbidden, *religio illicita*. While the religion of Rome was the only official religion she could not hold control over her vast domains without sanctioning the religions of all conquered nations. Thus Roman law was less than absolute. Acceptance of many different pagan religions nurtured a highly tolerant environment.

Roman pagan religious observances throughout the year demanded that everyone give obeisance to the gods. Citizens of other pagan countries did not object; they merely translated their gods and goddesses to the equivalents in Rome. But this Jews and Christians refused to do. Still, the Romans permitted Jewish religious observances.

Christian religion was uniquely different. Contrary to Jewish faith it did not have a national allegiance; it had no temple, altar, or sacrifice in Jerusalem or other holy city. It excluded all other religions. And it had an invincible belief that there was only one God, in heaven, and that no human being could represent that God, or become the object of worship. Thus Christian belief and practices aroused deep suspicion among the emperors, who were considered as gods, and among the general populace.

As evidence of the uncertainty with which Roman emperors greeted the new religion, consider the following examples. Tertullian (*Apologeticus 5:21*) relates that Tiberius, upon receiving a report from Pilate about the resurrection of Jesus, proposed to the Roman Senate that Jesus should be enrolled among the *deos Romanus*, but the Senate refused. According to Suetonius (*Claudius 25*), and *Acts 18:2*, Claudius commanded that all Jews leave Rome. Many of the early Roman Christians were Jews; thus they were subject to that edict. The first severe Christian persecution took place under Nero (54-68). When Rome burned he accused the Christians of starting the conflagration. By this time the general populace, deeply suspicious, readily believed the worst. Ancient inscriptions suggest that the persecutions spread into the provinces. It was during this period that Paul and Peter suffered their martyrdom, and may have been the period of John's exile to Patmos. According to Tertullian and Hegesippus, Domitian planned a persecution against Christians but did not execute it. Upon hearing the phrase "kingdom of Christ" he summoned two of the relatives of Jesus to Rome for examination but soon released them upon finding that they were not suspicious persons. The "good" emperor Nerva (96-98) recalled those who had been exiled for religious purposes, allowed none of his subjects to bring accusations against another, and especially forbade the reception of charges brought by slaves against their masters. Later persecutions by the emperors were sporadic, many half-hearted. They were not done as a service to God; they were done to uphold respect for the pagan gods who came under increasing pressure. Scattered between those emperors who actively pursued Christian persecution were others who ignored the new religion, or even welcomed it.

Even if the Romans killed many thousands of Jews as part of the troubles around 70 AD, or even thousands of Christians, we cannot legitimately regard Roman persecutions as fulfilling this prediction by Jesus.

If we look for religious persecutions later in history to fulfill this forecast can we say that the Protestant Reformation defines that period? Were Joan of Arc, who appeared as a divine prophetess to the French but as a sorceress to English soldiers, or William Tyndale, who gave us the first English translation of the Bible, both of whom were burned at the stake, persecuted under service to God? Is that what Jesus meant?

Are we to say that all religious persecutions took place in the past, and that such warnings could not possibly refer to us? The twentieth century has seen the most horrendous persecutions of all time. Hitler systematically killed millions of Jews to solve "the Jewish problem." Stalin killed millions of his fellow countrymen in order to stifle voices against his authoritarian rule. The forces of evil today are far stronger than any time in the past, forces many of us have been unwilling to admit.

“When Their Hour Comes”

An essential feature of the forecast is the manner in which Jesus framed his remarks. He said a “time” is coming, that it would take place at a certain “hour.” Indeed, his phrasing emphasized the difference between expulsion from the synagogues and other persecution.

By stating that “a time is coming” he sharpened his remarks in order that we all pay attention. His statement was designed to distinguish between persecutions upon his apostles by Jewish authorities and later persecutions. Unfortunately, the nature of the remarks created such puzzlement for the generations this separation of thought has effectively smothered our understanding. The translators linked the thoughts together by joining them into one sentence. Commentators and interpreters have universally lumped the remarks into one historic view.

Consider how the word “hour” is used in the New Testament, and especially by John.

Matt 24:36 “**But of that day and hour no one knows . . .**”

Matt 24:44 “**Therefore, you must also be ready; the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**”

Luke 12:46 “. . . **the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know . . .**”

John 2:4 “**Oh, woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.**”

John 4:21 “**Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.**”

John 7:30 “. . . **but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.**”

John 16:1 “. . . **the hour is coming when whoever kills you . . .**”

I have listed these phrases to show the dramatic context of the word *hour*. The word had a meaning which is not lost on modern generations, except to erudite scholars who are annoyed at the significance of the term. They struggle over modifying words, or Greek phraseology, in attempt to deny its crisis portent. Whether we would translate Greek *ora* as “hour” or “time,” the implication is not lost.

The use of *hour* as a predictive term is not some loose or hazy classification but an indicator of specific time. It is often associated through the phrase “of that day and hour,” certainly denoting a high degree of locality in time. It offers a method for indicating that an event, a condition, an expectation, or a moment of fulfillment will come according to the unfolding of destiny, according to the schedules of God.

Their hour is not a designation for feeble attempts by Jews over several generations to eliminate an upstart Christian sect. Nor is it a description of three hundred years of Roman persecutions upon the rising tide of Christianity. Nor is it

a means to characterize centuries of religious harassment by the Roman Catholic church. It is a precise description for a world moment of religious truth. And that recognition of truth will come when all of us become the target of death, a death wrought by those who believe they are serving God, but truly are not.

Their hour will belong to *them*, all those who are called to an extremity of human sacrifice, a program to eliminate God’s people from the face of the earth. The world has never witnessed that which is about to come down upon all of us.

Possible Confusion in the Gospel Record

In our attempt to understand the context of Jesus’ remarks we must distinguish between those statements which pertain

a) to the rigors of new religious belief and the consequent persecution individuals might experience while living in an inimical but organized world, the traditional historic context, and

b) to that suffering which Jesus expected to occur at a great world extremity, when law and order would break down, and when social consensus of proper human behavior would become chaotic.

Historically, Jews, Romans and Catholics all respected social norms; the world has now lost its foundation in social standards. Most anything goes that falls within the bounds of modern secular law.

Jesus spoke of such a time. He reserved remarks on such matters to the end of his earthly life because, as he said, “I was with you.” Now he was leaving and he wanted to provide warnings to those who would live in such world extremity.

What was the context of those remarks? Can we determine from comparison among the four gospels more exactly what Jesus meant, and a time of fulfillment?

Two separate discourses may have become confused in our records. The first contained remarks he made to the assembled group Tuesday evening on the Mount of Olives; the second contained those remarks he made Thursday evening at the Last Supper.

The first discourse was provoked by somber events Tuesday in Jerusalem when Jesus severely rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, *Matt 21-23*. To cheer themselves, and to recover some hope that Jesus might now proceed to take up the throne of Israel, the apostles pointed out the glory of the temple as they departed from Jerusalem, *Matt 24:1*, *Mark 13:1*, *Luke 21:5*. Jesus quickly dashed their hopes to the ground. Not one stone would be left standing upon another. They were a downcast lot as they returned to the Mount of Olives. Later that evening they asked him what he meant.

We should note that the apostles provoked the inquiry about the end of the age, Jesus did not. They could conceive of the complete destruction of the temple only under a great planetary event. They understood that there must be, by God’s necessity, an end to the planetary age. At that time God would sum up the age, would assess its accomplishments, would examine it against his goals, and would

decree those actions necessary to retrieve his world. There would be a divine judgment. Many ancient people understood such matters; most modern minds do not.

My Oxford edition of RSV has a footnote about *Matt 24:1-4*:

“These verses, together with the discourse that follows, seem to merge teachings about an immediate destruction of Jerusalem with details associated in Scripture with the end of human history. These teachings were set down by the Evangelist in the light of events between AD 30 and 70. It is difficult to be certain what the original form of Jesus’ word was.”

This footnote is well stated, except the idea that human history will come to an end is a distortion of biblical teaching. *Isaiah 45:18* is explicit:

“For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God) who formed the earth and made it (he established it) he did not create it a chaos; he formed it to be inhabited.”

Again, in Psalm 72 we see that an idea of a world end is an error. A royal son will reign upon the earth for untold ages of time.

“May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations! May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! In his days may righteousness flourish, and peace abound, till the moon is no more. May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

The Greek word for age used in the New Testament is *aion*, and its adjective form, *aionos*. It is the source of our English word *aeon*. In *Vine’s Expository Dictionary aion* “signifies a period of indefinite duration, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period.” The dictionary then goes on to say that *aionos* denotes that which is eternal in contrast to *proskairos*, that which is temporal. However, this remark carries the meaning of the term *aionos* too far. A more correct understanding would be in the concept of “dispensations,” time structured according to goals of divine administration, a purpose according to God in relation to what takes place during that specific, even if long, period.

How truly unfortunate that KJV translated the phrase as *end of the world*. This depended on the understanding of the King James translators at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but conditioned many following generations to the idea that the world would end. The ancients did not view time as coming to an end. Even in 2 Peter 3 the idea of the heavens being on fire, and the elements melting away with fervent heat led to renewal. New heavens and a new earth were expected wherein would dwell righteousness. We take these spectacular descrip-

tions of nuclear abominations raining fire from the sky, literally melting the elements of the earth under their scorching heat, and transpose them into an idea that Peter believed one grand conflagration would end all creation.

Without question, Jesus warned his followers about the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He did not want his fledgling flock to be destroyed in the political turmoil of the near future. Neither did he want them to be ignorant of events of the far future. His immediate apostles and disciples needed warning; his people of the far future needed warning also. These two crisis periods may, indeed, have become confused in the Synoptic gospels. But John was not thus confused. In his gospel he did not provide an account of Jesus’ remarks about the destruction of Jerusalem. He had no need to do so. First, when he wrote at the end of the first century the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was long past; his audience had no need for such warning. Second, events of the far future were described in his Apocalypse. Further commentary in his gospel was unnecessary. Therefore, he did not refer to the end of the age as such. He merely gave an account of Jesus’ remarks and concentrated on those subjects which could be instructive to the future. The fact that he did not report on the Tuesday evening discourse shows that he felt it unnecessary; he placed the end-of-the-age warning into the discourse at the Last Supper.

We must examine John’s record in the context of possible confusion among the discourses of Jesus, the limitations John imposed upon himself in the formulation of his remarks, the dramatic nature of the statements by Jesus, and the recognition by John that he was leaving important information to the future. We must especially remember that his later work was conditioned by his vivid experience on the island of Patmos

Gospel Parallels

I shall now proceed to gospel parallels. I shall demonstrate that the remarks by Jesus which John places at the Last Supper were actually part of the discourse about the end of the age on Tuesday evening. Indeed, Mark and Luke make these part of the Tuesday evening discourse, *Mark 13:9-13*, and *Luke 21:12-17*. Unfortunately, the Gospel of Matthew introduces even more difficulty in that it divides these warnings into two different sections, part of the Tuesday evening discourse as with Mark and Luke, *Matt 24:9-14*, and part of an earlier exhortation to the twelve apostles to teach among the Jewish people, *Matt 10:18-24*. For purposes of discussion here I use the passages from *John 15:18-27* and *16:1-4*. I restrict reference to other parts of the respective passages to limit this immediate discussion. I also relocate individual phrases to draw out the parallels.

John 15:18 If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

John 15:21 But all these things they will do unto you because of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Matt 10:22 . . . you will be hated by all because of my name.

Mark 11:13 . . . you will be hated by all because of my name.

Luke 21:17 . . . you will be hated by all because of my name.

Part of my purpose in these discussions is to demonstrate the textual difficulties we encounter in a serious attempt to understand messages from the Bible. The placement by John of details into the Last Discourse, while Mark and Luke place them on the Mount of Olives Tuesday evening, and fragmenting of the same remarks by Matthew into two different scenes, clearly show human interpretation which affects our traditional text. Different writers had different motives with obvious difference in understanding of Jesus' purpose. Such human factors modify how we understand.

John expands upon the thoughts. While the synoptic gospels state simply that we will be hated because of Jesus' name, John felt impelled to elaborate. He casts the remarks into a personal light, centered on Jesus, and repeatedly introduces the Father as an important part of the message. We can easily conclude that he was concerned that the heart of Jesus' message not be lost in the information. That heart was Jesus' love for us, and how he had given of himself because of his love. When our trials come we should remember that he loves us.

John's technique shows that he had the synoptic texts with him, and referred to them, as he composed his document. He was dissatisfied with their simplicity and lack of understanding. He not only does away with the Tuesday evening discourse; he reframes.

In spite of this, we do not lose the essential message. Jesus' people should not expect open arms from the world; the world would hate them, not because they represented darkness and evil, but because they represented light and truth. The world does not want to know truth.

In the versions the phrase is translated as *for my name's sake*. What does that mean? Literally, in Greek, it is *on account of the name of me*, or, in modern English, *because of my name*. It seems ridiculous that translators would carry such antique expressions into a modern world where they do so much to confuse. Jesus was warning that anyone who would identify with his name would suffer persecution. They would die if they expressed loyalty to him. In a world which was so familiar to us for its great freedoms, untold numbers of people hate the name of Jesus. Modern minds do not want to recognize or express spiritual loyalties. They are not responsible to anyone. They demand religious *freedom*.

But these warnings were far more than the religious suppression of the centuries. These warnings were for the acute and horrible persecutions now about to come down upon us.

John 15:20a "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'"

Matt 10:24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master . . ."

John 15:20b If they persecuted me, they will persecute you . . .

Matt 10:23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next . . .

Luke 21:12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you . . .

Jesus was warning those who would take up his service now, at the end of the age. They should expect to be treated as he was. The price of service to God was persecution. The meaning of the Greek word is to *put to flight* or to *pursue*. It suggests an extreme social action; the persecuted are not allowed to perform their service with freedom. The meaning is much more than neighbors spurning one another because they attend different churches. These individuals are subject to active pursuit and apprehension. Furthermore, if Jesus suffered pursuit, his followers should expect to suffer pursuit. If he was killed in service to his Father, his servants should expect to be killed in service to him.

Many Jews and Christians today believe they suffer persecution. And indeed, Jews suffered severe persecution in this century in various countries. But we cannot consider that the vast body of Christians throughout the world have suffered persecution within recent centuries. Certainly not after large segments of western civilization became liberated from the Roman Catholic church, and religious freedoms infiltrated western culture. Migrations from Europe to the New World to escape religious persecutions brought an end to that era. The so-called western countries are now socially Christian; their governments and social norms derive from Christian principles and standards. They have great religious tolerance. Christianity today composes the body of modern western culture, from the spectrum of liturgical and mainline conservative churches to fundamentalist groups. Those Christian groups and individuals who cling to and espouse the current civil order cannot claim persecution in recent centuries. *They* are the accepted social norm.

Nor would they be the ones to bring persecution in the sense indicated by Jesus. The modern Christian world is highly tolerant; it would not institute persecutions for mere religious differences. Therefore, if we are to understand this passage we must look for activity which falls outside accepted social Christian norms. If the followers of Jesus, certainly not modern Jews, are to be persecuted at the end of the age the persecution cannot come as part of today's accepted social regime. It cannot be ordinary Christian, of any class.

Many fundamentalist Christian groups, in order to salvage this prediction by Jesus, then conceive a social order which comes under the direct supervision of "the Devil." They believe this is the origin of the so-called "new world order" or "one world government," brought about by individuals in powerful economic or civil positions conspiring to obtain world control. Their concept is one of political persecution by malicious satanic governments. In order to shape this idea to the

biblical predictions they conceive that this malicious world rule will demand obeisance to satanic personalities who take power. If they are “God’s people” they will refuse such obeisance; hence the persecution will be upon them.

Because of their confusion in understanding their framework is awry. They have not arrived at the possibility that these persecutions arise outside the scope of civil regimes, beyond the context of social norms.

Something totally unexpected is about to occur, but no one, from the most liberal social scholar to the most adamant fundamentalist group, has been able to penetrate this forecast by Jesus, or to perceive or predict that which is about to unfold.

John 15:27 And you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Matthew 10:18 And you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the nations.

Mark 13:9 But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them.

Luke 21:12 . . . delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name.

We must keep in mind the circumstances which conditioned Jesus’ remarks. If he were to speak of future Christian gentile groups, and they were not pagan, he could not use the word temple. That would denote pagan religious worship. He did not have the word church; he had only the word synagogue. This use has forced biblical students, scholars, and theologians to believe that Jesus spoke of Jewish persecutions upon the new religion. This lack of perception has thrown them back into early apostolic days for their time reference. As a consequence, great confusion has arisen out of these forecasts, a confusion which left an indelible imprint upon all Christian understanding. If Jesus were placing his forecasts into the end of the age the word synagogue must mean church. Persecution by Jews is not realistic in this modern era. These witnesses may be brought up to synagogues for their testimony, but they will be brought up even more to witness in Christian churches.

The scope of this activity is indicated further by the witnesses being brought up before governors and kings and councils. They are not brought up to those civil authorities because they are under criminal indictment; they are brought up because they are witnessing to a phenomenon which those governors and kings do not understand. Something so dramatic is taking place it does not fit ordinary human understanding. Then the beating in synagogues = churches arises because of the extreme disturbance Christians (and Jews) feel about this testimony.

This view should be an indicator to those who seek recourse in conspiracy theories. A world government, under the direct supervision of the Devil, or any of its divisions, would not be soliciting testimony from God’s people, nor would they be tolerant of such testimony if it were offered voluntarily.

With comparison against the synoptic gospels John’s statements now take on a different complexion. The comments by Jesus about witnessing appear to be directed exclusively to his personal apostles, *because they have been with him from the beginning*.

Regardless how we may look at this, we should note that our record displays a confusion in accounts, and that John’s composition does not necessarily reflect Jesus’ actual discourse. Rather, it seems to reflect the fact that Jesus made such remarks, that John was dissatisfied with the synoptic record, and that he re-drafted to suit another purpose. The many parallels are much too powerful a testimony to the fact that Jesus made such remarks. We are left with the important question why the synoptic record would apply these remarks to the end of the age, while John would place them in apostolic days. The strength of the parallels suggest that he adapted. This is further attested by other parallels.

John 15:26 But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.

Matt 10:19-20 For when they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Mark 13:11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

Luke 21:13-15 This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.

Here is the crux of the revelation. The circumstance is one for which no preparation can be made. These are not theological dissertations, and they are not sermons from a pulpit. Witnessing will be in secular as well as religious environments, spontaneous from the heart, as given by God’s Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Truth.

Matthew and Mark offer confirmation of *that hour*. The revelation does not speak of two thousand years of Christian struggle, nor of complacent social religion. The passages show a time of extreme world condition, to appear at a brief moment of world destiny. Again we see how John differs from the synoptics. He uses a unique term, the *paracletos*. In Greek this means an advisor or counselor. It does not mean one who comforts. This is a spirit helper who comes directly from the Father to teach us in that hour of need. The word *pneuma*=*spirit* used in the synoptics does not capture the true intent of Jesus’ remark. John attempted to set the record straight. God’s people will see special help, more than the mere spirit of God.

Now we can come to a far greater insight into the extreme circumstances of the warnings.

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

Matt 10:21 Brother will deliver brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and put them to death.

Matt 24:9 Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations because of my name.

Mark 13:12 And brother will deliver brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and put them to death.

Luke 21:16 You will be betrayed by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death.

In Matthew and Mark the translators used the phrase *and have them put to death*. This reflects the notion that delivery will be to civil authorities; relatives and friends will bring charges against them in criminal courts.

Again we have one of those unfortunate cases of translation conditioned by the notions of the translators. The translators altered the tense of the Greek verbs. The phrase in Greek is certain: *and put them to death*. The hand of death will be directly by relatives and friends, not by government agencies. The phrase *You will be delivered up* given in some translations, rather than *You will be betrayed*, again falsely suggests the same concept of delivery to civil authorities, not delivery up to death.

The difficulty which faced the translators was this persecution unto death by relatives and friends. Where in history did such action take place? We might cite numerous historic episodes where relatives and friends brought accusations against those who believed in Jesus, but always those accusations were through civil channels. Suggestion of such historic context is another attempt to understand a forecast which has puzzled the generations. This persecution at the end of the age will come directly from the hand of those whom we know and love. Brother will kill brother; son and daughter will kill mother and father; friend will kill friend.